

TECHNOLOGY- FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

AGAINST WOMEN
DEFENDERS AND WOMEN'S
ORGANIZATIONS
IN PARAGUAY



TECHNOLOGY- FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DEFENDERS AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN PARAGUAY

TEDIC is a non-governmental organization founded in 2012, whose mission is the defense and promotion of human rights in the digital environment. Among its main issues of interest are freedom of speech, privacy, access to knowledge and gender on the Internet

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INTRODUCTION

According to UN Women (2025), Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)¹ is spreading at an alarming rate, fueled by artificial intelligence, anonymity and the lack of effective laws and accountability mechanisms.

One group particularly affected by TFGBV is Women's Organizations with a Public Voice, defined as networks, associations and non-governmental organizations composed of women who play visible roles in the public sphere, such as human rights defenders, activists, politicians and journalists, among others.

This violence manifests through multiple practices aimed at silencing, delegitimizing, discrediting and harassing women, negatively impacting their political positions, scrutiny processes, candidacies or the exercise of their public offices, with the ultimate goal of dissuading them from continuing to participate in public life (Amnesty International Argentina, 2024; Beck et al., 2022). This has a direct impact on the democratic health of countries, whose institutions depend to a large extent on the full participation of women in political and social life.

In this context, the present report analyzes the specific characteristics that TFGBV takes on against organizations with a public voice in Paraguay and examines how these dynamics erode the democratic institutions that underpin the country.

1 Throughout this report, we use the term "TFGBV" to acknowledge the cultural, social and political factors that drive TFGBV and the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people (LGBTQIA+).

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Epistemological foundations: the architecture of power and gender

The net-like nature of power in the digital age

To understand how violence operates in digital environments, this study draws on Michel Foucault's (1979) analytics of power. Foucault argues that power should not be analyzed as a property or commodity residing in a single center (such as the State or a specific institution), but rather as a circular, relational force that is exercised in the form of a chain. From this perspective, power functions in a capillary manner: it permeates everyday practices, discourses, norms and devices, forming a *net-like organization* in which multiple actors participate in its exercise. This perspective is interesting because digital platforms are, by definition, networked structures.

From a feminist critical perspective, the American thinker Sandra Bartky (2008) argues that this “microphysics of power” advocated by Foucault has a marked gender component, which translates into an aesthetic of femininity that imposes fragility and produces female bodies with little capacity to resist abuse. Furthermore, this disciplinary power is dispersed and anonymous: there are no individuals formally empowered to exercise it; it is vested in everyone and, at the same time, in no one in particular.

As for digital platforms, this network of power does not affect everyone equally. Women and gender-diverse people occupy a more vulnerable position within these environments: their bodies, their voices and their public interventions are subject to more intense surveillance, greater sexualization and more frequent punishment when they challenge established norms or hierarchies, as we can see in the reports by UNFPA, UN Women and Amnesty International (2024).

Gender as performativity and the punishment of “incoherence”

If power is net-like, gender is a mechanism that dictates who has the right to move through certain nodes of that network. The American philosopher Judith Butler (2007) defines gender not as a biological truth, but as a repeated stylization of the body, constituted through a set of acts that, when repeated within a highly rigid regulatory framework, ultimately produce the illusion of a natural substance.

In the political sphere, gender norms continue to dictate that the public sphere is historically masculine (UNDP, 2020). When a woman² occupies a position of leadership or visibility, she breaks with what is expected of her gender. Butler argues that society tolerates only intelligible genders, that is, genders that are coherent with established norms. Therefore, digital violence against women with a public voice can be understood as a punishment for an incoherent identity: the system uses harassment and denigration to “prohibit” this rupture and force women to return to the private or invisible sphere (Butler, 1990/2007).

In digital environments, this logic is intensified by constant exposure, where every time a woman intervenes in public debate, she is subject to surveillance, evaluation and judgment (Foucault, 1992).

2 All references to women include women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people in all their diversity, including those belonging to ethnic, racial and religious minorities, those with disabilities and those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

Intersectional perspective

TFGBV cannot be understood as a neutral phenomenon. These forms of violence are distributed unequally and do not affect all women in the same way; rather, they expose certain identities more intensely, leaving them more vulnerable to attack and more silenced than others.

The concept of intersectionality, formulated by the American lawyer and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988), allows us to precisely account for these overlaps. As Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) argue, intersectionality offers a framework for understanding how gender, race, class, sexuality and other categories do not operate independently but are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, producing specific and distinct forms of oppression.

From a Latin American perspective, the contributions of the Argentine philosopher María Lugones (2008) deepen this analysis by emphasizing that the very concept of gender is permeated by historical processes of coloniality. This perspective allows us to situate TFGBV within the specific social contexts of Latin America, where colonial legacies, socioeconomic inequalities and racial hierarchies can shape both the forms that violence takes and its differentiated impacts.

The continuum of violence: from the analog to the digital world

The transition of violence from the physical to the virtual space does not represent the emergence of a new phenomenon, but rather the extension of what Liz Kelly (1988) termed the *continuum of violence*. Kelly argues that all forms of aggression against women, from the most subtle to the most explicit, are interconnected by a common thread: they are tools of coercion used to *control, limit or constrain women's lives, status and opportunities*, seeking to limit their autonomy, opportunities and freedom, thereby perpetuating unequal power relations.

TFGBV is not an isolated phenomenon nor is it disconnected from the violence that takes place in the analog world; on the contrary, there is a clear continuity between the two spheres. As noted in the *Practical self-protection handbook on Online Gender-Based Violence*, published by the OAS, the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, we are facing an *age-old system of domination and gender violence that is now using a new platform to replicate itself*; we are facing a historical system of domination that adapts to new digital platforms to reproduce and amplify itself, without temporal or spatial limits.

Differences between digital violence and technology-facilitated gender-based violence

While the concept of digital violence is often used broadly to refer to acts of aggression that occur in the virtual space, TFGBV is characterized not only by the medium in which these practices take place, but also by the way in which technology facilitates, intensifies or amplifies violence that is structurally rooted in unequal gender relations.

Furthermore, the fact that this is the concept adopted by organizations such as UN Women, together with its alignment with international human rights instruments such as CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, gives it legal and political weight that transcends the colloquial use of “digital violence.”

It is defined as *any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools, that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms* (UN Women, 2023).

Impact on democracy: the silencing of women in politics

Violence as a barrier to accessing power

The UN Women (2020) study on violence against women in politics reveals that the ultimate goal of these attacks is exclusion. By targeting the visibility and sexuality of women lawmakers or candidates, they are subjected to a much higher *cost of participation* than their male counterparts. In Mexico (2018) and Argentina (2019), election monitoring showed that more than 85% of women candidates suffered attacks on social media, demonstrating that digital violence is now one of the main threats to political parity.

Self-censorship

The most corrosive impact of TFGBV is its silencing effect. According to data from Amnesty International (2024), 50% of women journalists and public figures who have been attacked opt for self-censorship to protect their safety. This withdrawal from digital platforms results in a loss of voice in public debate and, ultimately, a democratic setback, since the digital space, far from being neutral, becomes a hostile territory that expels women simply for “being women” in public spaces.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of the case study

Paraguay is a particularly relevant case study for analyzing TFGBV directed at women's organizations with a public voice, due to the convergence of political and social factors that shape an environment of high vulnerability and low institutional protection.

The country has high levels of gender inequality and a strong influence of conservative actors in public debate, which contributes to a context where women who actively participate in the public sphere often face stigmatization and harassment.

Selection of women's organizations with a public voice

The study focuses on three types of organizations with high public visibility, active participation in the digital civic space and recurring exposure to attacks or persecution: organizations of women environmental defenders, sexual and gender diversity organizations, and an association of women communicators and journalists.

EDIC (2024)³ found that women defenders, in all their diversity, face the greatest threats posed by disinformation and hate speech circulating online, as the conflicts they face regarding land use, agribusiness expansion, evictions and the defense of their territory are intertwined with patriarchal structures at both the state and community levels.

Sexual and gender diversity organizations constitute another highly exposed group. In Paraguay, movements defending the rights of LGBTIQ+ people have historically faced hostility from political and religious actors as well as conservative groups. Various reports point to a significant increase in violence against LGBTIQ+ people, including physical, symbolic and digital attacks.

Finally, the study includes an association of women communicators and journalists, given that international and regional literature agrees that women journalists are among the groups most exposed to digital violence. TEDIC (2023)⁴ indicates that digital violence against journalists has intensified with the growth of political debate on social media, affecting their safety, well-being and freedom of expression.

3 TEDIC (2024) *Uso de herramientas digitales y amenazas de seguridad digital en personas defensoras de derechos humanos en Paraguay y Colombia*. Un informe comparativo. See https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Contribucion-DD-Nupez-TEDIC.ES_.pdf

4 Sequera & Acuña, 2023. *Digital gender-based violence against women journalists in Paraguay*. See <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Violencia-Genero-Periodistas-TEDIC-2023-ENG-web-1.pdf>

Methodological design

The study adopted an exploratory mixed-methods design aimed at identifying trends, formulating preliminary hypotheses and detecting emerging patterns that contribute to an initial understanding of the phenomenon of TFGBV against women's organizations with a public voice in Paraguay.

A strategy of methodological and source triangulation was implemented, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to strengthen the study's analytical validity. This triangulation allowed for the comparison of documentary evidence with empirical data collected through surveys and interviews.

The sections of the study draw on a literature review, accounts collected through in-depth interviews and self-administered surveys of representatives of organizations that work primarily on gender-related issues.

A source triangulation strategy was implemented, integrating the literature review, the administration of surveys and the conduct of in-depth interviews. The research aimed to use methodologies focused not only on survivors of TFGBV but also on analyzing the structure of technological domination in Latin America, the responsibility of Internet intermediaries (Big Tech), as well as the perpetrators of TFGBV.

Data Collection

The research combined three main techniques:

1. **Document review.** An exhaustive review of regulatory frameworks and national public policies in Paraguay and the region, including the Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Gender-Based Digital Violence against Women⁵, as well as previous reports and studies related to TFGBV⁶ and political participation in virtual environments.⁷
2. **Structured, self-administered online survey.** A questionnaire was developed and sent to representatives of organizations supported by the FMS and its partners in Paraguay, with a total of 18 responses received^{8,9}.
3. **In-depth interviews.** Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with key organizations. These interviews aimed to capture qualitative perspectives, situated experiences and contextualized analyses of TFGBV, delving deeper into aspects that could not be fully addressed through the survey.

5 Hiperderecho. 2025. *La OEA avanza en una ley modelo interamericana para combatir la violencia digital basada en el género*. See <https://hiperderecho.org/2025/04/la-oea-avanza-en-una-ley-modelo-interamericana-para-combatir-la-violencia-digital-basada-en-el-genero/>

6 WRO. 2024. *From theory to practice – building and testing a framework for definitions of online gender-based violence and other terms*. See <https://www.tedic.org/en/research-from-theory-to-practice-building-and-testing-a-framework-for-definitions-of-online-gender-based-violence-and-other-terms/>

7 WRO. 2024 *Perpetrators of gender-based violence online – Roadmap for investigations*. See <https://www.tedic.org/lanzamiento-perpetradores-de-violencia-de-genero-en-linea-hoja-de-ruta-para-investigadores/>

8 TEDIC. 2023. *Metodología cualitativa y cuantitativa de la Violencia de género a Periodista en Paraguay*. See <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Anexos-Violencia-Genero-Periodistas-TEDIC-2023-web.pdf>

9 Cuevas, M. 2024. *Cybersecurity for human rights defenders in Paraguay*. See <https://www.tedic.org/en/research-cybersecurity-among-human-rights-defenders-in-paraguay/>

Analysis

1. **Legal and regulatory analysis.**
2. **Quantitative analysis of the survey.** The information collected through the structured survey was systematized and coded for subsequent statistical analysis in Excel. Each response was classified according to thematic categories, allowing for the calculation of absolute frequencies and percentages that reflect trends and patterns among the participants.
3. **Thematic qualitative analysis of the interviews**, conducted in several stages:
 - ◆ The interviews were transcribed using AI and reviewed in detail.
 - ◆ An analytical review was conducted to identify relevant units of meaning, which were coded using preliminary labels linked both to categories derived from the theoretical framework and to emerging themes not initially anticipated.
 - ◆ The codes were grouped into broader thematic categories, allowing the material to be organized around coherent analytical axes.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY ANALYSIS

International background on the protection of women against TFGBV

The international framework for protecting women's rights against TFGBV has been developed progressively, bringing together standards, recommendations and reports that recognize violence as a structural manifestation of gender inequality and that, over time, have explicitly incorporated digital environments.

In 2006, the United Nations recognized for the first time that the use of information and communication technologies can reproduce and amplify structural violence against women, marking the beginning of the international approach to online violence from a human rights perspective (UN, 2006).¹⁰

Since 2013, various UN resolutions have addressed more explicitly the risks, barriers and forms of violence that women face in exercising their rights on the Internet, particularly with regard to freedom of opinion and expression, participation in digital spaces and the protection of women human rights defenders. (UN, 2023).¹¹ For example, the Report of the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, issued by the Human Rights Council, delves into the relationship between digital inclusion and women's participation. The report highlights the importance of ensuring women's full and effective participation on the Internet as a central space for contemporary political, social, economic and cultural life. It acknowledges that such participation is hindered by various forms of online violence and discrimination, which pose specific risks to women and have a chilling effect on their presence and voice in digital spaces (UN, 2013).¹²

In 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights offered one of the first formal approaches to defining online violence against women. Furthermore, the report situates these forms of violence within the context of the digital divide, highlighting that inequalities in access to, use of, and control over technology increase women's vulnerability and exacerbate the impacts of online violence (UN, 2017).¹³

That same year, the CEDAW Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 35, which updates and expands upon General Recommendation No. 19 by recognizing that gender-based violence also occurs in digital environments and reaffirming the state's obligation to prevent and punish it (CEDAW, 2017).¹⁴

10 UN, 2006. *Resolution A/HRC/38/4* Available at: <https://docs.un.org/es/A/HRC/38/4> (accessed December 20, 2025).

11 UN, 2013. *Resolution A/HRC/RES/23/2* Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g13/150/77/pdf/g1315077.pdf> (accessed December 20, 2025).

12 UN, 2013. *Report of the Working Group. A/HRC/23/50* Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/23/50> (accessed December 20, 2025).

13 UN, 2017. *Resolution A/HRC/29/L* Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltd/g15/140/16/pdf/g1514016.pdf> (accessed December 20, 2025).

14 CEDAW, 2017. *Resolution CEDAW/C/GC/35* Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/GC/35> (accessed December 20, 2025).

Since 2020, United Nations reports have highlighted the increase in digital violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (UN, 2020)¹⁵ and its particular impact on women journalists and communicators, emphasizing that TFGBV poses a direct threat to women's freedom of expression and public participation. Specifically in the context of social media, according to the 2018 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Simonovic, political violence targeting women can have devastating consequences, such as a decline in their online presence, withdrawal from the public sphere and the erosion of democratic practice and good governance, resulting in a democratic deficit (UN, 2020).¹⁶

In 2024, at the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), it was decided to adopt the term “technology-facilitated gender-based violence” and to standardize its use. Although it is not official and there is no consensus definition, all official UN documents will use this term to refer to structural violence perpetrated against women and other vulnerable groups through technology.

In 2025, the Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Gender-Based Digital Violence against Women, adopted in 2025 within the framework of MESECVI, represents a significant regulatory advance in the regional approach to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This instrument serves as a guiding tool for States, with the aim of promoting comprehensive responses to the multiple manifestations of digital violence against women, from a human rights perspective. (MESECVI, 2025)¹⁷

Its development was the result of a collective and participatory process that spanned more than two years, involving consultations in eight countries and the active participation of organizations and experts from the region. In this regard, the Model Law represents a milestone for legislative debate in Latin America, as it promotes a comprehensive approach, not one focused exclusively on punishment, that assigns responsibilities to multiple actors and prioritizes a preventive and educational approach linked to structural inequalities, education, disinformation and the current challenges of the digital environment, including those associated with artificial intelligence.

15 UN, 2020. *Resolution A/75/274* Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/75/274> (accessed December 20, 2025).

16 UN, 2020. *Resolution A/HRC/44/52* Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/44/52> (accessed December 20, 2025).

17 MESECVI, 2025. *Resolution OEA/Ser.L/II/7.10 – MESECVI/CEVI/doc.299/25* Available at: <https://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/Interamerican%20Model%20Law%20Gender%20based%20Digital%20Violence%201.pdf> (accessed December 20, 2025).

Legal framework and background on TFGBV in Paraguay

Comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks, based on a human rights approach, are essential components of a broader accountability system aimed at ensuring effective mechanisms for preventing and responding to TFGBV. However, at the global level, current approaches remain fragmented and inconsistent, which limits their actual impact.

Paraguay's commitment to gender equality and the eradication of violence against women is reflected in its accession to key international instruments, such as CEDAW (UN, 1979) and the Belém do Pará Convention (OAS, 1994). Despite these commitments, and the efforts driven by both the State and civil society, significant challenges remain in achieving real and effective equality that guarantees women the right to a life free from violence.

CEDAW, ratified by Paraguay through Law No. 1215/86, defines in Article 1 the concept of discrimination against women as:

“...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field...”

Likewise, General Recommendation No. 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its 11th session in 1992, reinforces this concept by establishing that violence against women constitutes a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal footing with men (CEDAW, 1992).

For its part, the Belém do Pará Convention, ratified by the Paraguayan Congress through Law No. 605/95 (National Congress, 1995), defines violence against women as:

“...any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere.”

In Article 7, this instrument establishes that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to:

- a. To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- b. To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- c. To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Under the terms of this Convention, violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in addition to restricting their full recognition and exercise.

At the national level, Article 48 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Paraguay enshrines the principle of equal rights between men and women, including political participation, and establishes the State's obligation to adopt measures aimed at guaranteeing effective equality. Likewise, other constitutional articles are relevant, including: Article 4, concerning the right to life and to

physical and psychological integrity; Article 24, on religious and ideological freedom; Article 26, regarding freedom of expression and of the press; Article 33, on the right to privacy; Article 28, concerning the right to equality and non-discrimination; and Article 60, which recognizes the right to protection against violence within the family (Constituent Assembly, 1992).

According to gender expert Myriam González, women account for nearly half of Paraguay's population; however, they continue to be victims of gender-based violence (González, 2021).¹⁸ This violence, which particularly affects women, girls and adolescents, constitutes a persistent manifestation of structural inequalities and deeply rooted discrimination in society. In response to this issue, the Paraguayan State first enacted Law No. 1600/00 Against Domestic Violence and subsequently enacted Law No. 5777/16 on "Comprehensive Protection of Women Against All Forms of Violence,"¹⁹ which came into full effect on December 29, 2017, along with its Regulatory Decree No. 6973/17.

This law represents a fundamental tool for the Paraguayan State in the fight against gender-based violence. It establishes a comprehensive public policy aimed at preventing violence against women and implementing mechanisms for care, protection, punishment and comprehensive redress.

It recognizes and defines 15 types of violence against women, addressing situations in both the public and private spheres. Article 5, subsection L, of the law defines telematic violence as follows:

It is the act of disseminating or publishing messages, photographs, audio recordings, videos or other content that affects the dignity or privacy of women through current information and communication technologies, including the use of these media to promote the objectification, subjugation or exploitation of women. "Objectification" shall be understood as the act of reducing a woman to the status of an object.

While some researchers and members of Congress welcome the fact that this type of violence is included in the law, its definition is incomplete because it focuses solely on the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images²⁰ and exposure by the media. Left out are online harassment, threats, stalking, discriminatory expressions, defamation, unauthorized access to personal information, impersonation/identity theft, abuse, surveillance of communications and tracking via GPS, and technology-related sexual exploitation. (Garcia & Sequera, 2021)²¹.

On the other hand, Law No. 5777/16 contains several important provisions worth noting, such as the express prohibition of mediation in cases of violence, the criminalization of femicide, the creation of a Unified and Standardized System for Recording Violence against Women, and the assignment of specific responsibilities to various state institutions regarding the prevention and response to gender-based violence.

18 González, M. 2021. *Derecho a vivir libre de violencia*. CDE, Centro de Documentación y Estudios. Available at: https://www.cde.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CDE-Derecho-a-vivir-libres-de-Violencia___WEB.pdf (accessed December 23, 2025).

19 Congreso Nacional. 2016. *Ley No 5777 / DE PROTECCIÓN INTEGRAL A LAS MUJERES, CONTRA TODA FORMA DE VIOLENCIA*. Available at: <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8356/ley-n-5777-de-proteccion-integral-a-las-mujeres-contr-toda-forma-de-violencia> (accessed December 23, 2025).

20 This concept will be developed in the following section on TFGBV in Paraguay.

21 Garcia & Sequera, 2021. *Gender Violence on the Internet in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Violencia-Digital-TEDIC-WRO-2021-EN.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2025).

However, despite these regulatory advances, significant challenges remain in their implementation. The Justice of the Peace Courts, which gained jurisdiction to intervene in cases of violence, have been criticized for insufficient infrastructure and a lack of specialized staff, which limits the protection of women during their testimony and hinders the comprehensive support that victims require. (Bareiro & Walder, 2023)²².

In addition, many justice system professionals lack training in gender perspectives and human rights, which negatively impacts the defense of women, weakens the assessment of their testimonies and hinders the proper application of the international standards on gender-based violence that Paraguay has ratified.

In Paraguay, there are criminal laws that address various forms of violence committed online or through the use of technology. These include Law No. 1160/97, the Penal Code; Law No. 3440/2008, which amends Law No. 1160/97; Law No. 5378/2014, which amends Article 229 of the Penal Code (as subsequently amended); and Law No. 1286/98, the Code of Criminal Procedure. These laws can be used as legal strategies to defend victims in cases of TFGBV, whether they involve public or private criminal proceedings. These cases may be processed both before ordinary units of the Public Prosecutor's Office and before specialized agencies, including those responsible for investigating cybercrimes.

The protective measures provided for in Laws No. 1600/00 and No. 5777/16 are a key element in ensuring the safety of victims. However, their implementation faces serious challenges. The tendency to standardize these measures, without considering the particularities of each case, can lead to inadequate responses that fail to address the specific risks faced by women and their children, thereby compromising their safety (Bareiro & Walder, 2023).

As Bareiro and Walder (2023) point out, many women report violence with the primary goal of stopping it, but in practice they do not always receive the necessary protective measures in a timely manner. In many cases, these measures are not granted immediately after the report is filed, and their duration lacks a clear definition, which creates uncertainty and undermines their effectiveness.

Although the law stipulates that the duration of precautionary measures must be assessed based on the level of risk, the perpetrator's profile and other relevant evidence, the lack of regulatory clarity leads to unequal and inconsistent application, which does not always adequately address the specific needs of victims.

Ratification of CEDAW	Law on Gender Equality	Law on Violence Against Women	Law on ICT-Related Violence Against Women	Civil Remedies
Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Summary of existing laws that can address technology-facilitated violence against women

22 Bareiro, L., & Walter, G. (2023). *Barreras y nudos críticos en el tratamiento de las denuncias por violencia basada en género*. Consultorio jurídico Feminista. Available at: <https://www.cjfeminista.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Violencia-basada-en-genero-web.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2025).

As of the conclusion of this research, two legislative proposals are pending in Congress. The first, introduced in 2021, is titled “To Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Gender-Based Political Violence Against Women” and has not yet been passed in the first constitutional stage.²³ The second, introduced in 2023, is titled “To Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Universal Online Harassment in Paraguay.”²⁴

With regard to the legislative proposal on universal online harassment, TEDIC²⁵ conducted an analysis of its three articles and noted that it presents serious difficulties for effective implementation. In particular, the proposal lacks a clear and precise definition of “digital violence” and does not distinguish between the different types of violence that can manifest through the use of technology. Although the explanatory memorandum mentions various forms of violence, the legislative text addresses them in a generic manner. This allows for subjective and contradictory interpretations of the conduct subject to punishment and grants excessive discretion in the initiation of legal proceedings.

This lack of precision is exacerbated by the fact that, at the international level, there is no single definition of digital violence. In a literature review conducted by TEDIC as part of its membership in the Web Foundation’s Women’s Rights Online Coalition²⁶, at least fifteen definitions and terms related to this phenomenon have been identified. While these share common elements, they differ in terms of the affected individuals and the types of perpetrators. This context reinforces the need for careful and specific legislative drafting that avoids ambiguities and legal loopholes²⁷.

Furthermore, the proposal calls for the blanket repeal of all conflicting laws, which could create legal uncertainty and regulatory gaps. Added to this is the risk of impacting freedom of expression, given that imprecise wording can lead to unjustified or disproportionate restrictions. As the OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE)²⁸ warns, hasty state responses often result in prior or undue censorship. In this regard, any limitation on freedom of expression must meet the three-part test under international human rights law: it must be prescribed by law, pursue a legitimate interest and be strictly necessary for its protection.

23 Bill. *Expediente: S-2110141* <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/123379> (accessed December 23, 2025).

24 Bill. *Expediente: S-2300448* <https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/expediente/129408> (accessed December 23, 2025).

25 TEDIC, 2023. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/es-momento-de-una-ley-sobre-violencia-digital-contra-las-mujeres-en-paraguay/> EN <https://www.tedic.org/en/its-time-for-a-law-on-digital-violence-against-women-in-paraguay/> (accessed December 23, 2025).

26 See <https://webfoundation.org/wro-network/>

27 Carrillo, Bogado et al., 2024. *From theory to practice. Building and testing a framework for definitions of online gender-based violence and other terms*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Definiciones-Violencia-de-Genero-Online-1.pdf> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Framework-definitions-OGBV-2.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2025).

28 RELE, 2015. *Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and responses to conflict situations*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2015/05/joint-declaration-freedom-expression-and-responses-conflict> (accessed December 23, 2025).

PROBLEMS WITH ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN CASES OF TFGBV

Distortions in the application of Law 5777/16 by the Justice of the Peace Courts

Law No. 5777/2016 not only establishes the definition of telematic violence in Article 5, subsection K, but also allows the Justice of the Peace Courts to examine disinformation and online content. However, there are controversial cases regarding the application of this law.²⁹

Sequera (2024) analyzes six specific court cases in which journalists and communicators have been subject to precautionary measures under Law 5777/16. Among these, the study documents judicial decisions that limited the exercise of freedom of expression by preventing the publication or mention of critical content on social media or digital media. While two of the six cases resulted in rulings favorable to freedom of expression, four involved judgments that raised concerns about restricting journalistic activity and public debate.

The study identified patterns suggesting a possible distortion of Law 5777/16 when it is used in contexts of public interest, especially against journalists and communicators engaged in critical reporting or investigative journalism. In response, clear recommendations are proposed: to clarify and regulate the application of Law 5777/16 and its complementary regulations (such as Law 1600/00) to prevent judicial abuses; to train judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals in gender perspectives, human rights and freedom of expression; and to establish independent oversight and monitoring mechanisms that guarantee the proper use of precautionary measures without sacrificing essential democratic rights.

A landmark case of TFGBV before the IACHR

One of the most emblematic cases highlighting the shortcomings of the judicial system is that of Belén Whittingslow³⁰. Since 2013, Belén was the victim of systematic sexual harassment via WhatsApp by her professor, Cristian Kriskovich, with more than 1,600 messages and images serving as evidence. In 2021, the organizations TEDIC and CEJIL filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)³¹, in which they denounced the lack of access to justice, gender discrimination and the serious irregularities that marked a judicial process that lasted nearly ten years³².

Among the main concerns raised were the conduct of prosecutors who lacked a gender perspective, who characterized the events as mere “flirting or courtship,” ignoring both the aggressor’s position of power and the victim’s express refusal; the revictimization suffered by Belén, who was also unjustly implicated in other criminal proceedings unrelated to the harassment case; and the application of a biased analysis of consent, which perpetuated gender stereotypes and hindered

29 Sequera, M. (2024) *Possible distortions of Law No. 5777/16: Study of 6 legal cases*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/lanzamiento-posibles-tergiversaciones-de-la-ley-5777-16-estudio-de-6-casos-legales/> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Tergiversaciones-Ley-5777-EN-WEB.pdf> (accessed december 23, 2025).

30 TEDIC. 2020. *La violencia digital es real: Belén Whittingslow case*. Available at: <https://violenciadigital.tedic.org/es/b/litigios-estrategicos/caso-belen/> EN: <https://violenciadigital.tedic.org/en/b/litigios-estrategicos/belen-case/> (accessed december 22, 2025).

31 TEDIC, 2021. *TEDIC and CEJIL file a petition before the IACHR against the Paraguayan State*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/tedic-y-cejil-presentan-una-peticion-ante-la-cidh-contra-el-estado-paraguayo/> EN <https://www.tedic.org/en/tedic-and-cejil-file-a-petition-before-the-iachr-against-the-paraguayan-state/> (accessed december 22, 2025).

32 TEDIC. 2020. *Impunity and Digital Gender Violence. Analysis of the Belén Whittingslow Case*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/impunidad-y-violencia-de-genero-digital-analisis-del-caso-belen-whittingslow/> EN <https://www.tedic.org/en/impunity-and-digital-gender-violence/> (accessed december 22, 2025).

the effective punishment of the perpetrator. Currently, the case is in the admissibility stage before the IACHR and sets a crucial precedent by highlighting how institutional biases and the absence of specific protocols regarding technology-facilitated gender-based violence contribute to impunity and secondary victimization.

Belén filed a complaint against Cristian Kriskovich, a professor at the Catholic University of Asunción and a member of both the Council of the Magistracy—the central body responsible for the selection and appointment of judges and prosecutors—and the Jury for the Prosecution of Magistrates, which has the authority to sanction judges and prosecutors, including for acts of sexual harassment committed via digital means. As a result of the judicial persecution she suffered, Belén ultimately sought refuge in Uruguay. This case highlights two structural problems in Paraguay: on the one hand, the discrimination, stigmatization and denial of justice faced by women who report sexual harassment; and, on the other, the profound judicial obstacles to obtaining justice and redress when gender-based violence occurs through digital media. Furthermore, the case raises serious doubts about judicial independence in the Paraguayan justice system.

Literature review on TFGBV in Paraguay

A 2021 study on the state of TFGBV in Paraguay³³ documented cases of gender-based violence in the digital space based on a non-representative qualitative sample consisting of participants from five cities across the country. Its findings show that this form of violence is structural and historical in nature and that it extends into the digital environment, where it reproduces the same patterns present in the physical realm, as well as their consequences. All participants reported having experienced at least one of the 29 recorded forms of violence. They also identified the interconnection between these manifestations and acts of violence committed in the physical realm. Another complementary study, also published in 2021, specifically analyzed the “non-consensual dissemination of intimate images”³⁴ and its differentiated impact on men and women. The research highlighted the serious difficulties victims face in accessing justice, revictimization within the judicial system and the severe consequences these practices have on women’s lives, ranging from job loss to suicide.

Another study on TFGBV, conducted in 2023, focused on the experiences of women journalists in Paraguay³⁵. The results confirmed that digital violence affects women differently than men. The study identified 253 cases of digital violence perpetrated through social media, which were classified according to their various manifestations. Regarding the profile of the perpetrators, a total of 239 were recorded. Among them, unidentified or anonymous individuals predominated, followed by trolls, anti-rights groups, identified private actors or agents, coworkers in the media and, to a lesser extent, State authorities.

33 Garcia & Sequera, 2021. *Gender Violence on the Internet in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Violencia-Digital-TEDIC-WRO-2021-EN.pdf> and Sequera & Cuevas (2024) Technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women politicians in Paraguay. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Violencia-de-genero-a-mujeres-politicas-WEB-1.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2025).

34 Sequera, 2021. *Non-Consensual Image Dissemination in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Imagen-no-consentida-Tedic-web.pdf> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Imagen-no-consentida-Tedic-web-EN.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2024).

35 Sequera & Acuña, 2023. *Digital gender-based violence against women journalists in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Violencia-Genero-Periodistas-TEDIC-2023-web-2.pdf> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Violencia-Genero-Periodistas-TEDIC-2023-ENG-web-1.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2024).

In this context of access gaps and inequalities, the absence of comprehensive public education policies on sexual health and education contributes to TFGBV disproportionately affecting women and girls in vulnerable situations. A recent study³⁶ demonstrates how human trafficking networks operate through the Facebook platform to recruit women and girls in the country, taking advantage of their socioeconomic situation, and subsequently transport them via trafficking routes to Europe. This phenomenon highlights the need to address digital divides not only in terms of access but also in terms of protection, education, cybersecurity and human rights.

The most recent research on this topic addresses TFGBV against women in politics³⁷ in Paraguay. The qualitative study, conducted with 20 participants, revealed that this form of violence is highly normalized and naturalized. It also demonstrated that it often replicates patterns present in physical work environments, meaning that the digital space functions as an extension of that structural violence. The research identified eight of the 21 types of TFGBV classified by TEDIC: online harassment, doxing, disinformation, dissemination of private images without consent, network or coordinated harassment, monitoring or surveillance, defamation and hate speech.

The absence of other forms of violence does not imply their nonexistence, but rather highlights the participants' lack of awareness or underestimation of these forms, which reinforces the urgency of bringing these forms of violence to light and addressing them in greater depth. Likewise, 12 profiles of perpetrators of violence were identified, including male politicians, State authorities, the media, financial institutions, digital platforms, anonymous accounts, influencers, organized crime groups, anti-rights groups and judicial officials. Most testimonies indicated that perpetrators rarely face consequences, and that victims lack adequate and timely mechanisms to access justice or institutional support. As a result, many opt for self-censorship in the digital sphere, a particularly serious consequence that limits their right to freedom of expression and political participation.

In this context, there is no official evidence regarding specific data, such as the percentage of women who use the Internet to stay informed, for educational purposes or to access health services, although it is estimated that these levels remain low. Discussion in State programs regarding gender barriers to Internet access and use remains limited, as does the implementation of public policies on ICTs with a gender perspective³⁸.

36 Carrillo et al., 2024. *Trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation in its intersection with ICTs in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Investigacion-Luna-Nueva-v03.pdf> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Investigacion-Luna-Nueva-ENG.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2024).

37 Sequera & Cuevas (2024) *Technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women politicians in Paraguay*. Available at: <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Violencia-de-genero-a-mujeres-politicas-WEB-1.pdf> EN <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WEB.pdf> (accessed December 24, 2025).

38 UNESCO, 2025. *Paraguay: artificial intelligence readiness assessment report (RAM)* Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000396524> (accessed December 23, 2025).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The concept of human rights defenders has evolved from Article 1 of Resolution 53/144, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which recognizes the right of everyone, individually or collectively, to promote and seek the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.

On this basis, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has established that “every person who in any way promotes or seeks the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, nationally or internationally, must be considered a human rights defender.” This concept encompasses those who engage in activities to promote or protect human rights, even on an occasional basis. It also includes those who are members of State institutions and perform functions related to the promotion and protection of these rights.

The work of human rights defenders helps prevent violations, promote accountability, facilitate access to justice, strengthen the rule of law and consolidate democracy. Therefore, protecting those who defend human rights not only ensures their individual rights but is also an essential condition for the protection of the rights of society as a whole.

The Inter-American Court has recognized the right to defend human rights as an autonomous right, which entails specific obligations for States aimed at guaranteeing the free exercise of this work.

Violations of the right to defend human rights have a threefold dimension: they affect the defender in the exercise of their right, harm the collective interest in promoting and protecting human rights and limit the possibility of driving positive change for society. In this regard, the Inter-American Commission has recommended that States adopt a comprehensive protection policy that includes preventive measures, protection mechanisms in situations of risk and the effective investigation of attacks against human rights defenders.

Based on this recognition, the protection of human rights defenders has been developed through a set of international instruments and standards that establish their rights and the obligations of States to guarantee the exercise of their work. Below, this regulatory framework is examined within the Universal System, the Inter-American System and the Paraguayan legal system.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

The Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 53/144 (1998), constitutes the primary instrument of the Universal System for the protection of human rights defenders.

On this basis, the Declaration recognizes that States have the primary responsibility to promote, protect and guarantee human rights, and must take the necessary measures to create the conditions that allow for their effective exercise. It also enshrines a set of rights essential to the work of human rights defenders, including the freedoms of assembly, association and expression; access to information; the right to investigate, disseminate and develop ideas on human rights; the right to communicate with national and international bodies; and the right to participate in public affairs by offering criticism and proposals regarding State actions.

Finally, it highlights the role of human rights defenders and civil society organizations in promoting human rights and strengthening democracy and the rule of law, and urges States to ensure a safe environment for them to carry out their work. Based on this recognition, the United Nations developed specialized mechanisms to strengthen their protection

Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

The protection of human rights defenders was strengthened by the creation of a specific mandate, established through Resolution 2000/61, to promote the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and monitor the situation of defenders. Since 2006, this mandate has been part of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and is carried out by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

Since its creation, the Special Rapporteur has contributed to the progressive development of international standards on the protection of human rights defenders by preparing thematic reports, conducting country visits and sending communications to States. These advances have made it possible to clarify States' obligations regarding the risks faced by those who carry out this work, including those arising from the use of digital technologies.

In the report *Final warning: death threats and killings of human rights defenders* (A/HRC/46/35), the Special Rapporteur acknowledges that threats against human rights defenders may be communicated online (para. 50). It also identifies, among the protective measures adopted by defenders themselves, the act of publicizing the threat on social media, along with reporting them to local security authorities, United Nations offices and diplomatic missions (para. 96). The report also highlights the use of phone apps with high levels of security as part of self-protection mechanisms in emergency situations (para. 98). These references demonstrate that the digital environment is part of both the risks and the protection strategies associated with the exercise of the right to defend human rights.

In the report *At the heart of the struggle: human rights defenders working against corruption* (A/HRC/49/49), the Special Rapporteur notes that those working in this field face attacks that include electronic surveillance, cyberattacks, online harassment and smear campaigns, as well as criminalization, judicial harassment, physical assaults and even murder (para. 13). The report highlights that women defenders who denounce acts of corruption face particular risks, related not only to their work but also to their status as women. Among these forms of violence, it mentions smear campaigns carried out using artificial intelligence tools, such as computer-generated images or deepfakes, used to damage their reputation (para. 14).

In the report “*We are not just the future*”: challenges faced by child and youth human rights defenders (A/HRC/55/50), the Special Rapporteur devotes a specific section to the risks faced by human rights defenders in the digital environment. She notes that child and youth defenders are subjected to slander, propaganda, cyberbullying and defamation, especially in online spaces. She also warns that they are frequently the subject of negative coverage in the traditional media, perpetuated by biases which minimizes the impact of their work, and that their voices are often channelled through adults or even excluded from the media in contexts of government control (para. 41).

The Special Rapporteur notes that, although these forms of violence affect human rights defenders of all ages, their effects are particularly severe for children and youth, who often lack the same levels of resilience, support networks or access to training as older human rights defenders. It adds that the increased use of the digital environment to promote and defend human rights also heightens their exposure to such attacks (para. 42).

From a gender perspective, the report highlights that girls and young women human rights defenders face aggravated forms of online violence, including threats, harassment, doxing and online sexual violence (para. 43). It also acknowledges that digital technologies can be used to harass, control, blackmail or humiliate through the release of private content or the use of deepfakes, leading to self-censorship, withdrawal from digital spaces and further restrictions on civic space. Although these types of violence also affect men and boys, the Special Rapporteur warns that their gendered and intersectional effects can be particularly profound for young women and girls who are human rights defenders (para. 44).

Finally, she recommends strengthening the protection of child and youth defenders in the digital environment by collaborating with social media companies to develop policies that prevent online violence and help ensure safer digital spaces for those who defend human rights (para. 123(c)).

In the report *Out of sight: human rights defenders working in isolated, remote and rural contexts* (A/HRC/58/53), the Special Rapporteur identifies the digital divide as one of the factors that increase the vulnerability of defenders. She notes that the lack of Internet access, deficiencies in digital infrastructure and limitations on communications hinder access to protection mechanisms, legal assistance, funding and spaces for participation, particularly affecting those who carry out their work in rural and remote areas (paras. 16, 18 and 59–69). She also warns that deliberate Internet and communications shutdowns can prevent communities from organizing, reporting human rights violations or receiving timely support (paras. 65–67).

The report further highlights that digital technologies can serve as tools to strengthen the protection and defense of human rights. As examples of best practices, it mentions the use of digital solutions to document environmental damage in the Brazilian Pantanal and the use of drones and satellite imagery by Indigenous organizations in Indonesia to record encroachments on ancestral territories, provide evidence to authorities and strengthen the defense of territorial rights (paras. 109 and 110).

Finally, the Special Rapporteur recommends that States expand access to the Internet and secure communication tools, strengthen digital security measures and establish safeguards against illegal surveillance and data breaches. She also urges the protection of the digital rights of human rights defenders and the incorporation of an intersectional approach that takes into account the specific challenges faced by women and girls who are human rights defenders, Indigenous Peoples and rural and marginalized communities (Section XI.A, subsections e), f) and j)).

Report A/80/219 by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Gina Romero, warns that these rights face an existential threat due to the dismantling of international cooperation systems, reduced funding for civil society and the growing securitization of public policies. The report argues that this crisis is not limited to a problem of economic resources but undermines the ability of civil society organizations to defend rights, respond to the needs of communities and participate in democratic processes. In this context, the Special Rapporteur reaffirms that freedom of association and assembly are essential conditions for human dignity, civic participation and the protection of all other human rights.

In light of this situation, the report urges States and the international community to strengthen a sustainable ecosystem for civil society through legal frameworks that protect civic space, stable and independent funding mechanisms and policies that promote international solidarity rather than restrict it. It also emphasizes that civil society organizations and human rights defenders must be recognized as indispensable actors for democratic governance, accountability and the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, States have an obligation to create conditions that allow for the freedoms of assembly and association to be exercised freely, safely and effectively, as well as to avoid measures that criminalize or undermine their work.

The Human Rights Council and the protection of human rights defenders in the digital age

The Human Rights Council is the principal United Nations body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights. As part of its functions, it adopts resolutions that further develop international standards in this area. With regard to the protection of human rights defenders, Resolution 58/23 is the most recent instrument specifically dedicated to their protection in the digital age.

Resolution 58/23 reaffirms that the same human rights that protect defenders offline must also be guaranteed online. It also recognizes that digital technologies can strengthen democratic institutions, facilitate civic participation and contribute to the exercise of human rights, but they can also create new risks for those engaged in human rights defense activities, particularly through unlawful or arbitrary surveillance, interception of communications, hacking, doxing, smear campaigns, online harassment and Internet shutdowns, which disproportionately affect women defenders. It also warns of the risks posed by the use of spyware, biometric technologies and artificial intelligence when employed without adequate human rights safeguards.

In its operative paragraphs, the Council emphasizes that the right to promote and protect human rights must be guaranteed both online and offline, without fear of reprisals, and urges States to create a safe, accessible and inclusive environment for human rights defenders (paras. 1 and 2). It also calls on States to refrain from using technologies, including artificial intelligence applications and spyware, when their use is not consistent with international human rights law or poses undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights (para. 9(b)). It also recommends promoting an open, safe and inclusive digital space; reducing digital divides; expanding access to the Internet and secure communication tools; protecting encryption and anonymity; preventing Internet shutdowns; and establishing safeguards against illegal surveillance and the misuse of digital tools against human rights defenders (para. 9 c, h, j, k, l, m and n).

The resolution also devotes special attention to the situation of women human rights defenders. In this regard, it expresses concern about sexual and gender-based violence, as well as online smear campaigns, disinformation and defamation, and urges States to incorporate a gender perspective into protection measures (para. 10). It also expressly condemns technology-enabled forms of violence, such as doxing, deepfakes, cyberstalking, online harassment and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, urging the adoption of specific responses to these forms of violence (para. 11). Finally, it requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene regional consultations and prepare a report on the risks that digital technologies pose to human rights defenders, as well as best practices to address them (paras. 15 and 16).

Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council that periodically assesses States' compliance with their human rights obligations and issues recommendations to strengthen their protection.

During the fourth cycle of Paraguay's Universal Periodic Review (2026)³⁹, several States made recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organizations. In particular, they recommended the prompt adoption of a law to protect journalists and human rights defenders that establishes an effective and independent protection mechanism (Ireland, Czechia and Albania). They also called for ensuring comprehensive protection for journalists and human rights defenders in accordance with international standards, guaranteeing prompt and impartial investigations into attacks and reprisals, and reviewing any legislation that could restrict freedom of expression, assembly or association, or limit the operation of civil society organizations (France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia and Australia).

Regarding technology, the UPR includes specific recommendations to strengthen the response to digital violence against women; it also urges a review of existing legislation to comprehensively address all forms of digital gender-based violence (Estonia). Furthermore, it recommends ensuring the protection of civil society organizations' personal data and reviewing applicable regulations to ensure their compatibility with international human rights standards (Germany and Brazil).

39 TEDIC. (2026). *Working document on the recommendations made to Paraguay in the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)*.

INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

The case law of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The Inter-American Court consolidated the recognition of the right to defend human rights in the Case of Escaleras Mejía et al. v. Honduras. In this judgment, the Court noted that the right to defend human rights is not expressly provided for in any single article of the American Convention, but rather constitutes a right whose exercise depends on the combined protection of various rights and guarantees enshrined in the Convention.

Based on this criterion, the Inter-American Court concluded that the protection of human rights defenders requires guaranteeing, among others, the rights to life, personal integrity, personal liberty, judicial guarantees, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of movement and judicial protection, insofar as any infringement of these rights directly affects the exercise of the right to defend human rights.

Consequently, any act of retaliation directed against human rights defenders may result in the violation of multiple rights protected by the American Convention. Although the Court has developed these standards in relation to traditional forms of violence, threats and harassment, their content is equally applicable to new forms of aggression carried out through the use of digital technologies.

On this basis, the Inter-American Commission has clarified that practices such as illegal surveillance, the interception of communications, the use of spyware, unauthorized access to devices or cyberattacks constitute contemporary forms of retaliation that affect the exercise of the right to defend human rights.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in the Case of Members of the “José Alvear Restrepo” Lawyers’ Collective (CAJAR) v. Colombia (2023), established a regional standard on the protection of human rights defenders by recognizing that the right to defend human rights is protected under the American Convention on Human Rights. In its judgment, the Court established that States have an obligation to guarantee a safe environment for the exercise of this work by adopting effective measures of prevention and protection against threats, acts of violence, illegal surveillance, stigmatization campaigns and any other form of retaliation linked to the defense of human rights.

Likewise, the Court emphasized that the protection of human rights defenders is not limited to the adoption of physical security measures, but also includes the duty to strengthen public protection policies, prevent stigmatization by State authorities, investigate and punish attacks with due diligence and ensure that human rights organizations can carry out their work freely, independently and without undue interference. This precedent reaffirms the obligation of States to create conditions that allow for the safe and effective exercise of human rights advocacy as an essential component of a democratic society.

The IACHR's Office of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Within the Inter-American System, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) established the Human Rights Defenders Unit in 2001, which became the Office of the Special Rapporteur in 2011, with the aim of strengthening monitoring of their situation and developing inter-American standards for their protection.

Within this framework, in 2006 the IACHR published the *Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, in which it identified the main patterns of violations, developed the applicable legal framework and formulated recommendations to strengthen their protection.

Since 2006, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has produced a total of three regional reports on the situation of human rights defenders in the Americas (2006, 2011 and 2025). Each report has updated the regional assessment, progressively expanding the analysis of the risks faced by those who defend human rights. The third report addresses, among other issues, the challenges arising from digital surveillance, the use of spyware and other forms of technology-facilitated violence, which is particularly relevant to the analysis of the protection of human rights defenders in digital environments.

In its *Third Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* (2025), the IACHR warns that state surveillance and digital attacks continue to be used as a means of harassment against human rights defenders. Echoing what was already noted in its 2011 report, the Commission observes that arbitrary intelligence activities and the interception of private communications of human rights organizations persist.

Based on the standards developed by the then-United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, the IACHR identifies among the main forms of digital aggression the blocking of websites, denial-of-service attacks, the installation of malicious software (malware), remote access to devices, the theft of credentials, phishing, the creation of fake profiles and the arbitrary removal of content from digital platforms, all of which are used to restrict the exercise of the right to defend human rights.

The report also notes that surveillance techniques have become more sophisticated through the use of spyware and other digital intrusion tools. As examples, it documents allegations of illegal espionage in Colombia using malware known as “Invisible Man,” as well as acts of physical and digital surveillance—including the use of drones and email hacking—against human rights defenders. It also details cases of telephone tapping targeting journalists and human rights organizations in El Salvador and the use of Pegasus software against human rights defenders in Mexico, demonstrating that these practices continue to pose a regional threat to freedom of expression, privacy and human rights advocacy.

Application of international standards in Paraguay

The standards of the Universal System and the Inter-American System require the Paraguayan State to prevent and protect human rights defenders, including from new forms of violence facilitated by digital technologies. Their implementation at the national level is examined below.

a. The judgment in the Case of Leguizamón Zaván et al. v. Paraguay and the obligation to establish a protection mechanism

In the *Case of Leguizamón Zaván et al. v. Paraguay*, the Inter-American Court found the State internationally responsible for the murder of journalist Santiago Leguizamón and for the failure to conduct a diligent and effective investigation. As a guarantee of non-repetition, it ordered the State to promote the adoption of a law to protect journalists, media workers and human rights defenders, in accordance with international standards and with adequate prevention and protection mechanisms.

The joint inclusion of journalists, media workers and human rights defenders in this reparation measure must be interpreted in light of the evolution of Inter-American case law. In Advisory Opinion OC-5/85, the Court held that journalism constitutes the primary and principal manifestation of the right to freedom of expression recognized in Article 13 of the American Convention, emphasizing that its exercise is indispensable to the functioning of a democratic society. Years later, in elaborating on the content of the right to defend human rights, the Court recognized that this right is exercised through a set of Convention-based rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, the protection of which enables defenders to promote and pursue the observance of human rights.

From this perspective, the remedy ordered in the Leguizamón Zaván et al. case reflects a functional conception of inter-American protection. Both the practice of journalism and the work of defending human rights are grounded in freedom of expression and play an essential role in strengthening the rule of law, monitoring public authorities, ensuring the flow of information of public interest and promoting accountability. Consequently, the adoption of a common regulatory framework reflects the recognition that both activities require institutional safeguards for prevention and protection against threats that may arise from their exercise.

In accordance with this obligation, on April 26, 2022, Senator Blas Lanzoni, then-chair of the Senate Human Rights Committee, introduced a bill to create a protection mechanism for journalists and human rights defenders. The initiative was the result of a collective drafting process carried out within the framework of the Technical Working Group on Journalist Safety, coordinated by the Senate Human Rights Committee and the Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay (CODEHUPY), with the participation of civil society organizations and government representatives.

Subsequently, CODEHUPY and the Paraguayan Journalists' Union warned that the alternative bill presented to Congress failed to comply with the reparations ordered by the Inter-American Court in the case of Leguizamón Zaván v. Paraguay, as it excluded human rights defenders from the proposed protection mechanism.

This judgment constitutes the primary international precedent obligating the Paraguayan State to establish a comprehensive protection system for journalists and human rights defenders. Consequently, any legislative initiative must comply with the Inter-American Court's judgment, which entails keeping human rights defenders within the protection mechanism and adopting appropriate measures to address current risks, including forms of violence, harassment and surveillance facilitated by digital technologies

b. Law No. 7363/2024 and the challenges to freedom of association and civic space

Law No. 7363/2024, "Establishing Oversight, Transparency and Accountability for Nonprofit Organizations," has raised concerns among civil society organizations regarding its compatibility with national and international standards on freedom of association and citizen participation, leading to a petition for a declaration of unconstitutionality.⁴⁰ The action of unconstitutionality⁴⁰ filed against the law is based on the premise that, in a democratic, representative, participatory and pluralistic State, civil society organizations play an essential role in channeling the demands of different sectors of the public, promoting social inclusion, monitoring State actions and influencing the formulation and evaluation of public policies. From this perspective, freedom of association protects not only the right to form organizations but also the conditions necessary for them to operate autonomously, secure funding and effectively carry out their work.

On this basis, the petition argues that the new regime exceeds the legitimate aims of transparency and accountability and imposes restrictions that may affect the autonomous functioning of organizations. Among the main objections raised are the creation of an additional registry as a requirement for operating and accessing resources; the imposition of administrative and compliance burdens deemed excessive; the broad powers granted to the administrative authority to request internal information and documentation; the absence of sufficient safeguards for the protection of data on donors, beneficiaries and communications; indirect restrictions on access to funding; and a sanctions regime that, due to the breadth and vagueness of some of its provisions, could give rise to discretionary enforcement.

According to the arguments set forth in the petition, these provisions could have a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of association by hindering the creation, operation and sustainability of civil society organizations, particularly those dedicated to the promotion and defense of human rights. These concerns take on special relevance in the digital sphere, where the collection of and access to information about members, donors, beneficiaries and collaborative networks can increase the risks of surveillance, harassment and other forms of technology-facilitated violence.

40 Civil society organizations. (2025). *Acción de inconstitucionalidad promovida contra la Ley N.º 7363/2024 y el Decreto N.º 4806/2025* [Brief filed before the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice].

TFGBV IN PARAGUAY

The sociopolitical context as a legitimizing factor for TFGBV

The analysis encompasses TFGBV both when it targets a member of the organization on a personal level and when it is explicitly directed against the institution, as both levels are interrelated: individual attacks can impact the organization's reputation, operations, opportunities and security, and institutional attacks have repercussions for the people who make up the organization.

Paraguay has a fragile democracy. Its political system is classified as a “hybrid regime” by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index (2025) and as “partly free” by Freedom House. According to Freedom House, the country has lost 2 points since 2020 and scored 63 out of 100 in 2025 (Freedom House, 2025). Rivarola (2016, p. 81) argues that democracy is in crisis due to factors such as institutional weakness, a social structure marked by deep inequalities and the persistence of a conservative and authoritarian society.

The interviewees agreed that TFGBV in Paraguay cannot be understood without considering the sociopolitical system that enables and normalizes it. They noted that the country has been governed for more than 70 years by the National Republican Association (ANR), known as the Colorado Party, a conservative group that, in their view, has helped consolidate social structures based on traditional gender roles. According to their testimonies, this political and institutional framework seeks to push women out of public life and limit their political, social and professional participation. In this context, TFGBV functions as a mechanism to punish women who seek to occupy visible positions or challenge traditional gender norms.

Of the organizations surveyed, 55.6% reported having been victims of TFGBV. Meanwhile, 43% of the individuals surveyed reported having suffered attacks personally, while 14% indicated having been targeted both individually and at the organizational level. Additionally, 90% stated that they knew of a person or organization that had been a direct victim of TFGBV.

The rise of ultra-conservatism on a global and, particularly, regional scale, with figures such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Javier Milei in Argentina⁴¹, has strengthened and legitimized conservative and fundamentalist sectors in Paraguay. These sectors, referred to by several interviewees as anti-rights groups, are organizing to halt the expansion or recognition of rights related to gender, sexual diversity and reproductive health.

41 RTVE. (2025) *Vientos ultraderecha soplan fuerte en una latinoamericana bajo el yugo de Trump* <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20251220/vientos-ultraderecha-soplan-fuerte-latinoamerica-bajo-yugo-trump/16859052.shtml> (accessed November 10, 2025).

According to the interviewees, in recent years, public policies with a gender perspective have been dismantled or weakened, including attempts to hollow out the Ministry of Women⁴². In November 2025, the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC), through Resolution No. 1803, decided to remove the word “gender” from all educational materials, regardless of their format. This provision expanded the scope of Resolution No. 29664/17, which prohibited “the dissemination and use of both printed and digital materials relating to gender theory and/or ideology in educational institutions.”⁴³ One of the interviewees described this process as follows:

Since 2017, they’ve been fighting to eliminate the word “gender” from Paraguayan vocabulary, and they’re getting more and more invasive about it. I mean, they keep cutting out words that we supposedly use to push an ideology.

The interviewees also mentioned Law No. 7363/24 “Establishing Oversight, Transparency and Accountability for Nonprofit Organizations,” known as the “Anti-NGO⁴⁴” Law. This law introduces a series of restrictions that significantly hinder the work of civil society organizations; among them are limitations on foreign funding, increased state oversight of their activities and new administrative obligations that can impede their operations. As a result, the interviewees said they were operating in a climate of threat that forces organizations working on gender issues to tone down their language and public visibility for fear of institutional reprisals.

We try to be mindful of our language and downplay the issue of gender, in part because we, as a nonprofit organization, are threatened by the proposed anti-NGO bill.

The interviewees also emphasized that the current political leadership took office with a discourse strongly rooted in conservative religious sectors and based on narratives opposing the so-called “gender ideology” and sexual diversity. In this context, feminist organizations are stigmatized as promoters of agendas that threaten children or the family. As one of the interviewees put it: “They attack us a lot—organizations that work on gender issues or that identify as gender organizations—and that starts with the State.”

Therefore, violence against women with a public voice, especially in digital spaces, has increased in recent years. This perception was shared by 80% of the respondents, who reported an increase in TFGBV during this period. This increase is due, in part, to the fact that certain forms of hate speech are promoted or tolerated within institutional spaces. Statements by public figures, cloaked in conservative morality, serve to legitimize hatred and inequality toward women.

In this regard, the interviewees maintained that when officials from the Executive Branch or the Senate repeat anti-feminist narratives, they contribute to creating a climate of symbolic impunity that results in more aggressive and frequent attacks on social media. As one of them explained:

There are issues that weren’t as violent a few years ago, but when you have a government that stirs up that kind of hate speech, people feel emboldened to act violently.

42 Codehupy (Ed.), *Derechos Humanos en Paraguay 2023*. Asunción, Paraguay: Codehupy.

43 «MEC suprime la palabra “género” de todos los materiales educativos», *ABC Color*, November 9, 2025. <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2025/11/09/mec-suprime-la-palabra-genero-de-todos-los-materiales-educativos/> (accessed November 10, 2025).

44 SILPY (2025) *Que establece el control, la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas de las organizaciones sin fines de lucro*. <https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/ley/144993> (accessed March 20, 2026).

Thus, TFGBV emerges as an extension and amplification of political and institutional dynamics, in which technology acts as a multiplier of hostile discourses that find support—explicit or implicit—within the institutional context. Its intensity depends largely on the political climate and increases during periods of high ideological confrontation. As one of the interviewees put it: “But we’re keeping quiet now because with this government, we have to be even quieter.”

According to the interviewees’ perceptions, most of the attacks come from *Cartista* groups linked to the Honor Colorado movement, the dominant internal faction of the Colorado Party led by former President Horacio Cartes and the current government’s main political base. They also pointed to the existence of alliances with conservative religious sectors, including evangelical churches and segments of the Catholic Church. According to their testimonies, these groups hire individuals, groups and trolls to attack female journalists and activists.

The interviewees also perceive that the government and the Honor Colorado movement have an organized structure for defining and disseminating political narratives. According to one of them, there would be a group of approximately six people responsible for establishing the talking points, later replicated on radio and television programs. At a second level, individuals are reportedly responsible for disseminating and amplifying these messages on social media. Another interviewee commented: “I think there’s a group of people hired to counter every issue we raise or denounce on social media.”

However, the interviewees acknowledged that there remains a research gap regarding the structure and specific coordination mechanisms of digital attacks linked to pro-government sectors. Although they identify patterns suggesting a certain degree of organization and possible funding, there is still insufficient empirical evidence to map these dynamics with precision.

TYPOLOGIES OF TFGBV

TFGBV is constantly evolving, so the list of its types is constantly changing, evolving alongside technological tools and sociopolitical contexts. Based on the analysis conducted, eight main types of violence were identified that affect women's organizations with a public voice in Paraguay; these do not operate in isolation: they often occur simultaneously and in interconnected ways, reinforcing one another and generating cumulative effects on the victims.

Network-coordinated harassment, smear and threat campaigns targeting gender-related issues

DESCRIPTION. The most common type of TFGBV in Paraguay involves coordinated harassment and smear campaigns, reported by 60% of the organizations and 33% of the individuals surveyed. These campaigns consist of the artificial and coordinated amplification of hostile content by organized groups of social media users, trolls and bots (automated accounts or fake profiles). They are often accompanied by the following forms of violence:

- ◆ **Stigmatization:** the dissemination of messages or posts that delegitimize the organization, one or more of its members, or the causes they defend, or that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. This form of TFGBV was experienced by 90% of the organizations and 66% of the individuals surveyed.
- ◆ **Hate speech:** content that dehumanizes, degrades, or incites violence against the organization or its members. This form of TFGBV was reported by 90% of the organizations and 66% of the individuals surveyed.
- ◆ **Assaults and insults:** offensive, humiliating or degrading messages directed against the organization, its spokespersons, or its work. This form of TFGBV affected 90% of the organizations and 50% of the individuals surveyed.
- ◆ **Threats:** expressions of physical, sexual, femicidal or symbolic violence directed against the organization, its spaces, its events or its members. This form of TFGBV was experienced by 30% of the organizations and 16% of the individuals

Although these four forms of TFGBV can also occur in isolation, they were grouped under coordinated online harassment, smear and threat campaigns because the evidence gathered shows that, in practice, stigmatization, hate speech, assaults and threats tend to unfold as part of mass, coordinated attack

Furthermore, these campaigns have been accompanied by doxing practices, through which various accounts publish the personal data of the organization's members (their private social media profiles, phone numbers, email addresses and the names of their children) with the aim of encouraging mass harassment. One of the interviewees recounted the following case:

While there was a debate over whether Paraguay should accept European Union funds for projects related to gender, human rights and that sort of stuff, one of the chambers of the government rejected that funding. Then, a fellow journalist, on her radio show, pointed out that it was 'a disgrace,' 'that a lot of children will be left without school supplies, school meals,' and so on. As a result, anti-rights groups—in this case, led by a man named Juan Vera—obtained her private phone number and targeted her on social media, both on Facebook and Twitter. He posted her

phone number and said, “Message her, let’s call out this pro-abortion fanatic”—that was more or less the message. She began receiving a flood of hate messages and threats on social media, as well as calls and messages on her phone and via WhatsApp, even some referring to her daughters and her husband.

When these campaigns target an individual, they seek to discredit her through attacks related to her role as a wife and her family life. To do so, they resort to ridicule, sexualization, rumor-spreading and the exposure of private information, rather than discussing her political proposals or demands. When directed against an organization, they seek to stigmatize both the entity and the causes it defends through labels such as “pro-abortion fanatics,” posts that distort its positions, and insults and threats disseminated in public posts or through private messages.

OBJECTIVES

1. To amplify hateful narratives on social media;
2. To smear victims and delegitimize their causes and authority;
3. To reduce the impact and reach of their struggles and advocacy work;
4. To force the removal of posts on social media;
5. To discourage women’s digital participation, leading them to close or abandon their accounts;
6. To undermine the financial sustainability of organizations through narratives that question financial support for their causes. For example: “Why fund organizations that want to harm the family and make our children want to change their gender?”
7. To minimize or deny the violence faced by girls and women.

TRIGGERS. Attacks tend to intensify during sensitive political moments or following posts related to gender and human rights, particularly regarding education, gender-based violence and femicides:

1. We began to be heavily harassed on social media after we supported [peasants] during the Cu-ruguaty massacre in 2012, especially during the campaign to denounce the situation of political prisoners in women’s prisons and the subsequent reoccupation of the land.
2. Every time we speak out about harassment or violence against our colleagues, we receive waves of attacks.
3. There is a journalist who specializes in politics, and when she takes a stance on an issue or analyzes a political situation that does not align with the ruling party’s line, she begins to receive extremely severe attacks, especially on social media platform X.

MAIN PLATFORMS. X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp.

ESCALATION. In some cases, TFGBV has escalated into physical violence. There have been reports of situations in which members of organizations were assaulted by groups of men, as well as raids on offices following campaigns of digital harassment.

PERPETRATORS. There are several types of perpetrators.

1. Actors linked to economic interests, such as representatives of agricultural operations in conflict with Indigenous communities.

An Indigenous colleague confronted a company that entered the community's territories to plant eucalyptus trees. There, the landowner, a foreman and other workers began threatening her via social media and phone calls; a group of men even beat her, and as far as I know, she is still facing this situation of threats and has suffered a great deal of harassment.

2. Political actors and public figures.

What I see is that the aggressors are a group of political figures and wealthy people—who are real and identifiable, whom we know, and whom we run into—but who have a lot of fake accounts that reproduce or replicate what they say to generate that volume of attacks, that noise on social media. So it seems like there are a thousand people telling me the same thing, but I don't think there are really that many

3. Anti-rights groups.

Creation and dissemination of false or manipulated content

DESCRIPTION. This form of TFGBV consists of creating and disseminating false or manipulated textual or audiovisual content with the purpose of discrediting and stigmatizing women's organizations, as well as falsely linking them to criminal activities or threats to social stability. Forty percent of the organizations surveyed have been victims of the creation or dissemination of synthetic or fake images or videos, while 60% have faced the systematic circulation of false, manipulated or offensive information about their work. At the individual level, 67% of members reported having suffered defamation and damage to their reputation.

In most cases, these are videos produced by influencers or actors aligned with anti-rights sectors, who use institutional logos, records of activities and photographs of the members to construct incriminating narratives. This content is then disseminated and amplified through anonymous profiles or accounts that act as trolls:

There are several "news" pages on social media that make videos using my photos; for example, of me participating in marches in support of sexual diversity rights. They distort the information and use hate speech, accusing me of promoting "gender ideology" as a synonym for child sexual abuse.

OBJECTIVES

1. To publicly delegitimize the organization and undermine its moral authority.
2. To link the organization to illegal activities or criminal groups in order to erode its credibility and portray its work as a threat to peace and social stability:

They have even released videos on a couple of occasions directly linking the organization to a criminal organization. Because we are a women's organization, and because we are also engaged in a territorial struggle and support political prisoners, they directly link us to any group that threatens stability, peace and so on.

3. To portray the organizations and their members as “enemies of the family,” education or social stability.

TRIGGERS. Political developments, reports of gender-based violence or random incidents.

MAIN PLATFORMS. YouTube, Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok, as well as messaging apps like WhatsApp or Signal.

ESCALATION. Intensified public shaming in traditional media and mass harassment calls.

PERPETRATORS

1. Influencers aligned with anti-rights sectors.
2. Conservative religious groups, particularly those linked to evangelical networks.

Public stigmatization and incitement to hatred by public officials

DESCRIPTION. This form of TFGBV involves hate campaigns and disinformation initiated or amplified through statements by public authorities, particularly senators. The identified pattern begins when a political figure, usually after receiving criticism or coming under scrutiny, responds by directly targeting the journalist or activist involved. To do so, they may post screenshots, disclose information about her workplace and promote hate speech against her, the organization to which she belongs, or the causes she advocates for.

The interviewees noted that these responses often take on a personal nature, transforming political criticism into a personal attack. When such accusations are made during Senate speeches or from official accounts, they create a cascade effect: the initial stigmatization is subsequently amplified by supporters and by the very operators or trolls associated with the ruling party, leading to waves of attacks on social media:

One of our colleagues, who publicly criticizes the government’s performance on her social media accounts, was targeted by a senator, who began personally harassing and threatening her on social media. Among her posts, the senator shared screenshots indicating that our colleague works for our organization. Following that accusation, the attacks were directed not only against her but also against the organization as a whole. The situation raised particular concern due to the power imbalance involved, as it was no longer about an anonymous profile, but about a representative of the ruling party, with institutional power and a high level of public visibility. From that point on, whenever our colleague posted anything, even if it had nothing to do with her or the party, the senator would leave comments or threaten her.

OBJECTIVES

1. To delegitimize journalists and activists critical of the government;
2. To discipline public debate;
3. To justify restrictive legislative initiatives in the name of “protecting” the family or children.

TRIGGERS. When a woman with a public voice directly criticizes the government's performance, or an organization challenges conservative narratives or legislative proposals; when investigations or analyses uncomfortable for the ruling party are published; when issues related to gender, sexual diversity or human rights are addressed.

MAIN PLATFORMS. X, Instagram and Facebook.

ESCALATION. Accusations spread on social media can be amplified by the media, echoed by other political actors, or used as grounds to request investigations, audits or information from state agencies. In this way, digital aggression transcends the online sphere and becomes a form of administrative or political intervention. This can lead to inspections, reviews of agreements, delays in administrative procedures or other oversight actions that, although presented as formal procedures, stem from prior campaigns of stigmatization and delegitimization. In addition to affecting the individuals and organizations targeted, this rhetoric can intensify violence and discrimination against the communities to which they belong or whose rights they defend.

A senator began attacking the founder of a shelter for trans girls (a community center that serves as a temporary shelter for LGBTIQ+ people) on social media. After numerous attacks, people from the Public Prosecutor's Office were sent to the shelter because they claimed it housed teenagers. Furthermore, we have observed a significant increase in violence against trans people when ruling-party figures launch these attacks against them on social media.

PERPETRATORS

1. Senators from the ruling party;
2. Supporters who amplify this rhetoric on social media.

IMPACTS

1. Heightened fear due to the power imbalance;
2. Sense of surveillance and persecution;
3. Self-censorship;
4. Involuntary media exposure;
5. Sustained emotional strain;
6. Normalization of stigmatizing discourse;
7. Reduced participation of women in government oversight and monitoring mechanisms;
8. Deactivation of websites;
9. Withdrawal of public support from funders (all of our funders asked us to remove their logos from our activities);
10. Reinforcement of a climate of institutional impunity.

Digital lynchings

DESCRIPTION. This type of TFGBV is characterized by a disproportionate reaction to a situation that is initially debatable or open to criticism, which rapidly escalates into a collective campaign of harassment and hate. The attacks go beyond the event that sparked the controversy and shift toward personal aspects of the victim, including attacks on their body or weight, sexist insults, threats, invasions of privacy and moral judgments. A distinctive feature of this form of digital violence is the scale and gender asymmetry of the social response; similar behaviors exhibited by men do not generate equivalent levels of harassment, threats or scrutiny of their private lives.

There was a really big case involving a woman TV host, stemming from an unfortunate on-air interaction with a male colleague who was just starting out in the field. The new guy got her name wrong when introducing her, and she replied, “How can you not know your host’s name? You’re out!!” Although this situation could be the subject of legitimate professional debate, the public reaction quickly escalated into a massive hate campaign on social media.

It was her own colleagues who uploaded the video to social media, and within hours, a photo of her on Instagram racked up nearly 3,000 comments with messages such as “Why don’t you just kill yourself?,” “you fucking whore,” or “your husband is a cuckold,” even tagging her husband. She received death threats, attacks on her private life and harassment directed at her family. In contrast, the other two hosts—both men—who continued with the tasteless joke received absolutely nothing comparable in terms of hate or threats.

OBJECTIVES

1. To discipline women’s behavior in public and media spaces, reinforcing gender stereotypes about how a woman “should” behave in the workplace;
2. To publicly delegitimize women by shifting criticism from a specific behavior or situation to questions about their integrity, morality, professional competence or private life.

TRIGGERS. A situation that is initially debatable or open to criticism but, instead of remaining within the realm of legitimate discussion, is amplified and used as justification to trigger a collective and disproportionate response of harassment.

MAIN PLATFORMS. Instagram, X, WhatsApp.

ESCALATION. In the journalist’s case, the escalation resulted in the loss of her job and sponsors.

Sponsors withdrew their support because she was earning money as an influencer, including a well-known pharmacy chain that publicly announced its withdrawal by issuing a statement saying, “We will not work with this girl because her attitude does not reflect our values.” Ultimately, she was forced to resign from the media outlet where she worked, and she has kept a low profile ever since.

PERPETRATORS. This form of TFGBV typically begins with identifiable individuals, including those within the victim's own professional sector, and subsequently spreads through the participation of social media users. There is not necessarily any prior organization or involvement of political groups or party structures. However, the harassment can take on a massive scale through viral dynamics and be amplified by traditional media, increasing its reach and impact.

IMPACTS

1. Loss of job opportunities, contracts and sponsorships as a result of reputational damage;
2. Loss of employment or disruption of job stability;
3. Self-censorship;
4. Emotional exhaustion and impacts on well-being, including persistent fear of potential attacks or threats to physical safety.

Non-consensual sharing of intimate images to discredit women in their communities

DESCRIPTION. This form of TFGBV primarily affects young women and involves threats to disclose intimate images or their non-consensual disclosure, often by partners or former partners, as a means of intimidation, punishment or control following a breakup. The images may be used to threaten victims or shared directly in WhatsApp groups and other digital spaces linked to their social and community circles.

According to the interviewees, this form of TFGBV is particularly harmful in Paraguay due to the central role that WhatsApp groups play in community life. Spaces linked to neighborhood committees, sports associations, churches, schools and other local networks also function as settings for socialization and recognition. Consequently, the dissemination of intimate images is not confined to the digital space but directly penetrates the environments where victims build their relationships, their social identity and their legitimacy as members or role models of the community. Added to this is a context permeated by gender stereotypes and norms that tend to blame and stigmatize women for the circulation of intimate content, rather than directing blame at those who violate their consent: "The deeply sexist social context makes the impact even more severe, because the stigma falls on the woman and discredits her as a community leader."

OBJECTIVES

1. To damage the victims' reputation, leadership and social legitimacy by exposing and stigmatizing their private lives;
2. To punish the exercise of emotional autonomy, especially the decision to end a relationship or separate from a partner;
3. To control and sanction women's sexual autonomy, using their private lives as a mechanism for discipline, humiliation and discrediting.

TRIGGERS. This form of TFGBV is often triggered by a breakup, particularly when the perpetrator seeks to maintain or regain control over the victim. Jealousy, rejection of the decision to end the relationship or a desire for revenge can serve as triggers for threatening to share or actually sharing intimate images without consent.

MAIN PLATFORMS. WhatsApp

ESCALATION

1. Humiliating, sexualized or stigmatizing comments from other men and members of the community, as well as the mass forwarding of the material to new groups and digital spaces.
2. Loss of job and professional opportunities, weakening of community ties and social isolation:

There was a man who sent nude photos of the woman to all the groups he was in (soccer, school, transport, etc.), which led people to cancel meetings they had scheduled with her; they didn't want to work with her; questions arose about her community leadership, and even her ability as a mother was called into question. The damage to her reputation made it untenable for her to remain in our organization, and she eventually left the community and moved away.

PERPETRATORS. Partner / ex-partner

Campaigns against women in positions of authority “just because”

DESCRIPTION. This includes constant attacks, whether from individual profiles or accounts acting in a coordinated manner, against women's organizations or women who hold public office. These attacks may appear in comments or posts and take the form of degrading remarks about the body or appearance, rumors about private life, questions about intellectual or emotional capacity and references to sexuality or roles as mothers or partners. They also include threats, calls for resignation, public boycotts and mass reporting on social media to have their accounts suspended: “When she was Secretary-General, she was attacked very fiercely on social media, really fiercely, even with death threats.”

What is striking is that, in many cases, there is no specific trigger: the attack is not in response to a particular event, but rather to the very presence and visibility of women in the public sphere. Unlike men, where confrontations and criticism center on their economic or political positions, attacks on women focus on their bodies, private lives, sexuality, morality and dignity: “Male leaders face countless situations where they could be called out; for example, they have children all over the place, they commit all kinds of violence, right? But that doesn't matter.”

OBJECTIVES

1. To delegitimize women's leadership;
2. To publicly discredit the organization for being composed of or led by women;
3. To silence or discourage women's political, community and union participation;
4. To damage the women leaders moral and community reputation;
5. To discipline and intimidate other women who aspire to hold positions of power.

TRIGGERS. The very fact of being a woman and holding a position of power or a role of public representation.

MAIN PLATFORMS. Facebook, WhatsApp and X.

ESCALATION. Digital attacks can spill over into physical settings and manifest as in-person harassment, threats and intimidation.

PERPETRATORS

1. Men from the same community or organization;
2. Political or union opponents;
3. Anonymous social media users;
4. Members of online community groups who amplify the attack.

TFGBV structural to social media platforms

DESCRIPTION. Several interviewees noted that TFGBV is not limited to individual, explicit and intentional acts, but also includes the structures, operations, design logic, and business models of digital platforms. These elements exert influence by systematically normalizing violence.

Among the factors identified are algorithms that amplify misogynistic content or promote beauty standards associated with eating disorders; reporting systems that do not prioritize the protection of women at risk; a lack of moderation regarding misogynistic and hateful speech, and weak privacy policies that facilitate the rapid viral spread of intimate content.

This violence also incorporates aesthetic and symbolic dimensions: the hypersexualization of women, the pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards, the culture of constant evaluation of the female body and the algorithmic reinforcement of gender stereotypes through advertising, recommendations and trends.

All of this turns women with a public voice into objects of constant scrutiny, shifts the focus from their leadership to their appearance, and creates an environment where psychological, reputational and social harm is amplified and normalized:

To me, violence seems intrinsic to social media, and I don't think social media could exist without it. We stopped advertising diet pills on TV in the '90s; but now, women follow 200 influencers who promote unrealistic beauty standards, like how your eyelashes have to be shiny and stand up when you wake up in the morning, right? And that's so violent.

Furthermore, the architecture of these platforms determines which content is amplified, which is hidden, and which behaviors are permitted or penalized. In this sense, their structure functions as a regulatory framework that predetermines which subjects and which discourses are considered legitimate within the digital space.

In public debates or controversies related to feminism or human rights, 33% of victims of TFGBV on a personal level believe that digital platforms do not actively moderate content and allow violence to escalate, while another 33% believe they encourage confrontation and violence.

OBJECTIVES. These are indirect because technology is not neutral. Platforms without inclusion policies create hostile environments that prevent women and gender-nonconforming individuals from fully exercising their rights.

TRIGGERS. Algorithmic logic⁴⁵ and business model⁴⁶

MAIN PLATFORMS. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X.

ESCALAMIENTO. It enables individual, explicit and intentional acts of TFGBV.

PERPETRATORS. Social media platforms.

Other typologies of TFGBV

At the organizational level, half of the organizations surveyed (50%) reported having suffered digital harassment or attacks from a single account, generally targeting their official accounts or communication channels. Thirty percent reported experiencing digital surveillance (constant monitoring of their activities, events and communications), and another 30% reported the interception of internal communications, including unauthorized access to calls, messages or internal organizational communications. In more serious cases, 10% suffered identity theft or impersonation through the creation of fake accounts; another 10% reported hacking or unauthorized access to institutional email and social media accounts, and 10% were victims of extortion through threats or blackmail to force decisions, silence or public statements.

On a personal level, the most common forms include account hacking (33%), call interception (33%), harassment from individual profiles (17%), identity theft (17%) and extortion (17%), which involves forcing a person to act according to another's will through threats and intimidation. In addition, 16% reported having experienced censorship, blocking or deletion of their social media profiles by the platforms, primarily on Facebook.

Finally, 20% of organizations reported that their internet service providers suspended, interrupted or restricted service without prior notice or clear explanations, under circumstances that could be related to their activism or advocacy work.

45 Algorithms that amplify conflict: They prioritize and drive virality for misogynistic content, confrontation and polarization because these generate more engagement (clicks, watch time).

46 Attention-based business model: The architecture is designed to maximize engagement at the expense of women's safety. Reinforcement of stereotypes: Advertising, recommendations and trends actively promote unrealistic beauty standards and traditional gender roles.

ACTORS, DYNAMICS AND IMPACTS

Victims

The main factors that make organizations targets of TFGBV are linked to their agenda and public stance. Sixty percent identified the following as reasons for the attacks: feminist activism, the defense of LGBTIQ+ rights, their social media presence and speaking out against violence driven by *machismo*. Meanwhile, 50% cite the defense of sexual and reproductive rights as the central trigger

At the individual level, the most common profile of victims is that of women leaders: 50% of those attacked hold leadership roles within their organizations and 83% believe the attack is directly linked to their role as activists. Half identify the following as the reasons for the attacks: their political participation, the defense of women's rights (83%), LGBTIQ+ rights (50%) and speaking out against violence driven by *machismo* (50%).

The intensity and impact of TFGBV are not uniform; they are amplified by the interplay of multiple factors of social vulnerability, being particularly severe for Indigenous women and LGBTQ+ people (lesbian and bisexual women, and particularly trans women). These groups account for the only documented cases where TFGBV escalated into physical violence.

Indigenous women face additional forms of violence because their authority challenges historical hierarchies and power structures both within and outside their communities. In these cases, digital attacks can escalate into physical assaults, threats against their families and situations that force them to leave their organizations and spaces for participation. As one interviewee recounted:

An Indigenous woman from Concepción, who had been harassed on social media for some time, was riding a motorcycle to coordinate activities among Indigenous communities. Along the way, a few hooded men grabbed her and beat her until she lost consciousness. We took that case to the Public Prosecutor's Office, but a proper investigation was never conducted. She had to leave the organization because there had already been a very serious threat against her family. We have many cases like this, and men are often hired to attack women who have reported such situations.

The risk these women face is exacerbated because their leadership is linked to territorial and environmental defense, areas where their authority is visible and contentious. This situation reveals an intersection between gender-based violence, ethnic discrimination and conflicts associated with control over land and natural resources.

We are highly exposed because our struggle is territorial, and within the territory, women are the ones who most vigorously defend the community, the land and the environment, and there we come up against businesspeople, politicians and the men in our community who want us to stay at home

This situation is part of a regional context that is particularly hostile to defenders of territory and the environment. According to Global Witness's 2022 annual report, 68% of killings of environmental activists occurred in Latin America.

Women who lead rural, Indigenous or environmental communities often find themselves in environments where impunity is high and State protection is insufficient. Defending land and natural resources puts them in direct conflict with powerful economic and political actors, who may resort to violence as a means of control, intimidation and exclusion from leadership roles.

Meanwhile, LGBTQ+ women, particularly trans women, face waves of hate and online disinformation campaigns that often precede a significant increase in physical violence and direct threats. This dynamic highlights the connection between digital exposure and vulnerability in the real world. Furthermore, conservative policies, social structures shaped by *machismo* and institutional discrimination contribute to impunity for these attacks, which in some cases are perpetrated by members of law enforcement.

Escalation

Violence originates and spreads across different environments: in 33% of cases, it began and remained in the digital space; in another 33%, it began offline and later escalated on social media; and in the remaining 33%, it arose in the digital environment and had consequences in physical spaces.

Main platforms

Facebook is the leading platform for digital attacks: 70% of organizations reported attacks on this platform, followed by Instagram (60%), WhatsApp (60%), X (40%) and TikTok (30%). On a personal level, 100% identified Facebook as the main channel for attacks, followed by Instagram and WhatsApp, at 50% each. However, during the interviews, X was identified as the platform where attacks reach the highest levels of intensity and violence.

Frequency and changes

Seventy percent report attacks at specific times, such as during campaigns, elections, political developments or in response to sensitive posts, while 30% report them occasionally. Compared to previous years, 40% perceive the same intensity and 20% report an increase.

Perpetrators

Only 20% were able to fully identify their perpetrators, and 70% identified some of them. Among the perpetrators are:

Profile of perpetrators	Percentage of profiles that have attacked organizations	Percentage of profiles that have attacked individuals
Anti-rights or conservative groups	70%	83%
Unidentified individuals (anonymous)	50%	66%
Religious leaders	40%	33%
State authorities	40%	0%
State employees	30%	50%
Companies	10%	0%
Protesters	0%	0%
Identified private actors	30%	16%
Businesspeople	10%	16%
Media (Companies)	20%	33%
Trolls and troll centers	30%	33%
Coworkers	0%	16%
Partner / ex-partner	10%	0%

THE ROLE OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

In Paraguay, TFGBV operates in a context of impunity and limited institutional capacity, which shapes how women perceive and use legal mechanisms to protect themselves. Experience shows that, even when victims decide to file a complaint, the judicial systems do not always provide safety or effective redress: “Beyond the laws, I think the institutions are the problem, because whether a complaint is considered or taken seriously depends on who files it.” In many cases, filing a complaint can lead to revictimization or an escalation of violence: “It’s not in her best interest to file a complaint either, because what she’ll likely get out of it, if it becomes public, is that they’ll come after her hard again.” This situation seems even more acute when the perpetrator is a political figure, as one of the interviewees explains:

We decided not to confront him in any way; that is, to let it go and shift the focus to other people [...]. It was more a matter of dealing with it internally, because we know that filing a complaint against a senator from the ruling party is a lost cause, and it can even be dangerous.

Among women who personally experienced TFGBV, only 33% filed a formal complaint. Of those, 100% stated that they had received no results through the judicial system. Despite this experience, 66% of the respondents indicated that they would recommend filing a complaint. This data reveals that, even when institutional mechanisms prove ineffective, the participants believe that filing a complaint can be important for raising awareness about the abuse.

In Paraguay, the lack of judicial preparedness is evident: the courts and the Public Prosecutor’s Office lack protocols, specific training and adequate legal classifications to address TFGBV. As a result, many complaints are put on hold, postponed indefinitely or get bogged down in bureaucratic procedures, causing emotional, economic and social strain for the victims. Even well-known public figures, such as journalists or senators, face significant risk. Visibility increases digital exposure and attacks, but it does not guarantee an effective judicial response:

When my photos were posted all over social media, and we went to file a complaint, they told me, “What can we do about it? We don’t have access; the only solution is for you to go and talk to the person who posted your photos so they’ll delete the post”. So, once the exposure is out there, there’s practically nothing that can be done.

Local organizations, such as Codehupy or TEDIC, as well as allied lawyers specializing in gender issues and TFGBV, play a key role in providing accompaniment, guidance and legal support. However, protection depends more on these solidarity networks than on the State, which has shown a structural inability to guarantee safety and justice:

Few dare to file a complaint, since it takes time and money, two resources that journalists and activists generally don’t have, and the strength to see it through, because justice takes forever here, too. The Palace of Justice and the courts are overwhelmed with work, trials get postponed and postponed...

An activist who was harassed on social media and decided to file a complaint shares her experience:

Since we don't have specific laws addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence, the first thing you do is go to a Justice of the Peace Court and request a protective order to stop them from sending messages.

Subsequently, the case was classified as an invasion of privacy. Although the perpetrator was found guilty and fined, the custodial sentence was minimal and had no real deterrent effect.

Regarding the possibility of pushing for a law that explicitly addresses gender-based violence, the interviewees stated that they prefer not to promote specific legislation in the current context. As one of them explained:

At this moment, the political situation in our country will, at best, prevent that law from being passed, and at worst, turn it into a tool for persecution. We don't want another law; we're at a point where we need to protect what little remains.

IMPACTS

TFGBV generates sustained effects over time, at both the personal and organizational levels. It affects emotional health, the structure of organizations and women's public participation in the political and social spheres. Many of the interviewees described the violence as omnipresent and constant, inescapable, so that its impacts occur in cycles: just when it seems the situation is improving, the attacks resurface and the negative effects are reignited. One of them noted:

It never stops. At any moment, they'll publish something again. Ten years later, another one of your posts that they criticize comes to light. So, it's like a chain that never lets you go.

Another interviewee commented:

It's an invisible enemy. They might assign a police officer to protect you for two weeks, but then who knows what will happen, and besides, the violence continues through technology, so the police can't stop it either. It's complex.

Impacts of TFGBV directed at the organization	Percentage
Impact on the mental health of one or more members of the organization	80%
Emotional strain on the team	70%
Self-censorship or reduction in digital presence	60%
Changes in communication strategies	60%
Reduced participation in public debate	50%
Impact on members' safety	40%
Loss of funding	40%
Impact on daily work or projects	30%
Some members of the organization left or reduced their active participation	30%
Loss of partnerships	20%
Loss of visibility	10%

Impacts of TFGBV directed at the individual level	Percentage
Impact on your emotional or psychological well-being (anxiety, fear, distress, stress, feelings of insecurity or isolation)	67%
Impact on the perception of your reputation or identity	50%
Impact in the political and social sphere (opportunities, visibility or support)	50%
Impact on your physical health (sleep disturbances, psychosomatic symptoms)	50%
Impact on your professional life (job performance, difficulty finding other jobs, promotions)	33%
Impact on your daily life and relationships (changes in daily routine due to fear of exposing yourself online or in public spaces, strain on family and personal relationships)	25%
Loss of the organization's partnerships	20%
Loss of the organization's funding	17%
Loss of the organization's visibility	17%
Pérdida de visibilidad de la organización	17%

The most common impact of TFGBV, both at the organizational level (80%) and the personal level (67%), is on mental and emotional health. The interviewees reported experiencing anxiety, fear, depression, post-traumatic stress, insomnia and a constant feeling of being under surveillance. One of them explained: "Posts targeting you have a huge impact on those around you, whether it's your family or your community." Another commented: "You feel like you're being followed and stalked all the time; you're constantly anxious." Self-censorship and a reduced digital presence (60%), as well as changes in communication strategies (60%), show that organizations are actively modifying how they interact publicly to minimize risks. This limits their visibility and advocacy capacity.

Another noted: "There are certain topics we let slide, ones we don't get too involved in, like those related to children, because the scrutiny toward those of us who want to say something different is much stronger." In other cases, organizations are leaving digital spaces altogether, closing their social media profiles or taking down their websites.

The reduction in participation in public debate affects half of the organizations and demonstrates the inhibiting effect of TFGBV on their political and social presence. One interviewee explains it clearly:

It's not just about reducing the frequency of posts, but also the limitations we place on ourselves, both personally and organizationally, in terms of content. We think long and hard about what we're going to say, and we've also changed our discourse, we now post more about issues related to seeds and food sovereignty.

On this point, another interviewee notes that the chilling effect also leads to self-censorship by “letting certain topics slide”: “For example, childhood or issues like that, where the scrutiny is much stronger, so to speak, toward those of us who want to say something different.” In other cases, defenders are forced to leave digital spaces altogether, closing their social media profiles or taking down their websites.

TFGBV directly affects the day-to-day operations of organizations. When attacks are directed against them, organizations report losses in funding (40%) and disruptions to their daily work or project implementation (30%). Furthermore, in 30% of cases, some members leave the organization or reduce their active participation. As one interviewee put it: “No one wants to lead the organization anymore, nor do they want to commit to coordinating. They also don’t want to speak to the press, which used to happen all the time.” Several participants noted that this climate also leads to demobilization and political withdrawal among women who have not been directly affected, as well as in specific spheres of political participation, as one of them summarized: “TFGBV discourages women’s participation in feminist and political activism.”

On a personal level, TFGBV affects opportunities for leadership and social and political participation. Reputation and legitimacy are compromised (50%), as are visibility, support and political opportunities (50%), and, to a lesser extent, professional life (25%). One of the interviewees summed up this situation: “In a small country like Paraguay, everyone knows each other. They won’t hire you or fund you anymore because you’re ‘problematic.’”

Finally, 20% reported impacts on daily life, including the indirect exposure of minors to the conflict and the stigma generated by the violence.

RESISTANCE STRATEGIES AND OBSTACLES

Complaints filed with the justice system were scarce: they were reported in 20% of cases at the organizational level and in 17% at the personal level. Reports to the police, meanwhile, were practically nonexistent. These data reveal a deep mistrust of both the capacity and the willingness of public institutions to effectively protect victims:

Filing a complaint in Paraguay comes at a high cost; generally, there is no protection for the victim, there is a high level of public exposure that leads to revictimization and there is a lot of impunity. For this reason, I am still evaluating how and when to report.

Types of Reports	When TFGBV was directed at the organizational level	When TFGBV was directed at the personal level
I did not reported to any entity	40%	50%
Report to the justice system (prosecutor's office, courts or other judicial bodies)	20%	17%
Report to the police	0%	0%
Report via social media posts, to raise awareness	60%	50%
Report to the media, to raise awareness	10%	33%
Report to unions, professional associations or activist networks	0%	0%
Report to platforms	60%	50%

In this context of limited institutional protection, organizations have developed active strategies of resistance and self-protection, in which technology is a key tool for sustaining the collective struggle.

Partnerships between organizations serve as the primary source of support and a safety net. Through these networks, legal support (20%), digital security training (60%), technical assistance (30%), the strengthening of solidarity networks (40%) and psychological or psychosocial support (60%) are coordinated. One of these strategies is explained below: "We allocate a small portion of the organization's funds to hire a psychologist specializing in gender issues to assist our colleagues who have been victims."

Collectives such as Aireana, a lesbian rights group, manage hotlines like ROHENDU, which receive reports of discrimination and violence, including digital violence, and document and track these cases. Similarly, human rights organizations such as Codehupy serve as spaces for guidance and coordination. However, many activists acknowledge that, when it comes to TFGBV, TEDIC is practically the only specialized organization capable of providing technical support.

Forty percent of the organizations have specific protocols or strategies to address TFGBV, though in most cases, these are informal measures developed based on lived experiences and informed by training provided by TEDIC. Among these, the following are mentioned:

Do not delete threatening messages; take screenshots and save evidence; do not respond to provocations on social media; mute and block aggressors' accounts; follow the institutional process for filing a complaint, and we try to be involved in every step of the process.

Some organizations hold regular meetings to address internal safety and collective care.

In rural areas, they use Signal groups to collectively track each other's movements, thereby compensating for the lack of police protection against digital threats and physical violence. In addition, they have provided guidance to the organization's members on how to document any dangerous situation with photos and videos:

We still need to improve how we document situations without putting our fellow members at risk, because often our own means of communication work against us. For example, during an eviction, the women film and livestream directly on YouTube, and suddenly one of our members appears with a machete, which could lead to her being charged based on that footage.

Regarding responses to TFGBV on platforms, 83% blocked abusive accounts; 33% temporarily suspended profiles and another 33% permanently closed them. Additionally, 40% of the organizations said that they reported profiles and posts to the platforms in all cases of abuse, while 20% did so in "some" cases. However, no organization expressed complete satisfaction with the response received. On a personal level, 50% of the affected women filed reports with the platforms, and of those, 33% believe the issue was resolved: "What always happens is that there are groups of people who attack through fake accounts, so reporting a single account doesn't solve anything."

One strategy worth highlighting is coordinated mass reporting, in which an organization connects with allied organizations and, from multiple profiles, simultaneously reports an abusive account or a hate campaign to increase the likelihood that digital platforms will take action.

On a personal level, 33% of victims did not inform their organization about the attacks, while of the 66% who did, they received support primarily through internal support and joint discussions on how to proceed in each case:

We explain to each person the options available to them and how these lead to different outcomes and impacts. Someone might even want to file a complaint, but sometimes you have to realize that after doing so, you could lose your job.

Obstacles

The main obstacles the organization faces in addressing TFGBV are a lack of financial resources (40%), lack of time or an excessive workload (60%), lack of technical tools or knowledge of digital security (30%), fear of retaliation or an escalation of violence (10%), lack of response from digital platforms (20%), lack of institutional or State support (30%), and the normalization of digital violence (20%).

EFFECTS ON DEMOCRACY

The systematic silencing of women through TFGBV directly undermines the pillars of democracy and the rule of law, as it violates their civil and political rights and limits their aspirations and real opportunities to participate in the public sphere.

The marginalization of women's voices and perspectives in public debate, decision-making and the scrutiny of sociopolitical institutions undermines freedom of expression and pluralism, essential elements of any democracy. Furthermore, it entrenches patriarchal structures and norms, widens the gender gap and reinforces the stereotype that public, political, media and digital spaces belong to men.

Political stances and gender issues are often the main triggers for attacks, which highlights the goal of hindering women's entry into positions of power. When these factors are compounded by other issues, such as socio-environmental advocacy, ethnic identity or sexual diversity, the violence intensifies and takes on an even more disciplinary character.

TFGBV represents a historical continuation of attempts to restrict women's presence and participation in public spaces on an equal footing. It is a form of structural violence, rooted in hostility toward the voice and visibility of certain individuals as representatives of specific groups. Understanding this phenomenon as systematic resistance to equality, rather than as mere episodes of interpersonal harassment, helps explain why attacks are not distributed randomly but tend to intensify in frequency and severity against historically marginalized women—such as Indigenous women—and against those whose public presence is perceived as particularly threatening.

TFGBV thus functions as a mechanism of collective correction: it seeks not only to cause harm but also to set the limits of what a woman can say, do or be in the public sphere.

It is worth noting the widespread presence of forms of TFGBV perpetrated, enabled, and legitimized by ruling-party sectors and public institutions. This situation stems from certain political positions, bureaucratic structures resistant to change and the structural absence of accountability mechanisms for violence perpetrated by the State itself. These institutional shortcomings not only perpetuate violence but also hinder the progress of judicial and administrative proceedings, making it difficult to identify and hold perpetrators accountable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At the policy level, the interviewees explicitly stated that, for the time being, they do not consider it a priority to push for a specific law on TFGBV. Instead, they emphasized the importance of guaranteeing the effective implementation of Law 5777, compliance with which they perceive as insufficient. This stance reflects a pragmatic concern: before expanding the legislative framework, they consider it essential to ensure that existing legal tools function in practice.
2. The need to deepen the intersectional analysis of TFGBV emerged. The forms, intensities and consequences of violence are not uniform: they vary according to factors such as location (urban/rural), social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or level of public exposure. Understanding these differences would allow for the design of more tailored and effective responses.
3. In terms of future research, metrics could be developed to measure the level of women's political participation in various spheres (political parties, state institutions, journalism, labor unions, social organizations and student bodies) in order to track and identify setbacks, patterns of exclusion or signs of democratic decline linked to the impact of TFGBV.
4. The report also proposes developing a methodology to document and, eventually, automate the monitoring of attacks against women with a public voice on social media, in order to deepen the analysis of the phenomenon, gauge its magnitude and highlight its structural nature.
5. Another central focus is the accountability of technology companies. It is necessary to analyze to what extent platforms can be held jointly responsible when they fail to prevent, moderate or respond adequately to coordinated hate campaigns. This implies rethinking regulatory frameworks and accountability mechanisms for private actors that mediate the digital public sphere.
6. The interviewees emphasized the importance of strengthening organizational capacities to address TFGBV. Forty percent consider it a priority to expand training in digital safety and self-care, as well as to develop internal prevention and response protocols (40%). They also underscored the importance of building networks with other feminist and human rights organizations (40%) as a strategy for collective protection. Sixty percent highlighted the need to allocate specific funds for psychosocial support and the creation of spaces for collective care, recognizing that the sustainability of activism also depends on the emotional well-being of those who sustain it.
7. Provide specific training on TFGBV to judges, prosecutors, police officers and other public officials. The low rate of reporting and mistrust of the justice system are explained not only by impunity but also by a lack of technical understanding and a gender perspective in handling these cases. Without adequate training, judicial officials tend to downplay the facts, treat them as personal conflicts or overlook the unique evidentiary challenges of the digital environment.

DECLARATION ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

In compliance with academic transparency standards, we disclose the use of artificial intelligence tools (Claude.AI, NotebookLM, ChatGPT) exclusively for: style review and editing; systematization and organization of bibliographic information; and support in identifying relevant sources during the literature review. All analytical content, normative interpretation and argumentative development remain the product of the authors' direct intellectual work.

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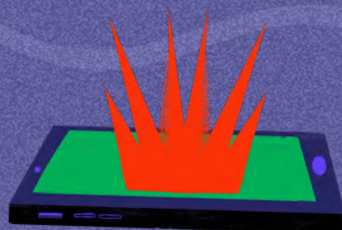
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