

**“Lessons from Women’s Police Stations
in Latin America:
Promising Practices, Challenges and Entry Points”**

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“Access to Justice for Women Survivors of Violence:
A Comparative Study of Women’s Police Stations
in Latin America”**

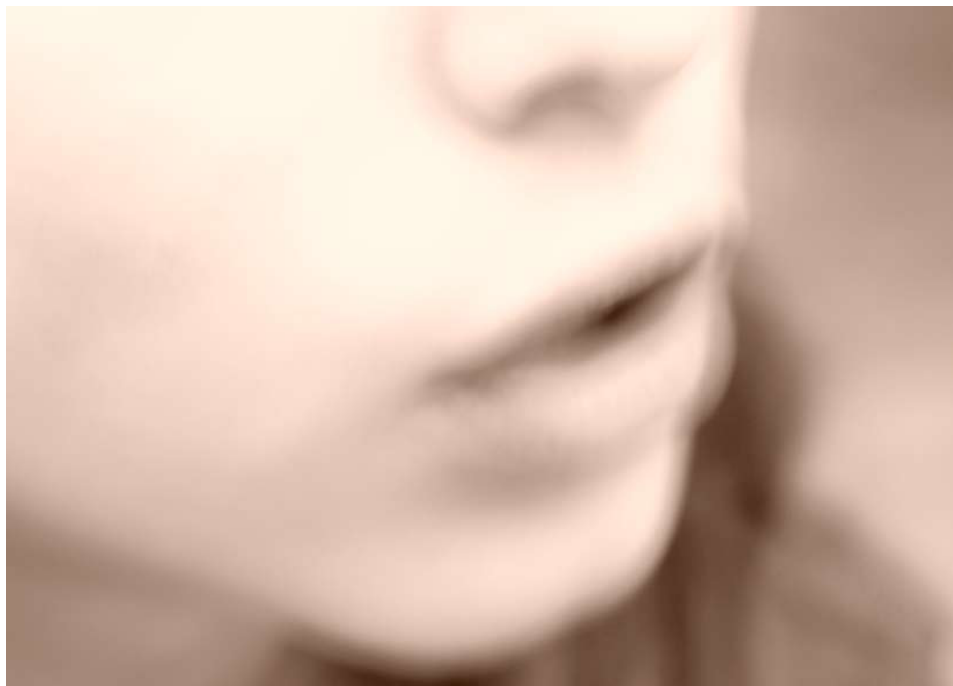
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“Access to Justice for Women Survivors of Violence: A Comparative Study of Women’s Police Stations in Latin America”

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Common Features of WPS in LA

- All or mostly women staff
- Have specialized training
- Located in a separate building or with a separate entrance from a common police station
- Multidisciplinary services are available in the WPS and/or in coordination with other agencies (government or NGO) in the community

A few facts about WPS in LA

- First WPS in Latin America was founded in Sao Paulo, **Brazil** in 1985; there are now 403 in Brazil
 - **Peru** : Lima, 1988; there are now 21
 - **Nicaragua**: Managua, 1993; now there are 35
 - **Ecuador**: Cuenca, 1994; until recently there were 31
- Set up in post-conflict situations
 - Locally and nationally driven

Introduction to Project

- 2 ½ year comparative research project carried out in Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Peru.
- National mapping study; primary research in one locality in each country involving: survey, interviews, observation, document analysis
- Project objective: Carry out a comparative study on Women's Police Stations in Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Peru regarding access to justice for survivors of violence against women and the exercise and respect for their rights, in order to make proposals for the improvement of public policy in this sector.

Successes and Promising Practices

Key Success:

The WPS have contributed to making the problem of violence against women more visible as a public, collective, and punishable issue.

- Usually increased reporting rates
- Almost universal recognition
- First point of entry to justice system and services in general

Promising Practices -1

- **Official mandate**
 - Puts into practice the state's responsibility for defending and guaranteeing women's human rights
 - Provides quality, specialized services
 - References regional and international human rights conventions
 - Commitment to interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination

Promising Practices -2

- **Protection**

- Protection orders (application and/or implementation)
- Quality of services: women feel they have someone “on their side”
- Enforcement of the law: men are scared

Promising Practices -3

- **Specialized training**
 - From a rights and empowerment perspective
 - By members of the women's movement
 - For : WPS operators and all police
 - When: initial training, placement in WPS, continuous

Promising Practices -4

- **Multidisciplinary or integral services**
 - At the WPS and/or
 - In coordination with other agencies: both in the criminal justice system and other local actors, usually women's centres
 - Types of services: support groups and/or psychological counselling; legal advice and/or representation, medical-legal exams; shelters

Promising Practices -5

- **Civilian oversight**
 - Policy advice
 - Local and national intersectoral commissions
 - Advocacy
 - Watchdog on particular cases
 - Joint awareness campaigns and community outreach

Limits and Challenges

Key Limitation: *WPS do not necessarily contribute to guaranteeing women's access to justice or eliminating or reducing violence.*

- Only about 15% of cases are transferred to the courts (Nicaragua; Peru)
- Only 11% receive sentences (Ecuador)
- Continued impunity
- Women take long, difficult paths to access justice and/or end violence in their lives

Challenges -1

WPS Operators and other actors' conceptions of justice often subordinate women's rights and normative frameworks to "family values"

- Conceptions manifested in WPS mandates, protocols, treatment of users
- Underestimate the danger women face and do not take all possible precautions
- Operators sometimes do not apply the law correctly or consistently

Challenges -2

- **Limits to implementing police responsibilities**
 - Deficient investigations
 - Limits to protection
 - Lack of prevention measures
 - Slow process

Challenges -3

Limited Quality of Service

- Women are patronized instead of being treated as subjects of their own process
- Women are sometimes revictimized or blamed
- Limited privacy

Challenges -4

- **Do not consistently or fully explain to women their rights, judicial procedures or other services available in their communities**

Challenges -5

- **Insufficient resources**
 - Material (gas, office supplies, computers)
 - Infrastructure (affects privacy and limits protection of women)
 - Human
 - Financial
- **Limited coverage and accessibility**

Challenges -6

Limited and unsustained coordination for direct services, prevention, and oversight

- WPS generally coordinate less than other local actors
- WPS operators have more of a family values perspective
- Directly affects access to justice, elimination of violence, quality of service, protection, and investigations

Entry Points

A. Within the police institution

- Official support for WPS at the highest level (police code, regulations, and statements recognizing women's rights and state responsibility)
- WPS mandates include defending women's human rights
- Sufficient resources allocated from national budget

Internal entry points -2

- National policy body within the police (design policy and protocols, training, supervision, research, monitoring and evaluation)
- Specialized training from a rights and empowerment perspective for WPS operators and all police, involving women's movement
- Dedicated intake (civilian or police) to provide information on WPS functions & services, procedures, and other community services

Internal entry points -3

- Gender audits to identify family-values and other harmful conceptions and plans to eliminate them through policy, protocols, and training
- Orientation for women about their rights during intake, investigation and other procedures
- Revision of protocols and procedures for improved protection and prevention measures and investigation techniques as well as their implementation

Internal entry points -4

- Coordination between WPS other police divisions (public security, criminal investigations, others)
- Self-care techniques for WPS operators
- Mechanisms to investigate and sanction police officers who perpetrate violence (institutional or personal)

Entry points for improved coordination -1

B.1: For services

- Intersectoral and interinstitutional coordination for services explicit in WPS mandate and policy
- Simple and effective referral mechanisms
- Ongoing coordination to follow-up on specific cases

Entry points for improved coordination -2

B.2 For oversight

- Civilian oversight included in mandate
- Resources allocated
- High-level participation in national and local anti-violence commissions
- Common perspective on VAW /GBV and justice developed based on the defence and exercise of women's rights

