

## Contesting Neoliberalism: Bringing in Economic and Social Rights to End Violence against Women in Mexico

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal policies addressing violence against women (VAW) are grounded in women's self-reliance and independence. The idea behind these policies is that women suffering violence should use their available resources to overcome violence. State remedies, grounded in neoliberal ideology, are short-term emergency strategies that rely on the assumption that all women experiencing violence will file claims against the perpetrators and remove themselves from violent situations on their own. They are not centered on long-term solutions. In contrast, effective solutions to end VAW must acknowledge the interdependence of all human rights and be built on principles of solidarity. Human rights, especially economic and social rights, are the starting point for providing a solid ground for women who are experiencing violence and a necessary foundation for them to get away from violence altogether. Hence recognizing social and economic rights is important, as is implementing these rights by designing policy interventions and programming that help women to secure these rights, such as rights to a secure job, social security, education, and health services. In the face of neoliberal dominance, however, social and economic rights are threatened by the ideals of individualism and minimal social support from the state, a policy framework that fails to provide for vulnerable groups.

In view of this, this chapter critically examines neoliberal policies and argues that they do not adequately address VAW, in particular for women in the most disadvantaged groups, such as women with disabilities and from ethnic minorities. Policies to end VAW should include strategies that cover the following four components based on human rights standards: (1) prevention, (2) protection, (3) rehabilitation and reintegration, and (4) prosecution and punishment (CEDAW Committee 1992; Manjoo 2012; OHCHR 2012).

In Section II, this chapter provides a brief picture of VAW globally. Section III describes neoliberal approaches to end VAW. It argues that neoliberal policies promote quick-fix solutions that do not address structural causes of discrimination against women in vulnerable conditions, and therefore, have proved to be largely ineffective in helping women escape violence and realize their human rights. Section IV explains the importance of policy responses that address economic and social rights, as well as other human rights, to effectively end VAW.

Section V examines the case of Mexico to illustrate the impact of neoliberal policies and the need to adopt human rights standards with a focus on economic and social rights. The data and quotations in this section are from three pilot studies (2013, 2014, and 2015) and research carried out in Mexico from August 2015 to October 2016. The research involved mapping the current Mexican policies (laws, programs, plans, and budgets) at federal and state levels in relation to VAW as well as the state and nonstate actors at the federal and state levels. Data collection was mainly through sixty-four in-depth interviews with state and nonstate actors such as key experts (scholars, feminists) and civil society organization (CSO) representatives (Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).<sup>1</sup> Finally, the chapter concludes by addressing the potential of economic and social rights to contest the neoliberal approaches to design and implementation of policies to end VAW.

## II. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Violence against women highlights the profound inequality between men and women in the world, also reflected in the political, social, and economic disadvantages of women (Commission on the Status of Women 2011). The Gender Inequality Index (GII), developed by UNDP, shows global disparities between females and males using three dimensions: (1) health in terms of the maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates, (2) empowerment measured as female-to-male ratio in secondary education and proportion of females in parliament, and (3) economic status in terms of female-to-male ratio in the labor force (UNDP 2016). The Human Development Report 2016 points out that women still experience discriminatory obstacles to achieving their full potential (UNDP 2016, iii). For example, women are much more likely to be deprived of their right to land and property (UNDP 2016, 6). Violence against women is a challenge for policy design because it is deeply rooted in norms and cultural values embedded in patriarchal societies (Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottmoeller 2002). The adverse impacts of violence on women's health are

<sup>1</sup> All interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated by the author.

documented by more than 7,000 studies around the world and these include health issues related to: sexual health (HIV/AIDS, syphilis infection, and chlamydia or gonorrhea); reproductive health (induced abortion); perinatal (low birth weight, premature birth, small gestational age); mental health (unipolar depressive disorders, alcohol use disorder); and injuries and death (WHO 2013).

Globally, 35 percent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate-partner violence or nonpartner sexual violence (WHO 2013). This percentage does not account for intersecting forms of vulnerability to violence such as disability, race, and ethnicity. The World Health Organization (WHO) 2013 report provided the last estimates on VAW for the age range of 15–49 years. The WHO excluded girls and older women because of the lack of data in most countries (WHO 2013, 11). This same report defines intimate-partner violence (IPV) as “self-reported experience of one or more acts of physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15 years” (WHO 2013, 6). Nonpartner violence (NPV) was defined as violence experienced by women being forced to perform any unwanted sexual act by someone other than their husband/partner (WHO 2013).

Violence against women is a human rights violation. Indeed, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, recognizes VAW as a human rights violation. The DEVAW defines “violence against women” as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (DEVAW 1993, art. 1). Similarly, in the Inter-American Human Rights System, the Convention of Belem Do Para defines VAW “to include physical, sexual and psychological violence” (1994, art. 2). In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action characterized VAW as: “an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms ...” (1995, D. 112).

The DEVAW identifies physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence as forms of VAW (UN DEVAW 1993). Other forms of violence include: sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and forced and child marriage (UN Women 2017). In countries such as India, forms of VAW include: forced sterilization, honor killings, female infanticide, acid-throwing, and dowry killings (Saravanan 2000). Still, the definition of VAW is contentious and differs among countries, and there is a need for better estimates on the prevalence

of VAW, especially among girls, older women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized groups of women (García-Moreno 2000).

Based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the CEDAW Committee issued General Recommendations Nos. 12 and No. 19 directing state parties to take actions to end VAW and to report on any legislative measures undertaken to protect women against violence (CEDAW Committee 1989, 1992). In the recommendations, the CEDAW Committee elaborated on state party obligations, referring to the state obligations to prevent, protect, prosecute, punish, and provide redress and compensation to victims (CEDAW Committee 1992). In this respect, the Beijing Platform recommended governments, employers, trade unions, community and youth organizations, and nongovernmental organizations “take special measures to eliminate violence against women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, such as young women, refugee, displaced and internally displaced women, women with disabilities and women migrant workers, including enforcing any existing legislation and developing, as appropriate, new legislation for women migrant workers in both sending and receiving countries” (1995, D.126, para. d). The CEDAW Committee is currently updating its General Recommendation No. 19, adopted in 1992. The new draft elaborates more on the state duty to end VAW, for example in prevention, protection and redress, data collection and monitoring (2016).

The United Nations recognizes VAW as a global problem. In 2008 Ban Ki Moon, then the United Nations Secretary-General, launched the campaign: UNiTE to End Violence against Women. This campaign aims to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and ending all forms of violence against women and girls in all parts of the world (UN Secretary-General 2017). International efforts, such as the United Nations campaign, have been accompanied by national policies promoted and lobbied for by women’s rights groups and their allies. The public sector, as the illustration of the Mexican case will show, has extensive and diverse policies to end VAW, which range from women’s shelters to special prosecutors.

Morrison and Orlando (2004) describe the type and kind of work that different stakeholders are doing to end VAW in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Public policies include service and advocacy efforts in the justice, health, and education sectors. A fourth area includes actions performed by multiple stakeholders across public and private sectors, such as legal assistance, income generation programs, programs for batterers, police intervention, counseling services, psychological care, support groups, telephone hotlines, shelters, and child welfare services (Morrison and Orlando 2004).

The variety and focuses of CSOs are extensive, from advocacy work involving lobbying to improve laws and their application, to sensitizing and training police officers, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to improve social knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to ending VAW (Morrison and Orlando 2004). Other CSOs support women in navigating through the justice system, for example, accompanying women in the legal process. Media campaigns and community-based legal literacy are also part of their activities to raise awareness and provide other tools to the community, and in particular, to women. A more recent approach various CSOs have undertaken is focusing on changing the attitudes and behaviors of males who contribute to VAW.

### III. NEOLIBERAL APPROACHES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Neoliberal ideology provides core principles as the basis for policies to end VAW under the neoliberal state. Harvey describes neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2005, 2). As such, neoliberal policies support market sovereignty, state deregulation to favor capital and private enterprise, elimination of trade barriers, reduction of state social responsibility, and secure property rights, all of this with high costs to human rights, in particular social and economic rights (MacNaughton and Frey, Chapter 1 in this volume). In short, the neoliberal agenda seeks economic and social transformation through free markets (Connell 2014, 5).

Free markets are, according to neoliberalism, the solution to state failure, and it is held up by pillars of: (1) market rationality, the idea that markets are self-regulated and do not need state regulation; (2) individual choice, the liberty of consumers to choose among products, lifestyles, modes of expression, and a wide range of cultural practices (Harvey 2005, 42); and (3) personal responsibility across society. As Thatcher pointed out: “There is no such thing! [referring to society] There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first” (Margaret Thatcher Foundation 1987). The main principle is that each individual has control over his or her own fate and self-development; consequently, state promotion of a social policy agenda is futile (Schild 2000). Neoliberalism’s market-based solutions restrict the action of the state in social policy and transfer welfare actions to civil society and private contractors (Schild 2000). Neoliberalism emphasizes reliance on provision of social services from private contractors, which may mean limited options for

vulnerable populations. All-inclusive services are provided not by the state but in the private realm, often by CSOs.

Under neoliberalism, the lack of secure jobs and social security for women is not perceived as contributing to violence. Economic security for the victims and their children is, however, a social justice issue that is hindered by neoliberal agendas (Weissman 2016). State services for battered women are reduced to the minimum, and state devolution to CSOs does not guarantee sufficient resources for long-term programs and support for women. Financial support in the form of monthly cash for victims may not be enough for them to support themselves. At the same time, neoliberalism erodes collective actors (e.g. women's rights movements and labor movements) with hostile policies and low funding that curtail collective action (Soldatic and Meekosha 2012, 197).

Neoliberalism perceives people as self-interested maximizers in their roles as consumers and workers. Soldatic and Meekosha (2012) argue that neoliberalism coerces the unwilling individual to reshape his or her behavior in favor of market competition. Violence against women is seen as a problem that disrupts individuals' free choice and interferes with the neoliberal state. From this perspective, the violent behavior of individuals, generally men, whose conduct affects women, needs to be corrected. In addition, women victims of violence should seek economic and social support by their own means. As a result, groups that are most marginalized or disadvantaged are worst off under state policies that cut welfare benefits, adopt punitive policies to access welfare, and allow a market that offers low-wage jobs (Soldatic and Meekosha 2012).

The "maquilas" are an example of state support of low-wage jobs mostly taken by young women who have no other choice than to accept these abusive jobs (Lang 2003). The individual is "the relevant unit of analysis" (Rakowski 2000, 120), an individual that is not distinct, but that competes on unequal terms (Sherry 2014). Women, and especially women with disabilities, migrant women and women of ethnic minorities, are hard hit by an unequal market system that does not address intersectional inequalities (Chapman 2016). The neoliberal state is indifferent to disparities and to individual specific needs because each person should be able to take care of his or her individual wants. Women with disabilities, for example, are seen as burdensome drains on society and not only do the policies reflect that, but they also permeate the culture, creating antipathy against persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups (Slater 2012).

As mentioned earlier, neoliberal policies to end VAW are designed on the premise that the solution is to rely on the individuals as well as on their families (Manning 2015, 161 citing Kingfisher 2002). In this regard, neoliberal policies to end VAW consider VAW as an isolated problem that has to do with

a medical condition in those who perpetrate violence and in those who are its victims. Violence against women is then the result of individual conduct and not a structural issue fed by a patriarchal society and gender inequality. Violence against women policies under neoliberalism are gender-neutral. Schild (2000, 25) argues that the neoliberal state advances women's rights as a political goal to transform it "into a technical task that leaves unchallenged the exploitative capitalist relations that enable the successful global economic integration of countries in the region, and may deepen the problem of feminization of poverty."

As the neoliberal state overlooks structural causes of violence, it overlooks prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration and instead focuses almost exclusively on prosecution and punishment. From this perspective, the principles of individual choice and personal responsibility mean that VAW is an issue in the private realm where state intervention is not necessary unless it threatens market values and hinders individual choice. As a result, the focus of neoliberal policies to end VAW remains on prosecution and punishment.

The neoliberal state also seeks to hold a monopoly on the means of violence to protect and ensure freedoms (Harvey 2005), and therefore domestic violence is an interest of the state. Accordingly, the criminal justice system and police intervention pursue prosecution and punishment; however, they push victims of violence aside and disempower them (Manning 2015). Congruent with this approach, VAW policies under neoliberalism must be efficient and show results, with quantified goals for prosecutions favored over assessing the impact of programs on women's lives. In essence, the neoliberal policy agenda focuses on "technocratic policy solutions that must obtain measurable results" (Schild 2000, 27). While it quantifies the number of women who file charges, it remains unconcerned with invisible unreported instances of violence.

#### IV. HOLISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACHES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

From a holistic human rights perspective, there is much support for the inclusion of economic and social rights to combat VAW. The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 19 recognizes that lack of economic independence forces many women to stay in violent relationships (1992, art. 6, para. 23). It is therefore important to emphasize policies that take into account economic and social rights. At the same time, the CESCRC General Comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal rights of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR 1966, art. 3) requires States parties to "provide victims of domestic violence, who

are primarily female, with access to safe housing, remedies and redress for physical, mental and emotional damage” and recognizes that “gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that inhibits the ability to enjoy rights and freedoms, including economic, social and cultural rights, on a basis of equality” (CESCR Committee 2005, para. 27). Further, the United Nations General Assembly resolution adopted on September 21, 2010, recognizes that “women’s poverty and lack of empowerment, as well as their marginalization resulting from their exclusion from social policies and from the benefits of education and sustainable development, can place them at increased risk of violence, and that VAW impedes the social and economic development of communities and States” (2011, 3).

The former Special Rapporteur on VAW, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo (2011), advocates for adopting a holistic approach to end VAW. In her 2011 report, she maintains that a holistic approach to end VAW is

based on the acknowledgement that unless women can achieve economic independence or be empowered socially and politically, the human rights they hear about will remain abstract concepts. This is especially true for those women for whom the lack of access to particular economic and social rights, such as the right to land, housing, and food are directly linked to the increased risk of violence (para. 53).

A holistic human rights approach to end VAW considers it necessary to address all rights to tackle the structural causes that have put women at a disadvantage compared to men (Manjoo 2011, para. 50).

Taking this approach, there are four areas in which states are obliged to act to end VAW: (1) *prevention*, (2) *protection*, (3) *rehabilitation and reintegration*, and (4) *prosecution and punishment* (CEDAW Committee 1992, 2016; CRPD Committee 2016; Manjoo 2012; OHCHR 2012). The state’s *prevention* obligation requires states to take all the appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of all forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse, taking into consideration intersecting forms of discrimination (CEDAW Committee 2016, 11; CRPD 2006, arts. 8 and 16.2). Prevention policies include awareness-raising programs to change societal perceptions that reinforce stereotypes and harm women (CEDAW Committee 2016, 15: b; CRPD 2006, art. 8). Other ways to prevent violence include providing appropriate training materials for all, in particular law enforcement officials, on the prevention of and response to VAW with disabilities (Manjoo 2012, para. 98: d). The state must also adopt measures to address violations of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights as underlying causes of VAW (CEDAW Committee 2016, para. 15). Further, the state obligation to prevent violence also involves regulating the

private sector to eradicate VAW and to collaborate in awareness-raising campaigns (2016, para.15).

The obligation for the state in its role providing *protection* includes ensuring the availability of all support services that safeguard the lives of women, taking into consideration the necessary accommodations when their lives are at risk. Also included as part of protecting victims of VAW are measures to ensure their safety, free legal assistance in legal proceedings, protection against eviction, and restraining orders against offenders (CEDAW Committee 2016, para.15). The obligation to provide protection covers women and their children before and after legal proceedings and also protection for women who decide not to take legal action against the perpetrators of abuse against them. Protection measures need to be based on an approach sensitive to culture, gender, disability, and age, including the use of professionally trained sign-language interpreters for women with hearing disabilities (CRPD Committee 2016).

Under the obligation to provide *rehabilitation and reintegration*, states must ensure that the justice sector provides adequate services, for example one-stop offices that include all services from legal to psychological counseling for victims (Manjoo 2012, para. 98: f). Reintegration also includes reparations, for example monetary compensation and the provision of legal, social, and health services (CEDAW Committee 2016).

Finally, with respect to *prosecution and punishment*, the state must prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence with an emphasis on a monitoring and information system. The information system must include the number of complaints about VAW, the number of women killed, the number of protection orders issued, the rates of dismissal and withdrawal of complaints, and prosecution and conviction rates (CEDAW Committee 2016, 15). In addition, the collected data must be disaggregated in relation to intersecting forms of discrimination against women: ethnicity, nationality, disability, and age (CEDAW Committee 2016, 15). These four state obligations to end VAW also include the importance of attaining all rights, with a major emphasis on economic and social rights, as well as immediate relief as necessary.

Ultimately, the lack of centrality of economic and social rights to ending VAW makes neoliberal approaches unlikely to succeed, whereas holistic human rights approaches addressing all rights are based on the understanding that women need to have social and economic security to get away from violence. The neoliberal agenda to end VAW fails to regulate market forces to ensure fair jobs and affordable housing to women victims of violence. Without these rights, VAW will not be eradicated (True 2012). Human rights standards require that states fulfill their obligations and prevent further revictimization of women. Holistic approaches to end VAW that address all human rights

are more likely to be successful because they address the structural causes that support the continuum of violence and perpetuate women's staying in harmful and violent relationships because of the lack of social and economic resources.

## V. THE CASE OF MEXICO

Mexico, as a case study, presents an opportunity to explore the types of policies – from the neoliberal approach to the holistic human rights approach – available to end VAW. Mexico is an interesting case for analysis owing to its high levels of VAW. The female killings in Ciudad Juárez and the increased violence resulting from drug-cartel activities are negatively affecting Mexican society and have attracted international attention (Ertürk 2006; Schmidt Camacho 2005). As a result, numerous federal and state policies to end VAW have been adopted over the last ten years. Some policies were driven by the women's rights movement and others by the state's interest in improving its reputation in the international community. Mexico ratified CEDAW in 1981 and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention Of Belem Do Para) in 1998, and thus, has committed to fulfill the provisions agreed upon in both international treaties. Mexico also ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1981.

In 2006, the CEDAW Committee urged Mexico to reform the penal code and incorporate femicide as a crime and to adopt legislative measures to protect women from violence (CEDAW Committee 2012). Femicide is the term used in Mexico to denote the violent deaths of women and the lack of state response. Russell and Radford proposed the category in their book *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992), and Lagarde translated it to “femicide” to mean VAW as a state crime, including kidnapping and disappearance (Lagarde y de Los Ríos 2005, 155).

Mexico has a population of 119.5 million, 61.5 million women and 58 million men (INEGI 2015). The 2016 National Survey on Households (ENDIREH) indicated that in Mexico 43.9 percent of women older than fifteen have suffered IPV in the relationship. This survey also provides data on the prevalence of different types of VAW; for example 49 percent women older than fifteen have suffered psychological violence, which includes receiving threats, being humiliated, and being underappreciated. Economic violence is another form of VAW 29 percent of women and occurs when women are forbidden to work and study, or restricted from access to property and money. Physical violence is a life-threatening form of VAW that 34 percent of surveyed women have

suffered. Sexual violence impacted 41.3 percent of women surveyed and is understood as a form of VAW in which a woman is forced by her partner to have sexual relations.

The General Act on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (GAWALFV) was approved in 2006 and enacted on February 1, 2007, followed by similar laws in the thirty-two Mexican states. The GAWALFV enshrines policies to end VAW in law and incorporates the principle of nondiscrimination (2007 art 4-III). It also introduces definitions of community violence and institutional violence. Community violence is defined in Article 16 as acts of violence perpetrated against the individual or a collective of people in public (2007). Institutional violence refers to acts perpetrated by public servants that obstruct justice and discriminate against women (art. 18, 2007). Notably, the GAWALFV references the four human rights standards: (1) *prevention*, (2) *protection*, (3) *rehabilitation and reintegration*, and (4) *prosecution and punishment*.

The *prevention* policies include awareness campaigns, training of public servants, and telephone helplines. Policies to *protect* include emergency services such as shelters operated by public and private institutions. *Rehabilitation and reintegration* focus on a "set of strategies of the three levels of government to provide victims access to restorative justice and establish actions and educational measures for the aggressor with effective diligence and gender perspective" (GAWALFV Regulations 2008, art. 4 para. II). Measures under *prosecution and punishment* include legal and psychological counseling for the victims, training public servants on the different types of violence, risk indicators to safeguard the victim, and comprehensive guidelines to file a complaint.

The GAWALFV (2007, art 65) and its regulations describe women's shelters as a strategy to protect women from violence. Shelters are operated by public and private providers (mostly CSOs) and are monitored by the National Women's Institute (Inmujeres), the National Institute for Social Development (Indesol), and the National Centre for Gender Equity and Sexual and Reproductive Health at the Ministry of Health (CNEGSR), which provide financial resources.

Shelters are places that provide protection and professional assistance to women and their children who have experienced violence. Inmujeres reported seventy-two shelters, thirty-four of which are operated by CSOs and the rest by public authorities (Toledo-Escobar and Lachenal 2015, 19). In 2015 the CNEGSR funded thirty-five shelters, of which thirty-three were operated by CSOs. The number of women assisted in all the shelters reported for the year 2015 was 1,806 women, 1,474 girls and 1,578 boys (CNEGSR 2015, 7–9).

However, there are not enough shelters to cover the demand for these services (Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). National Centre for Gender Equity and Sexual and Reproductive Health at the Ministry of Health funding also included the operation of external centers attached to the shelters to provide counseling and training and to make referrals of women to other shelters. In 2015, the CNEGSR funded thirty centers, and provided psychological and legal counseling that assisted 17,343 women, 4,133 girls, and 4,257 boys (2015, 7–9).

Unfortunately, the data focus on the provision of services rather than the demand for them and in fact there are no data on the demand for services. Such data would be useful to understand the scope of state policies to address VAW relative to its occurrence. In addition, while state data prioritize statistical reporting on the number of services provided and women assisted, they do not address the impact of the services provided. Further, these statistics are not disaggregated to account for intersecting forms of discrimination, such as that against women with disabilities. Additionally, a researcher recounts “there is a problem with the data; for example, the registrar is incomplete, some of the months are lacking, there is no consistency on the criteria” (Personal communication with researcher, September 2014 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). The problem is not about getting the number right; rather, as this scholar mentions, the problem is the clarity and the criteria for reporting and registering information; for example, reporting femicide.

Public and private shelters address women’s socioeconomic distress on a short-term basis by taking actions to safeguard their lives. The ultimate goal of a shelter is to safeguard the woman and her children; women can stay there up to three months. Thereafter, the reintegration process for women who have suffered violence is challenging, and for some, finding a job is a decisive factor. Private shelters run by CSOs do their best to connect with businesses and find other alternatives to employment, such as helping women create their own businesses (Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). The National Network of Shelters (RNR), an organization with forty-four members (twelve public shelters and thirty-three private shelters), is concerned about finding new alternatives for women’s economic independence (RNR-International Congress, October 2015). Opportunities for women exiting from the shelters are limited, however; most are self-employed as vendors and a few manage to work in small social enterprises that a few CSOs have created (Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).

Shelters are tied to public funding and they rely on other government services and the criminal justice system to support women. Furthermore, disability policies are disconnected from the GAWALFV provisions. Shelters are not prepared for women with disabilities and their staff have to learn to navigate through disability-related services provided statewide. The psychologist at one

shelter reported, “it is more difficult for us [CSO staff] when we have women with a cognitive development problem or an intellectual disability because they don’t get quick access to public services.... There is no disability screening and there are long waiting lists” (Personal communication with CSO staff, October 2015 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). In addition, disability policies at the federal and state level do not have specific welfare programs to support women with disabilities who have suffered violence. Women with and without disabilities who have suffered violence must seek their own livelihoods. Mexico’s neoliberal policies promoting self-reliance do not provide securitization for indigenous women and /or women with disabilities in terms of social and economic rights, resulting in their abandonment by the state.

A policy framework to end VAW in Mexico has been in effect for ten years, but it has shifted from: “regulations that were shameful; for example, in order for women to prove domestic violence, it had to be repetitive ” (Personal Communication with Inmujeres, September 2015 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017) to the recognition of femicide as a crime. Feminists in Mexico have worked hard to establish violence as a priority in the national and state agendas and yet inclusion of women who belong to vulnerable groups is still missing. Women with disabilities are forgotten in the Mexican feminist agenda. As the director of a federal entity stated, “They [women with disabilities] are not in their [feminist] agenda. Even if you search for them, you will not find women with disabilities, because it was like the re-vindication [sic] of us strong women, using the word ‘empowered’ and that does not fit with the inclusion of other groups [referring to other vulnerable groups]” (Personal communication with Indesol, September 2015 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).

The public resources provided are not enough to end VAW. Women’s rights groups face delays in delivery of public resources and lack of transparency in the administration of public funding for the shelters (Personal communication with the director of CSO, February 2016 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). The program administered by the CNEGSR allocates resources to CSOs that operate shelters through a public call but the resources vary every year without guaranteeing resources for all. Public and private institutions compete as preferred in neoliberal governance. The state devolution to CSOs thus creates resource competition, which reduces services rather than fostering collaboration to ensure that services are adequate to meet needs.

Since 2012, the National Commission to prevent and eradicate VAW (Conavim) has been promoting the installation of Justice Centers for Women. The Justice Centers are areas for interinstitutional coordination among the federal, state, and municipal governments, as well as CSOs to ensure women’s rights. The centers operate through interinstitutional agreements; there

are currently thirty operating in twenty states (Conavim 2016). These centers have a standardized model that includes the following services: psychological, health, and legal counseling; referrals to emergency shelters; a play center for children; and diverse workshops to empower women offered by CSOs. The state allocates resources for the construction of Justice Centers, one-stop offices to assist women. From 2010 to 2016, the federal government provided approximately 126.45 million Mexican pesos, equivalent to US\$ 6.7 million, to these centers (Conavim 2016). However, these offices do not provide the services that women need. For example, they do not provide economic support, housing, and childcare to help women out of violence. The Justice Centers offer job training, but this is delinked from job placement services and other social policy programs.

The Justice Centers have become the federal strategy to eradicate VAW. However, an issue that has emerged is the lack of resources they have with which to operate. A staff member of the Justice Center in Puebla explained, “the federation invested in the creation of the centers, in adapting and building the infrastructure, to have a dignified place but we don’t have the amount of resources required to operate” (Personal Communication with staff of the Justice Center, January 2016 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). There are also coordination issues because the center has staff from different policy bodies, and they do not answer to the director of the center; rather, their priorities are set by each one of the entities involved (Personal Communication with staff of the Justice Center, January 2016 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).

In the end, the legal tools under a neoliberal state are gender- and disability-neutral and disregard social and economic barriers that contribute to VAW. Private shelters improvise services to provide to women beyond the three-month stay. Neither private nor public shelters are adapted for women with physical disabilities nor do they have expertise to assist women with psychosocial disabilities (Personal Communication with the staff of the Justice Center, January 2016 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017). Public services are not equipped with policies and trained public servants that are sensitive to issues of culture, age, gender, and disability. Therefore, the failure of Mexican policies to end VAW is more acute for indigenous women, women with disabilities, and women living in rural areas. Mexican policies to end VAW are typically seen as a one-dimensional policy issue, meaning that conditions such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability are absent from the gender concerns. In addition, resources are too limited to encompass the challenge that public and private services face in providing social and economic security to women escaping violence. Despite the fact that Mexican policies to end VAW are characterized by a complex state infrastructure based on an advanced normative framework,

VAW is still a huge problem in Mexico (Personal communication with feminist scholar, December 2016 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).

## VI. CONCLUSION

The case of Mexico shows that despite the institutional display of alternatives, such as shelters and one-stop offices, these policies are still palliative measures that have not been able to address the structural causes of VAW by addressing women's social and economic rights. The Mexican state focuses on interventions after violence has occurred; prevention is not a top priority, and state efforts have been insufficient. In the end, it is as one interviewee explained, "Do you see any campaigning to prevent violence? Or do you see information on the services provided depending on the type of violence against women ...? There is none and this is crucial to prevent violence" (Personal communication with specialist, December 2013 in Sánchez Rodríguez 2017).

The GAWALFV and state laws need to be coordinated, supplemented, and reoriented toward a holistic human rights framework that acknowledges the need to address women's economic and social rights. First, the Act needs to clarify what public and private strategies there are to address different types of violence. The law is specific about strategies to address domestic violence but it remains ambiguous on community violence. Secondly, the Act must integrate civic-participation mechanisms to effectively formalize CSO participation in decisionmaking and include their proposals in policy. Although the CSOs have the best knowledge of what is needed in the field to address VAW, the law does not state ways in which the organizations can participate besides providing shelter. Thirdly, the state must fund community resources that promote caring solutions, such as support groups, and improve and strengthen emergency services such as shelters. The Mexican policy framework to end VAW is largely neoliberal in orientation, because it focuses on prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator, and only short-term safety of women and children. From a holistic human rights perspective, the state must adopt additional measures on prevention of VAW as well as rehabilitation and reintegration programs for women – not just for the perpetrators of violence.

Additionally, the Mexican case shows that the state relies on CSO services and yet the resources provided to CSOs are a matter of negotiation every year. The government relies on private shelter services and sends more women to them than these shelters can support, which requires the organizations to stretch their services. Moreover, the Mexican government reports on the number of beneficiaries who are assisted by the organizations but not on the number they are unable to help or on the necessary services that they are unable to

provide. Finally, the government makes increasing demands on the CSOs without contributing to the growth of the organizations.

In sum, neoliberalism influences policymaking through a range of strategies that favor *prosecution and punishment* measures to end VAW to the detriment of *prevention and rehabilitation and reintegration* strategies. *Rehabilitation and reintegration* policies for women require the state to grant women's economic and social rights to ensure women's material reality, such as educational attainment, housing, and access to land, water, food, and work (Manjoo 2011, 73). A holistic human rights approach to end VAW – in contrast to neoliberal approaches – seeks to supply women's economic and social rights, addresses the impact of policies on vulnerable populations, and creates long-term solutions to end VAW.

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