

WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA:

resilience in the face of
multidimensional crisis



Una alianza de:



Presentation



This policy brief is part of a series of three documents produced by [Alianza Latinoamérica Sostenible](#) (ALAS), based on the systematization and monitoring of several community experiences during the year 2023 in Colombia, Chile and Mexico. These projects were supported by ALAS, thanks to funding from the Ford Foundation, with the specific objective of exploring **sustainable recovery**¹ processes in the face of the crisis generated by COVID-19. Special emphasis was placed on aspects that help build resilience.² The findings reported in these policy briefs seek to provide feedback for policies, programs or strategies **to promote just transition³ and resilience in the face of the multiple crises facing humanity, such as climate, biodiversity and health crises**, at the local scale and, in particular, together with the communities of Latin America. To this end, these documents address three themes: rural indigenous communities, women and green jobs.

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- 1 Recovery strategy that promotes measures that reflect the interdependence of economy, health and society with the environment to increase social inclusion and well-being of people, especially the most vulnerable.
 - 2 Resilience is understood as the “conditions that enable people to anticipate and respond to change, minimize the consequences of crises, recover, and seize new opportunities. It is not simply a matter of having the necessary resources at hand to do so, but also the willingness and ability to turn those resources into effective adaptive action” ([Cinner et.al., 2018](#))
 - 3 Just transition is that transition aimed at decarbonization, ensuring that the changes that this implies and that generate negative effects on vulnerable populations are addressed in such a way that these groups are compensated and supported and no one is left behind. In addition, it is sought that the opportunities offered by the transition, can be seized and maximized for these populations.

01

Introduction



This document seeks, based on three community projects, to address the challenges experienced by women in the context of the multidimensional crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), marked by the combination of the climate crisis, pollution and loss of biodiversity. Thus, based on the work of the Alianza Latinoamérica Sostenible with organizations from Mexico and Chile, we reflect on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in this context, which deepened structural gender inequalities, in order to generate public policy recommendations.

From ALAS, we understand the context of the pandemic as a hard opportunity to learn from grassroots communities and their leadership, tracing paths of justice and sustainability. The value of the cases presented here lies in the medium- and long-term processes that women lead, systematizing their successes and challenges to promote their projection and replicability.

In turn, the notion of resilience occupies a central place throughout our reflection due to its importance in the face of the future crises that our societies will face. In this analysis, resilience is understood as a dynamic process of conditions that develop before, during and after social, health or environmental crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This concept will become increasingly useful and relevant

for public policy as crises become more frequent and intense. Therefore, the production of knowledge from concrete experiences is of great value for designing and implementing such policies.

In order to contribute to these reflections, through three community projects in Mexico and Chile, we will develop three different approaches whose inputs will serve to strengthen the resilience of our societies, all with a gender perspective. In the case of Mexico, we present a project promoted by a civil society organization in the municipality of Puebla, in the state of the same name. This seeks to document statistically and experientially the evolution of adolescent pregnancy during the pandemic, in order to influence the local strategy to prevent and care for girls and adolescents who experience pregnancies. In the case of Chile, two case studies are considered, located in

the Valparaíso Region, in the central part of the country. The first, from the Concón municipality, presents an organization led by women that has sought, during and after the pandemic, to activate the social fabric, fostering female leadership and promoting spaces for sustainable social action. The second of these cases, located in the borough of Petorca, recounts the experience of rural drinking water management organizations and their articulation with the local municipality, to promote communicative and technical tools in communities facing water scarcity conditions. Together, these three projects tell us about the possibilities for change that arise from civil society organizations, while at the same time allowing us to propose lessons learned for generating relevant public policies with a gender focus in the scenario of multiple crises faced by LAC communities.



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02

Three views of resilience from a gender perspective



On May 5th, 2023, the UN declared that COVID-19 no longer constitutes an international public health emergency, thus declaring the end of the pandemic that began in 2019. Despite this important announcement, the region still has to face the effects of this crisis, which had a greater impact on women by exacerbating structural gender inequalities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Gender Agenda has recognized four fundamental issues to address the challenges of recovery: socioeconomic inequality, unfair social organization of care, discriminatory cultural patterns (or patriarchal culture of privilege) and hierarchical relations in the public sphere.

Women are over-represented in the poorest households in the region since. By the year 2021, the femininity index of poverty was 116⁴ and, in the case of extreme poverty, 118.3. The pandemic increased this gap as in 2019 this index was 113.9 and 115.5, respectively. This disparity is due to the fact that women receive lower salaries than men and also a significant proportion (27.6%) have no income of their own.

4 This means that for every 100 men living in poor homes in the region, there are 116 women in a similar situation.

During the pandemic, there was a dramatic exit of women from the labor force, described as a [reversal of more than ten years](#). In LAC, between [2019 and 2020](#), the female unemployment rate increased from 9.5% to 12%, while the male rate only increased from 6.8% to 9%. This is mainly explained by the care tasks that are mostly assumed by women and which act as a [structural barrier to their economic autonomy](#). Thus, despite the progressive recovery of the markets, inequality continues, since by [2022](#) the unemployment rate for women was 8.7%, while the unemployment rate for men was 5.9%. Likewise, in [2022](#), the labor participation rate of women in LAC was 51.8% (and that of men, 74.4%), i.e., one out of every two women of working age did not participate in the labor market.

In addition to the socioeconomic and labor gaps, [women's reproductive rights](#) were affected during the pandemic because of the interruption in the provision of sexual and reproductive health services. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 64% of LAC countries reported interruptions in family planning and contraceptive services at the beginning of [2021](#), and several countries reported severe disruption, with a 50% or more decrease in contraceptive supply. In the area of safe abortion and postabortion care, countries reported a significant discontinuation of 33% and, by [2022](#), it is estimated that less than a

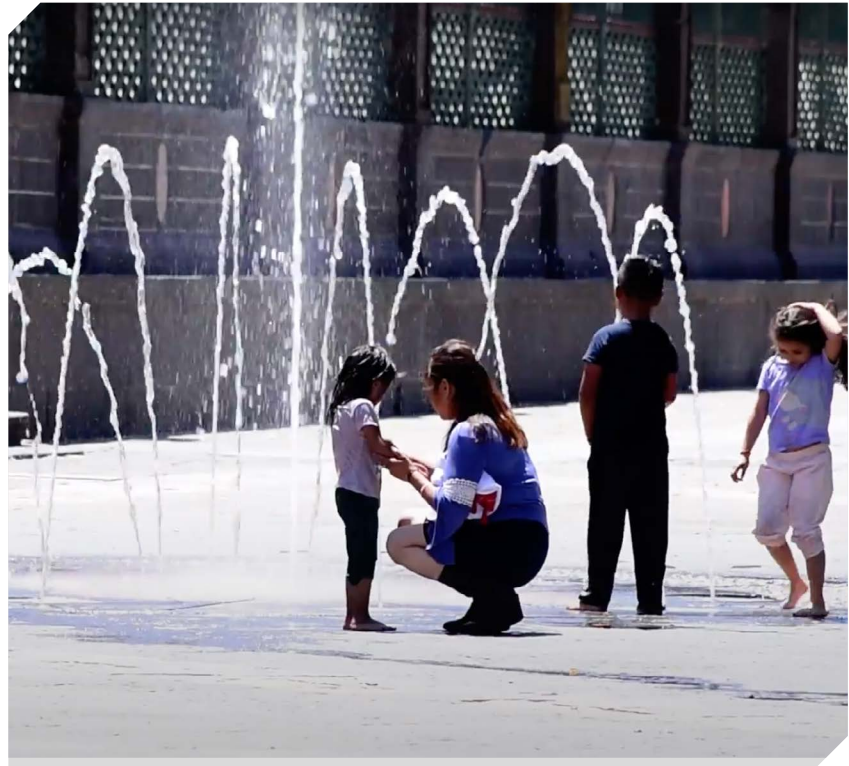
quarter of abortions occurring in the region can be considered safe.

Despite these figures, information gaps still persist in order to reach a detailed diagnosis of gender gaps in the region. For example, the [Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\)](#) points to ambiguity in the evidence available on the evolution of domestic violence during the pandemic, due to the complexity of obtaining reliable data; the same scenario regarding the mental health crisis, because, although we know that women [have been affected to a greater extent](#), the [New Agenda for Mental Health in the Americas](#) states that one of its challenges is the collection of statistics in this regard. The same is true when distinguishing between urban and rural populations or between different age groups, as there is still not enough information to delve deeper into these issues. Consequently, there is a prevailing need to draw lessons from the crisis we have experienced, reflecting beyond it and projecting towards the challenges of our time.

Following the [last Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(COP27\)](#), the countries of the world have decided to move towards decarbonization of our societies, promoting a just transition. With this, we believe that an opportunity is opening up for a transformative agenda that tackles the challenges of sustainability with the problems of



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gender justice in all its diversity: firstly, by opening up ways to strengthen women's participation in the planning and implementation processes of the new measures for decarbonization; and secondly, by addressing the issue of women's participation in the new jobs created by the key industries for decarbonization.

Resilience is very important when considering how to address future crises, but also how to ensure a just transition that considers the vulnerabilities of the most marginalized groups. For this reason, we propose to analyze three dimensions of resilience from a gender perspective, based on the systematization of the experiences of community projects in Mexico and Chile.

- 1. Community resilience:** These are the conditions and processes that allow collectives to respond to adversities, strengthening or developing new resources. Three components can be recognized among these conditions: cultural knowledge, social capacities and organizational strategies. Thus, the prior existence of networks, experiences and paths is fundamental in the processes of community participation and organization in the face of crises. It should be noted that the difficulties to which women are exposed due to structural gender inequalities (precariousness, violence, economic dependence, work overload, among others) increase their vulnerability in contexts of health crises, compared to men.



The importance of gender mainstreaming in public policies arises from the recognition that any policy, on any issue, can potentially advance or set back gender equality.

2. **Institutional resilience:** Refers to the capacity of public policy and institutions to adapt to different eventualities (shocks and crises) without compromising women's access to their rights. This definition is inspired by the concept of gender mainstreaming, or the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in public policies. Its importance stems from the recognition that any policy, on any issue, can potentially [advance or set back gender equality](#). Thus, mechanisms have been identified to ensure that the effects of each policy seek to resolve gender equality gaps on an ongoing basis, especially in times of crisis when, because of the need to address the urgent, structural issues such as the gender gap may be overlooked. Among these institutional resilience [mechanisms](#) are: the collection of data and statistics disaggregated by gender; budget allocated to the gender dimension; and the measurement of impact on gender equality. The use of these tools could prevent an [increase in gender-based violence or the violation of women's sexual and reproductive rights](#) in the event of future crises, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. **Public policies for community resilience:** Aims at those policies that seek to work with communities to anticipate or recover after a crisis. It should be noted that such work, focused on pre- or post-disaster



intervention, requires a mindset centered on the [accompaniment, participation and connection](#) of their leaders, i.e., it is essential to move away from the conventional and asymmetrical model of top-down action to promote dialogue

processes. From this perspective, [policies](#) can incorporate the needs and interests of women, provide spaces for their autonomy and participation in decision-making or even in the planning and implementation of plans in their territories.

03

Community projects in the face of the multidimensional crisis



“Sowing food, harvesting community”: Community resilience

Studies on community resilience show us that those populations that faced environmental or socio-political crises had a greater chance of overcoming them when they maintained an organized participation around community and/or institutional networks, such as those provided by municipalities or territorial health services. In fact, during the health and social crisis caused by the epidemic, citizens mobilized and organized themselves in search of multiple responses to emerging needs.

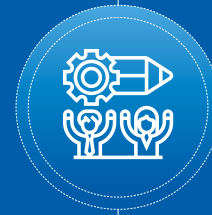
These mobilizations were more successful in communities where there were previous paths and experiences of community participation and organization. Consequently, communities with greater conditions of autonomy demonstrated that they perceived themselves less as recipients of aid, and more as collectives with the capacity for agency, both collective and individual.

A good example of community action carried out during the pandemic is the case of Patrimonio Vivo Costa, based in the borough of Concón (Valparaíso Region, Chile), a community organization led by women who, during the pandemic, organized a campaign

to distribute basic goods baskets to vulnerable families. Thus, they delivered basic products during the quarantine, when work and resources were scarce, connecting especially with women who were the breadwinners of their households. However, after the health emergency, the group they had managed to assemble dispersed.

In order to capitalize and give continuity to this collective experience, during the year 2023, the organization promoted the creation of a free access community garden for women in the borough, promoting agroecology as an environmentally friendly approach to agriculture, while offering a space for improving personal wellbeing, health and nutrition. The project proposed, through a playful and experiential methodology, to build alternatives for the self-sufficiency of the families involved and, in the future, to foster the local economy, creating jobs while implementing positive actions for the social and environmental surroundings.

Thus, through a cycle of 10 workshops and various complementary activities, the project “Sowing food we harvest community” brought together a group of twenty women, whose ages ranged from 35 to 80 years, to create the first open-access community vegetable garden in Concón. After this experience, it can be concluded that the promotion of employment through urban vegetable gardens does not seem feasible, for reasons ranging from the interests of the participants themselves to



Patrimonio Vivo Costa (PAVIC)

It is an organization composed of 26 people, mostly women, dedicated to activities of promotion and conservation of the natural heritage. It should be noted that Concón is a coastal municipality threatened by the impacts of climate change, especially manifested in the reduction of rainfall and the risk of rising sea levels, like much of the Valparaíso Region; it is also affected by real estate speculation and industrial processes, having been declared a saturated zone in 2015.

In this context, the organization has proposed to create, develop, promote and disseminate initiatives to raise awareness about the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the local community.

Thus, since 2018, it has participated in and promoted environmental, cultural and sports projects, promoting the participation and involvement of the community.



the scale of production possible. Nevertheless, with equal or greater relevance, a space for social encounter has been created, which is fundamental after the period of confinement.

This has strengthened the leadership of the women participants, who have acquired increasing responsibility for the management of the garden, while at the same time reactivating the neighborhood social fabric. In fact, six months after the start of the project, its participants have distributed themselves into teams



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of three or four women to cover all the tasks required to maintain the garden on a weekly basis. This demonstrates the collective’s capacity for self-organization, but also the ability to transfer leadership from PAVIC to the women involved in this new project, in order to promote the garden as a space for empowerment, sisterhood and autonomy. During the execution of the project itself, it was noted

that not only was the transfer of knowledge from the monitors and teachers encouraged, but also among the participants themselves.

Currently, the group continues to operate, exploring its articulation with municipal authorities and other public bodies. It should be noted that the progress described above is due to the territorial knowledge and previous networks built by PAVIC, which has been able to design an effective call and a territorially relevant intervention that has reactivated social encounters among women. As a result, we can now speak of a common management experience that leads to the empowerment of its protagonists and the promotion of sisterhood, facilitated by a space for the dissemination of agroecology.

**“Pandemic and Pregnancy:
The case of adolescent girls in Puebla”:
Institutional resilience and sexual
and reproductive health.**

In the face of a crisis, public policies and programs must adapt to the new requirements of the context. It is essential that these responses do not neglect other public challenges that, in turn, will have new negative impacts. Other epidemics, such as Ebola, have demonstrated [the detrimental effect of emergencies on access to essential services](#) that occur when health systems are not well



prepared, putting people's health at risk. Thus, the [disruption in access to contraceptives](#) and the decline in visits to health centers result in both unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions that put women's lives at risk.

Latin America is particularly vulnerable to the phenomenon described above; before the health crisis, the rate of Unmet Need for Contraceptives (NIA, by its Spanish acronym) was [10%](#) and the rate of adolescent childbearing was over [12%](#). This is why both institutional resilience and gender mainstreaming in health policies in the region are so fundamental. Even (and even more so) in contexts of crisis, policies designed to provide essential health care services to adolescents in the region, particularly those that serve vulnerable populations such as girls and adolescents, must have mechanisms to adapt and sustain themselves. Ensuring the sustainability of health services, as well as ensuring gender mainstreaming, [requires planning, investment, generation of reliable gender-disaggregated data, and accountability](#) on the part of public servants regarding how they chose to incorporate a gender perspective in a specific project, how resources were used, and what the impact was.

ODESYR set out to understand what adolescent girls experienced in terms of access to their sexual and reproductive rights. This project arose because ODESYR, as well as organizations such as the [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (ECLAC) and the United



Observatorio de Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (ODESYR)

The Observatorio de Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (**ODESYR**) **is an organization** that promotes the guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights and access to a life free of violence for women. They work in the state of Puebla, Mexico, which has one of the [highest teenage pregnancy rates](#) in Mexico and the region.

Since 2011, ODESYR has been influencing local policy, both at the municipal and state levels, through the generation of information, pedagogical activities and evaluation and diagnostic projects. They specialized in issues of teenage pregnancy, obstetric violence and legal termination of pregnancy, for which they promote an approach of Human Rights, reparation of damages and non-repetition.

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), detected that the increase in gender-based violence and the reduction in access to contraceptives made it crucial to monitor and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on sexual and reproductive rights. Moreover, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, [it is not possible to achieve a fair recovery from the pandemic without cross cutting the gender perspective](#) in public policies. This is because the socio-economic effects of the pandemic had a greater impact on women and their recovery from these effects was slower than that of their male peers.

In Mexico, for the adolescent population, [there was a 41.6% drop from 2019 to 2020](#) in first and subsequent family planning consultations and care in friendly health services. In addition, although to date there are no data that have documented this phenomenon, the Consejo Nacional de Población estimated that because of the pandemic, and in a context of maintenance of sexual and reproductive health services, there would have been a [20% increase in NIA](#) during 2020 and 2021, with over 100,000 additional unintended pregnancies; of these, 21,575 would be in adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age. These estimates could not be confronted with reality, as there was no clear strategy on how to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights and prevent unintended pregnancies during the contingency period.

The state of Puebla (Mexico) in 2021 [registered](#) 75.61 births per 1,000 women between 15 and 19

years of age, one of the highest rates in the region. It ranks fifth nationally in terms of pregnancies among girls between 10 and 14 years of age. Given this context, which is not very visible in the media and the government, ODESYP elaborated a diagnosis of adolescent pregnancy during the pandemic, with the objective of contributing to the improvement of public policies to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights in times of crisis.

To this end, ODESYP conducted surveys and interviews with adolescents and public officials, in addition to consulting official information on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (ENAPEA) and statistics on births and abortions in the years 2020 and 2021. From this research, it is possible to assess which local government actions worked and which need to be improved in order to create policies with a cross-cutting and resilient gender perspective.

During the period of confinement, only one Ministry in the state of Puebla, the Ministry of Health, considered the risk of teenage pregnancy, adapting its policies accordingly. Particularly noteworthy was the opening of a friendly hotline with telephone and WhatsApp counseling to provide continuity to the Sexual and Reproductive Health Program. Despite its good results, it should be noted that this program was stopped at the end of the contingency due to lack of budget.

As mentioned above, a resilient policy in terms of both gender and health requires recording



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relevant data, allocating budget and monitoring/evaluating the actions deployed. ODESYP identified that some Secretariats in Puebla, such as those of Education and Substantive Equality, in charge of ENAPEA, did not meet any of these three requirements, neither during the pandemic nor afterwards. Consequently, there are discrepancies in the number of births of girls and adolescents recorded by different agencies. Without accurate data, it is not possible to construct and evaluate a policy that prioritizes the rights of women, adolescents and girls.

Any policy that seeks to address a crisis requires relevant budgetary allocations. The ENAPEA is a strategy designed with a gender perspective that

includes an Intersectoral Attention for Girls and Adolescent Mothers and Pregnant Women. This care includes, among others, referrals to mental health experts and safe abortion services for minors under 14 years of age. However, it was halted during the pandemic due to the redirection of public resources to the purchase of vaccines.

The lack of access to health services during the COVID-19 pandemic is an example of how, in the face of a crisis, policies that seek to guarantee women's rights cease to be a priority, particularly if gender perspective crosscutting has not been seriously implemented in the different government sectors, including those most concerned by the crisis and recovery.

Given this situation, ODESYP presented the results of its research to key stakeholders in charge of the ENAPEA in Puebla, seeking to act as a bridge between the adolescent population and the government. In particular, ODESYP is promoting the compulsory installation of Local Committees for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy, since the diagnosis showed the importance of local governments to promote pregnancy prevention strategies.

**“Forming cooperative and resilient leadership for water in Petorca”:
Public policies for community resilience.**

Crises, especially those involving social isolation and/or painful individual experiences, can deeply affect the community social fabric; [in some cases](#), even after the crisis, it is not possible to recover the levels of social cohesion that prevailed before the crisis. Progressively, it has been shown that communities with stronger and more active social fabrics have a significant ability to cope with crises. In this sense, the existence of mobilizing leadership and strong organizational processes guarantee a community’s greater capacity to face a catastrophe or shock.

In order to strengthen the resilience of communities, relevant work must be done according to the capacities and conditions of their members; otherwise, a merely conceptual and abstract transfer of knowledge would be totally futile. Public

policies should increasingly assimilate and apply this learning, anticipating the challenges ahead. Thus, it is recommended to facilitate [formative and participatory processes](#) in the communities, from which relevant strategies and resources can be developed to respond to crisis situations. In other words, a community resilience policy should be inserted into a community development policy, taking ingredients and instruments from the world of development and proposing methodologies appropriate to the context.

However, community processes have limits. These include [structural patterns of social vulnerability](#) such as socioeconomic inequality and gender discrimination. In this regard, [ECLAC](#) has proposed strengthening intersectoral coordination; the human rights and intersectionality perspective; the recognition, participation and autonomy of women; normative integrity with a gender perspective; economic and financial stability; and the relevance of localization and progressiveness of participation in public policies.

However, although [there is growing evidence](#) on the importance of community participation, it is not usually prioritized by governmental bodies. For this reason, it is essential to generate evidence, based on statistical data or to systematize qualitative learning from experiences at the local level, as this will allow [public policies to be nurtured](#).

Petorca is a borough of more than 1,500 km², located in the Valparaíso Region (Chile). It has a



The project “Forming cooperative and resilient leaders for water” aimed to strengthen the resilience of rural drinking water systems, providing leadership tools on water issues and concrete solutions for domestic efficiency.

largely dispersed population and is one of the areas most affected by [water scarcity](#) in Chile, especially affecting the smallest and most isolated communities. Throughout the borough there are 24 Rural Drinking Water Organizations (APRs, by its Spanish acronym), currently known as Rural Sanitation Services, which constitute the most local water management system. Their work includes sanitation and supply for human consumption. Historically, in Chile, these organizations have been managed on a community basis, which is why they have become key to the rural social fabric.

In this borough, these organizations have been able to articulate around the Unión Cuenca Río Petorca (Petorca River Basin Union) and the holding of Mesas del Agua (Water Boards), an instance where common water challenges are addressed. Some of the initiatives born under its wing are the “Mingas del Agua”⁵, which have allowed the promotion of cooperative solutions for the most disadvantaged localities. However, the organization was diluted during the pandemic and, despite the

time that has elapsed, community participation has declined. It should be noted that many leaders are women heads of household and senior citizens, so that the double working day, associated with the care work performed by women, as well as the difficulties of mobilization, partly explain this situation.

In this scenario, the project “Forming cooperative and resilient leaders for water” aimed to strengthen the resilience of rural drinking water systems, providing leadership tools on water issues and concrete solutions for domestic efficiency. Specifically, six workshops were held for the construction of dry toilets⁶ and four workshops where tools for effective social communication were developed, working with more than 100 leaders and inhabitants of the borough. This initiative was led by the Cooperativa de Agua Potable de Hierro Viejo and had the Office of Water Affairs of the Municipality of Petorca as a strategic partner.

The dry toilets help to save water in homes in localities with low water supply, allowing the redistribution of water to subsistence activities such as vegetable gardens or animal husbandry.

5 A “[minga](#)” is a community practice based on traditions present throughout South America, where people from the same community or neighborhood collaborate on work that requires numerous participants. While its specific form may differ, its underlying essence revolves around collective effort and solidarity for the betterment of the community and the strengthening of neighborhood networks.

6 The [dry toilet](#) is a system designed to manage human excrement in a hygienic and water-sustainable manner, through alternate pits. Its product is a solid material similar to soil that can be reused as compost.

At the same time, the coaching sessions strengthened the communication, management, administration and operational capacities of these organizations, empowering current water leaders and promoting new leadership.

An important finding is that the fact that it was defined as an event for “women leaders and men leaders” made it especially difficult for women to participate, not only because they did not recognize themselves in this leading role (despite playing it on a daily basis), but also because of the difficulty of abandoning their caregiving tasks. Both situations highlight the need to revalue the social work of women leaders, as well as to address the disparity in the distribution of responsibilities by sex in the household.

Both workshop cycles, dry toilets and leadership skills, require support to continue developing in the medium term, as well as the communities’ own impulse. However, the development and dissemination of guides and manuals for the construction of dry toilets is already planned, as it is an efficient and easily replicable technology, together with a simple monitoring system from the organizations managing this project. At the same time, in order to continue strengthening psychosocial and organizational capacities, the communities themselves will manage new days of the Leadership and Management Skills workshop. In this way, the intention to gradually reactivate the activities of the territorial organizations is being fulfilled.



Cooperativa de Agua Potable de Hierro Viejo

Since 1964, the **Cooperativa de Agua Potable de Hierro Viejo** has supplied drinking water to the town of Hierro Viejo, where today there are more than 370 active members. In addition to ensuring access to water, this organization plays an educational role in environmental matters, raising awareness about the use of water and promoting the principles of cooperativism. It is also a member of the **Unión de Sistemas Agua Potable Rural Cuenca Río Petorca**, which was created in 2015 and brings together 24 community water management organizations. This communal union constitutes a true network of solidarity between organizations of Rural Drinking Water and has managed to have been able to promote joint initiatives with universities in the region, international foundations and the Municipality of Petorca.



Both for the success of this project and for its continuity, the articulation existing beforehand between the rural drinking water communities and their articulation with the local authority has been essential, as it has allowed the design and execution of initiatives relevant to local needs. It has also made it possible to upscale the organization's work to other State services and to opportunities outside the State (such as ALAS itself).

Finally, the existence of a strong social fabric has been the response of local communities to

the challenges of drought and climate change. Understanding and recognizing the role of their leaders is essential for the continuity of this process and also for replicating initiatives and lessons learned, as crucial as the Unión Cuenca Río Petorca, in other territories of the country and the region. Thus, policies should incorporate these capacities in their diagnoses, facilitating citizen dialogues in advance of any disaster, to develop effective and territorially relevant prevention and response plans, but also to identify and address previously existing vulnerability conditions.

04

Reflections and recommendations



This document has proposed three approaches to understand the concept of resilience from a gender perspective; in all cases, the aim was to generate inputs for its incorporation into public policies. The relevance of the lessons learned from these three experiences lies in the strengthening of the connection between public authorities and communities, challenging the “top-down” logic and, instead, fostering co-construction processes in public decision-making.

Firstly, community resilience implies the empowerment and autonomy of individuals and communities; secondly, gender crosscutting promotes the real and effective participation of women in the public sphere; and finally, public policies for resilience make it possible to institutionalize initiatives to guarantee their sustainability over time. The combination of these three dimensions of resilience (community, gender cross-cutting agenda, and public policies) will strengthen the agency capacity of individuals and communities in the face of a scenario of multiple crises and also provide guidelines for better public policies.

However, there are gaps and lessons learned identified in a cross-cutting manner in the three proposed axes. First, the need to contextualize measures to each territory, respecting its characteristics and social processes. Second, the formulation of



Community resilience is understood as a set of conditions that human collectives develop in a dynamic and contextually relevant way to face crises.



public policies requires the generation of evidence and data disaggregated by gender, which allows for a diagnosis of possible differentiated impacts. Third, resilience, in all its dimensions, requires continuous work, both on the part of individuals and public authorities, when acting before, during and after any crisis.

Community resilience

Community resilience is understood as a set of conditions that human collectives develop dynamically and relevant to their context in order to cope with crises. These conditions may exist prior to the occurrence of a crisis, being activated during them, but may also develop

afterwards. Community resilience must be defined in terms of the group itself that puts it into practice, while it always presupposes the existence of some degree of cohesion within the collective. Specifically, in order to strengthen these processes, we propose providing spaces for leadership participation, respecting the temporality of social processes and articulating existing initiatives. Consequently, we recommend:

- 1. Adopt a focus on capacity building and the strengthening of women's leadership:** Direct and sustained assistance can create dependency rather than empowerment. Promoting conditions and capacities for resilience requires spaces for learning and

dialogue that generates management strategies relevant to the needs and capacities of the collective.

2. Promote community response based on the terms and processes of the communities.

It is recommended that public authorities assume the role of recognizing, understanding and respecting long-term social processes, which implies considering previous skills and knowledge in order to determine what contribution the State can make to strengthen community resilience in the face of future adversities. Additionally, this implies paving the way for the allocation of resources and reducing bureaucratic barriers characterized by inflexible and time-limited deadlines and projects, with a view to providing an adaptive response to the crisis, with projection over time.

- 3. Articulate different local initiatives:** To achieve this means fostering spaces that promote pre-existing organizational structures, in line with their own dynamics and objectives. This, in turn, maximizes the impact and sustainability of these interventions by triggering a multiplier (or synergy) effect in the community.

Institutional resilience

We understand the concept of institutional resilience as the capacity of institutions to adapt and adjust public policies to any eventuality

without violating access to the rights of marginalized and discriminated populations, such as women. Both for a just transition and for future crises, it is necessary that all public policies, not only those explicitly designed for a vulnerable population, can be adapted without generating negative impacts for any population group. In this sense, we promote the cross-cutting of the gender perspective, including vulnerable populations in the design of public policies and generating relevant data as tools to generate institutional resilience. This is addressed in the following points:

- 1. Cross-cutting and institutionalizing the gender perspective in public policies:** Sectoral public policies have the potential to move the gender agenda forward or backward. When designing and implementing their recovery and transition strategies, the countries of the region are invited to conduct a context analysis with a gender perspective to study how each policy will affect men and women differently, and what options exist to prevent the gender gap from widening. It is important to carry out this exercise from the design of the strategies, in order to consider the legal and budgetary measures required to institutionalize the strategies that are considered to be adapted and maintained during the crisis.

- 2. Include the people who will be benefited or impacted by a policy in its design. Particularly when the population is in a situation of**

vulnerability: Women, and especially girls, adolescents, indigenous women and older women, are not usually included in the design of policies that seek to improve their well-being or access to their rights. Organized civil society, particularly local and grassroots organizations, can be a good bridge to approach these populations and engage in the dialogues required to design policies that place them at the center.

Public policies for community resilience

Public policies must recognize the complexity of community resilience, directing learning processes and permanently accompanying the preparation of response and adaptation strategies in the face of crisis and change. Placing the protagonism in the communities and their leadership is fundamental for the projection over time of response strategies. However, it is also crucial to problematize the limits of this agency to confront the structural inequalities that generate vulnerability. Therefore, we propose:

- 1. To foster both technical and communicative and psychosocial skills of the people who exercise leadership:** Facilitating the development of these tools has two important advantages; first, it allows empowering actions and coordination within the communities; second, it facilitates the relationship with the authorities to achieve greater incidence in the design of public policies.
- 2. Strengthening the territorial role of the State through local public entities:** In the borough of Petorca, community resilience and hydrological management emerged as an adaptive response to the scarce management capacity of the State in isolated territories in the face of drought. Thus, coordination between community organizations and local authorities becomes essential to generate actions in the face of the crisis. In this way, if it dialogues with the communities, state action at the local level makes it possible to effectively channel public resources towards the generation of relevant solutions at the territorial level.
- 3. Address inequalities in the distribution of household and care work:** To date, women have concentrated household and care work. To address this inequality, it is recommended that public systems for caregiving be implemented, as well as awareness-raising campaigns on the subject. This will facilitate the development of female leadership, distributing household responsibilities between genders. In addition, it is recommended that such systems and campaigns consider the intersection with the rural/urban context and the age groups of the public.
- 4. Adopting a preventive approach to crises to strengthen the social fabric:** Learning



from pre-crisis initiatives means adopting a preventive approach, a crucial component of resilience, enabling the strengthening of the social fabric before, during and after any crisis. Moreover, to maximize the impact of resilience measures, it is necessary not only to replicate initiatives, but also to promote

collaboration between key local organizations and actors. Communities are dynamic in terms of members and relationships, as it is common for many people to be involved in multiple communities simultaneously; therefore, working with these key actors can enhance local initiatives.

Useful resources



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July Criado and **Lorena Tellez** (Transforma).

2023



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