

SUMMARY

STRATEGIC PLAN
EVALUATION REPORT



clacai

CONSORCIO LATINOAMERICANO
CONTRA EL ABORTO INSEGURO

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INTRODUCTION

The Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion (CLACAI) is a regional network that was established in 2006. It promotes access to appropriate information, strategies, and technologies to reduce unsafe abortion and improve access to legal abortion in Latin America. CLACAI works in the framework of full respect for human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, from a gender and equity perspective, as a substantial contribution to the democratic agenda. It is composed of people, organizations, and networks that are dedicated to activism, research, health service provision, legal services, and other related fields.

CLACAI aims to be a leading space of multisectoral articulation in the region in terms of decreasing unsafe abortion and ensuring access to legal abortion. For that reason, in 2014, it approved a new 2015-2019 strategic plan that defines strategic areas and lines of actions to achieve their mission and vision, in addition to institutional objectives to strengthen the Consortium's actions.

To develop the new 2020-2024 CLACAI Strategic Plan, an evaluation of the previous plan took place. The evaluation identified development opportunities for the Consortium, as well as achievements obtained in the framework of the current context, and prospects in the region.

ABORTION IN LATIN AMERICA: EXTREMES INTENSIFY, AND DIFFICULTIES PERSIST

In the region, 82% of countries consider unsafe abortion to be a concerning issue for governments (UN, 2017). However, the work of CLACAI takes place in a complex environment. Although the issue is recognized and there is an increase in the social demand for access to safe abortion, the radicalized opposition has grown as well. Therefore, the regional context can be characterized by the following:

- High rates of unplanned pregnancy and high rates of unsafe abortions, considering that three out of four take place in risky conditions (UN, 2018).
- The majority of countries consider abortion legal only in when the mother's life is at risk, and when there are issues of mental or physical health, rape, or the non-viability of the fetus. In Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Cuba, Guyana and French Guiana, abortion is legal under any circumstance. In a third group of countries, the voluntary interruption of pregnancy is still restricted and penalized (Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, and Haiti).
- Regarding progress, there are regulatory advancements in Chile and Bolivia, certain increase in the social decriminalization of the issue, new financing platforms to counter the negative effects of the US Global Gag Rule¹, improved quality of information on the use of medical abortion, placement of abortion in the public agenda, successful use of health as a factor, and, potentially, the use of risk to life in various countries in the region (e.g., Colombia, Argentina, Chile) due to the advocacy of multiple actors.

(1) The new Global Gag Rule (GGR) prohibits international organizations who receive any type of international funding from the US (including, but not limited to, USAID funds) to carry out abortions, offer counselling on abortion or recognize abortion as an option and as part of family planning and sexual and reproductive healthcare.

- Latin American women, however, continue to face significant obstacles when interrupting an unwanted pregnancy for the following reasons:
 - 1) In countries where abortion is completely or partially decriminalized, there are high rates of doctors who use conscientious objection not to perform the procedure, even in cases of rape or when the mother's life is at risk.
 - 2) Despite progress in the use of misoprostol, Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions where mifepristone is least approved for use. Women mostly resort to the informal market to obtain it.
 - 3) There are deficiencies in abortion and post-abortion services in the region. These are characterized by delays in treatment, inadequate interventions, and attitudes based on prejudice by health professionals.
 - 4) Even when rape is considered a valid cause for abortion, women are still required to provide a complaint report. Often, women avoid filing reports, or find obstacles to do so and thus cannot access a safe abortion.
- Significant consequences due to the renewal of the US Global Gag Rule. This implied budget cuts, and prevented the access –mainly for youth and women with limited resources– to quality contraceptives and family planning, education on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), counselling, and access to safe abortion services.
- In recent years, extremist groups have grown at alarming rates around the world. This, in addition to religious fundamentalism, significant participation of Christian, Catholic and Neo-Pentecostal movements and political parties (for example, Brazil as the most notable case), has had significant repercussions in proposing reforms that favour access to abortion services, SRHR education, and family planning.

CLACAI'S STRATEGY IN HINDSIGHT

The 2015-2019 CLACAI Strategic Plan was developed based on three lines of action: a) improved access to services within existing legal frameworks, b) partial or full decriminalization of abortion, and c) improved access to appropriate and quality medical and surgical technologies for abortion in the first and second trimester. Specifically, the evaluation helped identify findings for each one of these strategic lines, as explained below.

With regard to the line of action that promotes access to abortion within existing legal frameworks, this has been the most significant area of work during the past four years. CLACAI has been effective in supporting actions to broaden the understanding of the health exception, the rape exception, and other exceptions. These achievements include regional events on the issue such as the Meeting of public providers of safe and legal abortion, publications such as the Guide for the promotion and defence of the right to legal abortion, local initiatives, and protection support to people with landmark cases in some countries. The Consortium has also established partnerships with various organizations such as the Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres, Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad, and Planned Parenthood, among others.

In terms of promoting innovative initiatives for partial or full decriminalization of abortion, although there are

concrete examples of CLACAI's work in this line of action, this is considered an area where the Consortium should make further progress in the next few years. This is far from being a weakness of the Consortium. It is, instead, a result of having to prioritize the protection of what has been gained thus far, due to the significant strength of the opposition in the region with increasingly "sophisticated" strategies. On the other hand, CLACAI broadly disseminated information regarding decriminalization, contributed to the development of documents such as "Muerte o cárcel"² (Death or jail) and research on abortion, and has actively participated in events in the region. The Secretariat of CLACAI has also actively participated in follow-up events to the Montevideo Consensus, as well as other accountability spaces during the 2015-2019 period.

Finally, regarding medical and surgical technologies, the issue of medications continues to be one of the areas where there is much work to be done. Although there are concrete examples of how CLACAI has worked during this period, more significant interventions are required, especially in terms of working towards the availability of mifepristone and misoprostol for obstetric indications in the region. The Consortium also contributed to publications such as "Entre la indolencia y el sesgo"³ (Between negligence and bias). Finally, this period also included the development of a project that systematized information on the availability of medications, compliance with registration processes, and the conditions that hinder and facilitate those registrations.

(2) <https://clacai.org/portfolio-item/muerte-o-carcel/>

(3) <https://clacai.org/portfolio-item/la-indolencia-sesgo-derecho-las-mujeres-beneficiarse-los-avances-cientificos-materia-reproductiva/>

VALUABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

The adverse context described above has strengthened CLACAI during this period, while also exalting the value of general achievements, which include the following:

- 1** CLACAI is considered a leading space for multisectoral articulation in the region to decrease unsafe abortion and ensure access to legal abortion.
- 2** It has become a platform that gathers diverse identities in a strategic dialogue forum, brings together diverging voices, always accompanies regional and local processes, is a recognized and legitimate voice, and allows all stakeholders to work in equal conditions.
- 3** It has strengthened its capacity to produce knowledge and disseminate information.
- 4** It was able to adapt itself to respond to emerging changes, such as the opposition of the growing conservative sector that talks about the “gender ideology”.
- 5** The CLACAI Secretariat, as the implementing body, is another strength of the Consortium. The work of PROMSEX⁴ is highly recognized, especially that of its Executive Director, who is, at the same time, the Executive Secretary of CLACAI. Other aspects worth recognizing are its ability to mobilize resources and diverse voices, maintain a respectful dialogue among actors with different agendas, and build collaboratively.
- 6** One of CLACAI’s most significant strengths includes the support to local efforts through the dissemination of information, mobilization of actors to respond to calls to action, and concrete support, local initiatives, and emergency funds.
- 7** The strong presence in social media has enabled greater visibility and legitimacy of the Consortium.
- 8** CLACAI has known how to continue prioritizing its commitment to support and strengthen initiatives that the different members implement locally to improve women’s access to safe abortion. For this, six calls for proposals for projects took place, 115 proposals were evaluated, and 32 were selected that were approved by CLACAI.

(4) PROMSEX is a feminist non-governmental organization in Peru. It consists of men and women, professionals and activists, who aim to contribute to the validity of the integrity and dignity of people in the access to reproductive health and rights, justice, and human security. Available in <https://promsex.org/>

WHERE CAN WE CONTINUE MAKING PROGRESS?

This question, posed in such a way, intends to identify the strategies that allow us to make the most of existing progress regarding abortion in the region while maintaining the ability to respond quickly and strategically to the increasing challenges. The areas of opportunities detailed below correspond to specific strategic lines or institutional objectives. These include:

- 1 Two strategic areas that could potentially be included are “Promoting innovative strategies to face the opposition” and “Promoting the social decriminalization of abortion”. At the same time, there should also be lines of action that address issues such as masculinities and men’s reproductive responsibility in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies.
- 2 Enable spaces that are strategic, instead of informative.
- 3 Think not in terms of “against unsafe abortion” but rather “for safe abortion” or “the right to legal and safe abortion”.
- 4 Regarding efforts to face strong opposition, the Consortium should continue exploring actions that are less reactive and more proactive.
- 5 Include even more diverse voices.
- 6 Promote dialogue on issues that could generate “frictions” among its members.
- 7 Promote greater intersectoral work.
- 8 Promote the development of messages that favour approaching other movements (e.g., messages that highlight intersectionality) and other networks or groups that are working on specific agendas.
- 9 Analyse the diverse national environments and look for bilateral strategies.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As an entity that defends the right to safe abortion, CLACAI is positioned as a key actor in promoting progress on this issue in Latin America. Despite great challenges, the Consortium has been able to establish itself as an articulating space that supports and strengthens the initiatives of its members at the local level. It also implements its own initiatives by promoting a synergy that draws from the diversity of contributions and that constitutes the fundamental aspect that allows envisioning more significant achievements and more rights for youth and women in the region.