



### **Bullying and sexual harassment in the working and educative environments. Violence against women made invisible**

During the last decades the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have advanced in regards to norms and public policy initiatives for the confrontation of some of the manifestations of violence against women, such as domestic violence and in some countries femicide/feminicide. However, other forms of violence continue to remain invisible, and with a lower presence in the public debate. Such as is the case of sexual harassment in the workplace and educative environments, which, beyond limiting the exercising of economic autonomy of women, constitutes a thread in the continuation of gender violence and which also contributes to sustaining a gender order based on discrimination.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident.

Since the 1990s, fifteen countries (13 from Latin America and 2 from the Caribbean) rely on legal regulations against sexual harassment (some take the form of a special law, others classify it as a type of crime in their penal codes, or is integrated as part of the integral laws for protection against violence). Between them, only 8 include sexual harassment also in the learning environment (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela). However there are insufficient developments in protocols for the reporting, audit, and follow-up of cases, as well as the production of knowledge in relation to the phenomenon.

The few studies that have been carried out by some countries coincide in signalling that the majority of those who suffer sexual assault or harassment, are women and that the majority do not report. A study realised in 2014 by the Ministry of Work of Colombia indicated that 13% of the people surveyed had suffered sexual harassment in their place of work, of which 63% were women. However, only 10% of victims raised a complaint or denounced the incident.

With respect to the following-up of denouncements or reports made, in Chile, a study of the Directorate of Work shows that the majority of denouncements are made by women (96.8%) and do not manage to be verified due to the testimonies being considered insufficient or because the women

abandon the employment before the investigation is completed.

In the educational field, in cases where there is legislation, as with sexual harassment at work, the vast majority of victims are women and the percentage of reports made is low.

**Sexual harassment persists as a naturalised and invisibilised behaviour. Despite the fact that women face daily situations of sexual harassment in their places of work and study, these forms of violence are still not being registered and it is not possible to know the impact of the laws and policies created to confront this phenomenon.**

**It is necessary to place in the public discussion that:**

- Sexual harassment is a form of violence that affects the lives of people, especially those of women in their places of work, study, as well as other public spaces.
- The social and symbolic invisibility of this form of violence, its naturalisation, is part of the gender structure and in this way sustains gender discrimination and puts equality at risk.
- This violence forms part of the continued violence against women and its persistence infringes their autonomy.

**Principal measures to combat sexual harassment in working and educative spaces:**

1. Strengthen the mechanisms which ensure the protection of the right to a life free from violence in all its forms.
2. Develop information campaigns that place in the public discussion the forms of violence that are most invisible, such as bullying and sexual harassment.
3. Report on the prevailing normative regulative arrangements in countries, their scope, avenues for reporting and follow-up.
4. Institutionalise strategies and measures of prevention, sanction and reparation for women who suffer sexual harassment in the workplace and educative environment.
5. Incorporate in the curriculum of the education system the debate about harassment as a form of violence that should be eradicated.

**The eradication of all forms of violence against women is the responsibility of everyone.**

**“Without gender equality, sustainable development is not development nor is it sustainable”**

**More information in:**

<http://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/otras-formas-violencia-mujeres-que-reconocer-nombrar-visibilizar>

**UNITE Campaign:**

<http://oig.cepal.org/en/documents/erradicate-violence-against-women-and-girls-latin-america-and-caribbean-12-key-messages>

Division for Gender Affairs, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

<http://www.cepal.org/en/work-areas/gender-affairs>

