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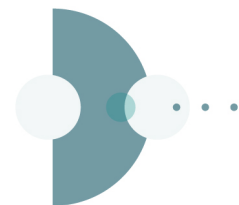
Towards a New Model of
Governance after Covid-19

POLICY BRIEF # 2

THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MIGRANTS AND WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN MEXICO: BETWEEN INEQUALITY AND GOVERNMENT MISALIGNMENT

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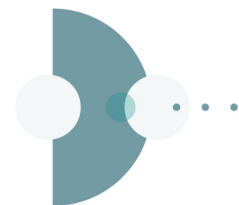
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The Covid-19 pandemic has brought us into uncharted territory. It represents a crisis with health, economic, social, and also political dimensions. Besides, it has exacerbated the inequalities and exclusion suffered by sectors living under conditions of vulnerability. It represents a crisis that has given rise to additional concerns, due to the likely deepening of political discontent and the consolidation of authoritarian practices through the expansion of the Executive Branch's powers and the restrictions of civil rights in a post-Covid-19 scenario.

This reality has shown us that the pandemic poses a challenge to which we cannot respond unilaterally, from the one-sided perspective of a single government or specific community. This is a global challenge with profound impacts on several dimensions of society, as well as differential impacts on the different women and sectors living under more vulnerable conditions. Therefore, it is a challenge that requires a multidimensional solution with an intersectional approach – a solution that is not yet available to us.

This is why we need political practices that promote collective intelligence-oriented collaboration as a way of finding solutions to public challenges, such as the one posed by the pandemic. The premise behind collective intelligence is, precisely, that no one knows everything, but everyone knows something. Translating this fact to the way in which decisions are made in a society represents a significant challenge, and requires collaborative mechanisms involving a variety of actors. It specifically requires collaborative governance.

For this reason, the *Colabora.Lat: Towards a New Model of Governance after Covid-19* project aims at studying and making recommendations on the governance models that have the greatest potential to respond to convoluted crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. By collecting quantitative and qualitative data in several



Latin American countries, we seek to generate diagnostic and prospective information about the impact of collaboration on the feasibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of the responses developed to address the numerous problems that have emerged during the pandemic, especially in vulnerable communities.

The project is grounded in the conviction that defining a framework of good practices in governance, inclusion and gender parity will lay the foundations for a new long-term democratic agreement in Latin America.

Antonella Perini, Jennifer Cyr, and Matías Bianchi

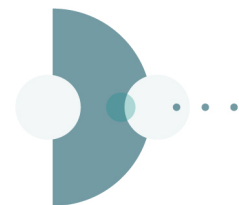
Colabora.Lat is driven by an Implementation Council comprising universities and think tanks with experience in research and territorial anchoring in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico.

Member institutions:



Funding institution:





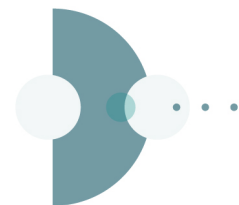
THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS AND MIGRANTS IN MEXICO: A PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS FROM A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

JUAN MÉNDEZ VARGAS AND MARCELA AGUILAR RUBÍ

Nosotrxs

Effects of the pandemic on vulnerable populations: women domestic workers and migrant populations

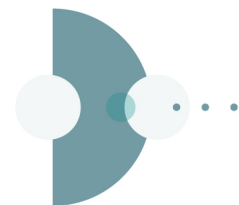
One year after the arrival of Covid-19, Mexico urgently needs to implement a series of public policies to mitigate the strongest adverse effects of the crisis on the more vulnerable groups, such as women domestic workers and migrants. To date, the social, economic and political effects of the pandemic have reinforced inequalities and confirmed the absence of a rights protection system that guarantees the most vulnerable can fully exercise these rights. In Mexico, the system of universal access to healthcare and social security discriminates against the most vulnerable people, and the pandemic has made this situation worse. Among the most important economic effects, as a result of the crisis, approximately 10 million people will join the population living below the poverty line (CONEVAL, 2020).



As for the vulnerable groups selected for the research, the direct consequences that most severely affected them were, in the case of migrants, the closing of borders and their resulting permanent stay in Mexico, and, in the case of women domestic workers, wrongful termination. In neither case are there specific public policies designed to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic (with the exception of the welfare microcredit subprogram for women domestic workers), which leaves migrants and women domestic workers in the margins of society and without any open channels for them to effectively exercise their rights.

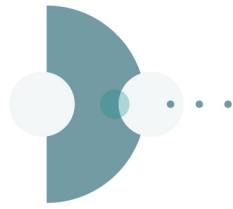
Women domestic workers and migrants are two vulnerable groups resulting from the structural discrimination experienced in Mexico. On the one hand, domestic work is not fully recognized as formal work. As a consequence, those who engage in this type of employment lack labor rights, including access to social security, legal benefits, and a fair income. Since domestic work is not recognized as formal work, there are no mechanisms designed to enforce labor rights. As 98.3% of women domestic workers do not have access to social security, they are also unable to access the limited government support (OIT, 2019).

On the other hand, the migrant population (particularly Central American migrants) is a group that is constantly criminalized. Forced to live in hiding, the full exercise of their rights is restricted not only by the government, but also by the population. This was evidenced in Cuajimalpa, Mexico City, when vaccination centers (unofficially) prevented foreigners from receiving the corresponding dose (Conexión Migrante, 2021). It is important to note that official sources (e.g., the Undersecretary of Prevention and Health Promotion, Hugo López-Gatell) have pointed out that foreigners, regardless of their



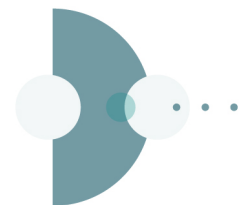
migratory status, will have the opportunity to access Covid-19 preventive measures, i.e. vaccines (Infobae, 2021). However, the percentage of migrants with the possibility of exercising their right to healthcare will be very small as a result of the political and social discrimination they are subjected to.

In this regard, the main problem stems from the lack of appropriately designed and enforced public policies on the protection of vulnerable people's rights. Government actions to respond to the pandemic came late, and they have not achieved the expected results. Firstly, the federal government has been unable to control the chain of infection, and due to the same systems of inequality, people with limited resources are the ones more likely to get Covid-19. Secondly, there has not been a timely response to meet the basic needs of people who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. However, it is important to highlight the efforts made by the federal entities to assume part of the responsibilities of the Federation in assisting their residents. For example, in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, the city council created a temporary shelter, and introduced safe transportation measures, in order to protect the migrant population (El Economista, 2020). However, it should be highlighted that in the case of both the migrant population and women domestic workers, the few actions implemented for the protection of vulnerable people have been the result of the collective effort of civil society organizations, which have unwaveringly pressed the federal and state governments to guarantee that people can fully exercise their rights.



Problems faced by the migrant population

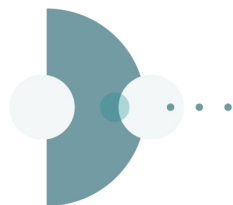
- 1.** The United States-Mexico border was closed, and the southern border was militarized. These actions sparked a chain reaction within migration and human mobility flows, which escalated both as a result of the fact that applications for asylum were no longer processed and due to the limited capacities of Mexican migration agencies.
- 2.** The new social distancing rules limited the response capacity of migrant homes and shelters. As a result, the migrant population was concentrated in overcrowded spaces in border cities, increasing the risk of spreading the virus.
- 3.** The digital divide leads to inequalities in access to rights and public services. In order to carry out paperwork – most of which is now digital – it is necessary to prove nationality by means of national IDs. Without these means of identification, people cannot access, for example, healthcare or social security services, including the Christmas bonus, vacation premium and profit sharing.
- 4.** Since migrants are not subjects with rights in the collective imaginary, discrimination and exclusion prevent them from having access to a decent life without endangering their stay in Mexico. In the case of the transmigrant population specifically, they are at risk of being deported to their own countries of origin.



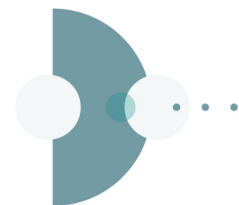
Problems faced by women domestic workers

1. Most women domestic workers have had their hours off reduced (in the case of in-house workers) or have been wrongfully terminated, in both cases with a view to limiting the spread of the virus in the employers' homes.
2. The pandemic caused the dismissal of 435,679 women domestic workers, which accounts for nearly 20% of the labor market (Cebollada, 2021).
3. As they are part of the informal sector, women domestic workers have no legal protection to force employers to respect their labor rights.
4. In the case of full-time workers, also known as "in-house workers," their right to move freely was restricted, since employers prevented them from leaving, arguing that they might contract the virus and put the household at risk. What is more, as is the case for migrants, it was possible to confirm that the few actions implemented for the protection of vulnerable people have been the result of the effort and work of civil society organizations, which have unwaveringly pressed the federal and state governments to guarantee that people can fully exercise their rights.

In conclusion, the actions and initiatives proposed by the federal government have failed to assist vulnerable populations, as they did not follow the process or the logic of public policies. Besides, it is important to highlight the participation of civil society organizations, who collectively exerted pressure on the federal and state governments to guarantee the vulnerable population in Mexican territory was able to effectively exercise of their rights. However, the federal government did not establish clear collaborative mechanisms to



involve multiple civil society organizations in the dissemination of measures. As a consequence, it is necessary to implement a collaborative governance model which favors the inclusion of non-governmental actors in decision-making processes.



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