
FREEDOMS AT RISK

WHO WINS AND WHO LOSES?: ANTI-RIGHTS GROUPS AND INEQUALITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Over the past few decades, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the rise of actors who restrict rights—driven by an alliance between economic elites, conservative groups, and religious fundamentalists—has gained significant momentum, threatening the recognition of fundamental rights and deepening social inequalities.

Through strategies aimed at polarization, fear, and intolerance, these groups and ideologies promote regressive agendas; they seek to impose an absolute truth regarding the family, gender roles, and people’s bodies; and thereby uphold a system of privilege based on patriarchal, discriminatory, and violent patterns. Their influence in various spheres of power is causing a setback in the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people, as well as in equality and inclusion policies. Given this situation, it is urgent to strengthen alliances and promote collective strategies that defend progress in rights and equality policies.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter, LAC) is facing an adverse context for equality, justice, and human rights. Widespread inequality persists, and the fight against poverty has stalled. Many governments are adopting neoliberal and austerity policies, sacrificing social spending and the protection of the most vulnerable populations. An increasing number of governments are opting for authoritarian practices that restrict fundamental freedoms and hinder the work of human rights defenders. Ideologies are being promoted that profoundly challenge human rights values and advances, particularly those related to women's equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. Attacks against emancipatory movements and advocacy organizations have intensified and are systematically undermining international frameworks for the protection of rights.

The rise of the resurgent right or radicalized right, the emergence of fundamentalist religious organizations in political life, and the expansion of ultra-conservative citizen movements are part of a neoliberal, authoritarian, and patriarchal backlash, actively driven by a variety of forces that challenge the universality and expansion of human rights. Despite broad ideological and contextual differences, these forces share an “anti-gender” or “anti-feminist” agenda, and much of their activity is aimed at dismantling equality policies and combating feminism as a movement

to transform everyday life; that is, to contain the advances that threaten the patriarchal *status quo* and the broader critique of feminism in a capitalist, colonial, extractivist, and highly unequal society.

The actions of these groups are primarily aimed at defending the patriarchal gender norms entrenched in society; at delegitimizing movements and activists who challenge these norms (particularly women's rights defenders, feminists, and LGBTIQ+ activists); to positioning, in public opinion and social imaginaries, ideas that reject sex-gender diversity; and to a backlash against policies on gender equality and human rights.

The advance of anti-rights groups **is the result of well-coordinated strategies** that involve building power alliances at the national and international levels; influencing and co-opting spaces of political power; the shrinking of civic space; the delegitimization of the international human rights system; the systematic attack on organizations and actors that defend these rights, particularly feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations; the promotion of hate speech and discrimination based on dogma and prejudice; and the co-optation of various mobilization strategies.

Anti-rights currents¹ in LAC jeopardize progress on rights, as they deepen inequalities and affect, above all, the exercise of rights such as identity, education, health, a life free from violence, civic participation, freedom of thought and expression, and the right of individuals to decide about their own bodies.

A variety of actions are being promoted by progressive movements to confront this reactionary cycle². Among many others, these include strengthening organizations, cultural contestation, influencing social imaginaries, solidarity and sisterhood among movements, challenging these restrictive agendas, building alliances and networks, intersectional and intergenerational dialogue, linking struggles from the local to the transnational level, influencing public policy and legal defense, as well as updating communication and activism strategies.

In the face of the reactionary counteroffensive driven by anti-rights forces, it is urgent that democratic citizens, social movements, progressive political actors, and feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists strengthen their alliances, deepen their solidarity, and promote collective strategies in support of rights and policies aimed at equality and justice.

INTRODUCTION

In a regional context marked by multiple crises and deep inequalities, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) faces a cycle in which the rise of new right-wing or radicalized right-wing forces, the emergence of fundamentalist religious organizations in political life, and the expansion of ultra-conservative citizen movements are jeopardizing advances in human rights—

large part those of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people. These threats are concentrated primarily on sexual and reproductive rights, undermining people's autonomy over their own bodies, with the aim of subjecting them to the productive and reproductive logic of

a capitalist and patriarchal system that generates structural inequality in the region and worldwide. This trend, promoted by anti-rights currents—which bring together economic elites, fundamentalist groups, and conservative political organizations, and which oppose the universality

and expansion of human rights—seeks to reaffirm hierarchies of privilege that have been challenged by advances in equality policies and the recognition of rights. The significance of this global phenomenon and its consequences for equality, justice, and human rights make it necessary to deepen our understanding of anti-rights groups and their impact on the region.

Oxfam has prepared this discussion paper with the aim of contributing to critical reflection on the rise of anti-rights movements in LAC. The paper addresses their strategies, power networks, use of narratives, and influence on institutions and public opinion; at the same time, it highlights some of the main impacts of this trend on policies, institutions, rights, and, in particular, on people's lives.

The content of this document takes a qualitative approach and is based on a series of twenty-five in-depth interviews conducted with individuals from human rights organizations in eight LAC countries (see methodology section), as well as on a review of the literature on the analysis of anti-rights movements and their impact in the region.

1. A REACTIONARY WAVE THREATENS RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN LAC

AN ADVERSE CONTEXT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: NEOLIBERALISM, AUTHORITARIANISM, AND PATRIARCHY IN LAC

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is facing an increasingly challenging context for equality, justice, and human rights. Widespread inequality persists, and the fight against poverty has stalled. Many governments are adopting neoliberal and austerity policies, sacrificing social spending and the protection of the most vulnerable populations. An increasing number of governments are opting for authoritarian practices that restrict fundamental freedoms and hinder the work of human rights defenders. Ideologies are being promoted that radically challenge human rights values and progress, particularly those related to women's equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. Attacks against emancipatory movements and advocacy organizations have intensified and are systematically undermining international frameworks for the protection of rights.

In LAC, the concentration of wealth has continued to accelerate. Over the past year, the wealth of “billionaires” has grown 16 times faster than the regional economy. , the wealthiest 1% in LAC holds more wealth than 90% of the population, while 160 million people live in poverty, 63 million in extreme poverty, and wide gaps in multidimensional inequality persist³ .

Poverty and multidimensional inequality affect women most severely, particularly younger women and girls, as well as rural women, women of African descent, and indigenous women⁴. In 2024, multidimensional poverty affected 54.2% of the rural population, compared to 13.8% of the urban population⁵. It is estimated that, out of every 10 women, 3 live in poverty and 1 in extreme poverty; for indigenous women, the poverty rate reaches 43%, and for women of African descent, 21.6%⁶ . 41.8% of women suffer from food insecurity (32.7% for men). Thirty percent of women have no income of their own (15% for men), only 53.7% of women of working age participate in the labor market (the participation rate for men is 76.2%)⁷ , and most of women's total working time is devoted to unpaid domestic and care work⁸ .

The region has failed to overcome chronic weaknesses in its social protection systems and public services. Health, education, care, and social services are areas that, due to underfunding and a lack of political will, limit the ability to guarantee universal, high-quality coverage that ensures basic rights. These shortcomings have a significant impact on the lives of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. The lack of sexual and reproductive health services has a direct impact on the deterioration of various health indicators. It is estimated that the region's maternal mortality rate (7,200 per 100,000 live births)⁹ is more than six times higher than that of the EU. In LAC, each year, 21 million women do not receive treatment for STIs, 10 million have an unmet need for contraception, 3.6 million undergo unsafe abortions, 554,000 do not give birth in a health facility, and 266,000 do not receive adequate care for obstetric complications¹⁰ .

Despite the vulnerability of a large portion of the population and the weakness of public systems, **many governments have opted for policies of austerity, privatization, and deregulation**, which have contributed to the dismantling of essential public services, the elimination of equality policies, the reduction of social protection systems, and the transfer of state responsibilities to the market. For example, in the case of Argentina, cuts to public spending affected social benefits, subsidies and public services¹¹—a decision linked to increased impoverishment of vulnerable sectors, the elimination of social assistance programs, and the weakening of key public services. The cuts have specifically impacted equality policies; according to ACIJ, in 2024 alone, funding for policies against GBV saw a 65% budget reduction¹². Additionally, in 2025, the Argentine government shut down 13 programs related to sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, and the prevention of GBV¹³. In Ecuador, the merger of the Ministry of Women with the Ministry of the Interior has created uncertainty regarding the operation and allocation of resources for various programs, including shelters, putting at risk the care provided to women survivors of violence¹⁴. In El Salvador, the ISDEMU faced budget cuts amid broader reductions in social spending. In 2025, more than half of the projects aimed at reducing gender gaps and assisting victims of violence were reported to be underfunded¹⁵.

Many of the current governments in LAC have adopted positions contrary to human rights, particularly the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people. Government officials from several countries in the region, including Argentina, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, as well as the presidents-elect of Chile, Honduras, and Costa Rica, have expressed their rejection of the gender perspective, the recognition of gender and sex diversity, safe and legal abortion, comprehensive sex education with a gender focus, and feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements. Many of these governments maintain close ties with conservative religious organizations, whose leading figures are active members of groups that aim to eliminate equality policies and halt progress on rights such as abortion, same-sex marriage, or comprehensive sex education.

The growing influence of these movements within the state is accompanied by both a **deterioration of the rule of law and an increase in authoritarianism**. Several governments in the region have been classified as authoritarian (4 countries) or semi-authoritarian (8 countries)¹⁶; most countries have a “repressive” or “closed” civic space¹⁷, meaning that a large portion of the population lives in contexts where fundamental freedoms are restricted and where they face the risk of repression. In 2024 alone, at least 247 human rights defenders were killed in LAC, and thousands of people are attacked, criminalized, and threatened for defending human rights, particularly defenders of land and territory, feminist activists, and LGBTIQ+ collectives¹⁸.

“There is a **very clear link between neoliberal systems, this concentration of wealth and exploitation of resources, and conservative agendas**. Above all, because from the side of progressive and rights-based agendas comes a significant challenge to these agendas of inequality—not only regarding gender but also all the intersectionalities at play there—such as gender, sexuality, economics, race, ethnicity, and identity—[as well as] a challenge to those neoliberal extractivist policies that exacerbate inequality. It is no coincidence that the business and political groups promoting these agendas have a very natural and fluid connection with anti-rights agendas”¹⁹.

The strengthening of positions that deny inequality and gender-based violence contributes to the persistence and, in some cases, the intensification of inequality and various forms of gender-based violence (GBV). It is estimated that in LAC between 63% and 76% of women and girls have experienced some form of GBV²⁰, and that one in four young women has been a victim of early union or marriage²¹. In 2024, 3,828 women were victims of femicide²²; 361 LGBTIQ+ individuals were murdered²³, and the number of missing women is estimated in the tens of thousands²⁴. At the same time, the stereotypes and social constructs underpinning gender inequality persist. For example, the report *Breaking the Molds of Violence and Inequality in Latin America* notes that, in LAC, 38% of young people surveyed attribute a domestic role to women, 37% hold traditional views on women's role in the workforce, and 30% maintain sexist beliefs regarding women's sexuality, enjoyment, and pleasure²⁵.

Furthermore, **there is a progressive weakening of international agreements and organizations dedicated to the defense of human rights.** Some governments in the Global North have announced their withdrawal from various multilateral organizations, such as the WHO, the Human Rights Council, UNESCO, or UN Women²⁶. Authorities in countries such as Peru, El Salvador, Argentina, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, among others, have shown little willingness to comply with resolutions from bodies such as the IACHR, the OHCHR, or UN Women regarding rights violations in their countries, or have complied only partially and belatedly. Some authorities have disregarded or questioned the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; this is the case, for example, with the LAC network of parliamentarians, which has accused the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of interfering with sovereignty due to its ruling in the case of *Beatriz et al. v. El Salvador*²⁷. At the same time, the dismantling of institutions and equality policies is undermining the international commitments made under CEDAW.

These regressive trends affect women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals most acutely, as they continue to face multiple barriers that limit their autonomy, well-being, and development. While significant progress has been made in recent years in the recognition of their rights and in equality policies²⁸, the persistence of inequality and GBV, along with the lack of guarantees for the fulfillment of sexual and reproductive rights, demonstrate that this progress is insufficient and at risk of being reversed. ECLAC has warned that the context of multiple crises facing the region reinforces the “structural knots of gender inequality”²⁹—such as socioeconomic inequality, patriarchal cultural patterns, the gendered division of labor, and the concentration of power—intensifying the inequality, exclusion, and violence affecting women and LGBTIQ+ people, issues recognized by States within the framework of the Regional Conference on Women (CRM).

THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE OF PRIVILEGE: WHO IS DRIVING THE SETBACKS AND HOW POWER IS REORGANIZING IN THE REGION

The rise of a renewed or radicalized right wing, the emergence of fundamentalist religious organizations in political life, and the expansion of ultra-conservative citizen movements are part of a transnational phenomenon that some authors have termed a “reactionary or neoconservative cycle”³⁰. In this cycle, **certain groups seek to reaffirm and intensify their power and privileges, which have been challenged by processes of democratization, the recognition of rights, and social transformations.** This reaction, which is neoliberal, authoritarian, and patriarchal in nature, is actively driven by a variety of forces that make up a “heterogeneous reactionary ecosystem”³¹, in which Economic, political, and cultural actors coexist within this ecosystem. This ecosystem is organized and operates through business associations, political parties, civil society organizations, citizen movements, religious congregations, and media networks, among others. This group of actors has been generically labeled “anti-rights” due to their radical challenge to the universality and expansion of human rights³².

While these forces direct their attacks against a variety of equality policies and the rights of the most vulnerable groups—such as people living in poverty, the unemployed, migrants, domestic workers, and indigenous communities, among others—they have placed special emphasis on attacking the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people. Despite broad ideological and contextual differences, **these forces share an “anti-gender” and “anti-feminist” stance**, and much of their activity is aimed at dismantling equality policies

and to challenge feminism as a movement for transforming everyday life; that is, they seek to contain the advances that threaten the patriarchal *status quo* and feminism's broader critique of a capitalist, colonial, extractivist, and highly unequal society³³.

One of the main elements linking these currents is the rejection and political use of the misnamed "gender ideology." The incorporation of the gender perspective into international organizations³⁴ involved the adoption of a theoretical framework that addresses the roles of gender roles and inequality as social phenomena rather than "natural facts," recognizing that **inequalities are the product of historical and structural power relations that must be corrected through equality policies**. Since the introduction of the gender perspective into the international legal agenda³⁵, the Catholic Church and like-minded groups have characterized it as a narrative contrary to the "nature" of the sexual division of labor, the roles associated with it, and the structure of the traditional family. In this context, the term "gender ideology" became established as part of a political and discursive strategy focused on combating feminism and LGBTIQ+ activism, which are viewed as movements that challenge a supposed "natural and morally correct order"³⁶.

The narrative against "gender ideology" is based on the idea of restoring a "natural" (in a biological sense) and "morally correct" order as a universal norm, appealing to the common sense embedded in society's patriarchal imagination. Demands such as the right to decide over one's own body or personal self-determination are presented as threats to the family, workplace, and social order³⁷. **The "gender ideology" narrative has made it possible to bring together various actors across the ultra-conservative spectrum** in the articulation of anti-rights and anti-gender agendas, and has been effective in mobilizing certain social sectors in campaigns against sexual and reproductive rights³⁸.

Another unifying element among these groups is their opposition to the "public sphere" as a space for the democratization of rights. Their aim is to dismantle the modest progress made by the state toward universalizing the protection of rights, favoring instead a more exclusionary, hierarchical, and authoritarian state, in which rights are defined privately and in accordance with the market. In this sense, **both market forces and socio-conservative forces converge, aiming for the economic and familial privatization of the public sphere**. These currents have promoted a narrative that portrays certain public policies—such as secular education, public health programs, or labor rights—as interventions against individual and market freedom. Wendy Brown notes that "by extending the reach of the private sphere and deregulation to everything and everywhere, the values and practices that sustain social bonds, social inclusion, social cooperation, social benefits, and social equality are radically eroded"³⁹.

Despite the diversity of forces within this reactionary ecosystem, **four areas or objectives can be identified in LAC on which they focus their action**. The first is the defense of patriarchal gender norms entrenched in society, which are presented as "natural" or "common sense"; the second, the delegitimization of movements and activists who challenge these norms, particularly women's rights defenders, feminists, and LGBTIQ+ activists; the third, the promotion in public opinion and social imaginaries of ideas that reject sex-gender diversity; and the fourth, the backlash against policies on gender equality and human rights⁴⁰.

There is a **close link between the interests of economic elites, the radical right, and fundamentalist groups**, which converge around the defense of free markets, the reduction of the public sphere, the rejection of emancipatory processes, and the dismantling of policies on equality and the protection of rights⁴¹. For example, the ideological work of fundamentalist groups serves to discipline subjectivities, discourages critical perspectives, and promotes acceptance of authoritarian logics of power; the reinforcement of traditional and conservative values—such as the ethic of effort and sacrifice—also serves a development model based on the exploitation of people⁴².

It is through the articulation of the agendas of economic elites, conservative groups, and religious fundamentalists that common objectives are established for an anti-rights movement aimed at halting the processes of democratization and the recognition of human rights in LAC⁴³.

In the current LAC landscape, it is evident that, while the far right expands its spheres of influence, anti-rights groups are advancing in the dissemination of hate and fear-mongering discourses that reach various sectors, with the common goal of reconfiguring cultural pacts and progress in rights and, above all, sustaining an economic model of extreme inequality⁴⁴.

These movements operate in various spheres at the local and transnational levels. They are part of organizations with established structures, funding, and access to political power, which allows them to connect with international conservative networks, expand their social base, strengthen their narrative and influence, promote political initiatives, coordinate with authorities and legislators, exert influence on the international stage, and occupy positions of power within governments and even international organizations⁴⁵.

The case of the Political Network for Values (PNfV)

An example of how anti-rights groups and networks organize, coordinate, and operate is the Red Política por los Valores. It is a global far-right network that serves as a hub for *networking* and training for leaders and activists, guided by a family-oriented vision of society and a rejection of expanded rights, same-sex marriage, secular and public education, abortion, and euthanasia, among other issues. Its leaders and supporters come from far-right political movements and religious fundamentalist circles and promote policies and narratives that seek to prioritize their conservative, nationalist, and religious views over recognized rights frameworks.

Among some of the members of the PNfV are organizations such as Family Watch International, the Center for Family and Human Rights, Alliance Defending Freedom, the World Family Organization (responsible for the World Family Summit), The Heritage Foundation, the Center for Fundamental Rights (a right-wing *think tank* linked to the Hungarian government and organizer of the Conservative Action Political Conference in Europe), and the organization Moms for Liberty (identified as an “extremist and anti-government” entity⁴⁶), or El Yunque (a Mexican organization founded in 1950 as a paramilitary, Catholic, and ultra-conservative society that has evolved into a political action network⁴⁷).

One of the main platforms for coordination among these organizations is the Transatlantic Summit for Freedom and the Culture of Life, which is held annually and includes, in addition to member groups, representatives from various governments. The PNfV has ties to high-ranking government officials, legislators, and leaders of political, religious, and civic organizations, with whom it promotes joint agendas. It has a complex operational structure that allows it to coordinate a growing network of politicians, religious leaders, and academics around the world⁴⁸.



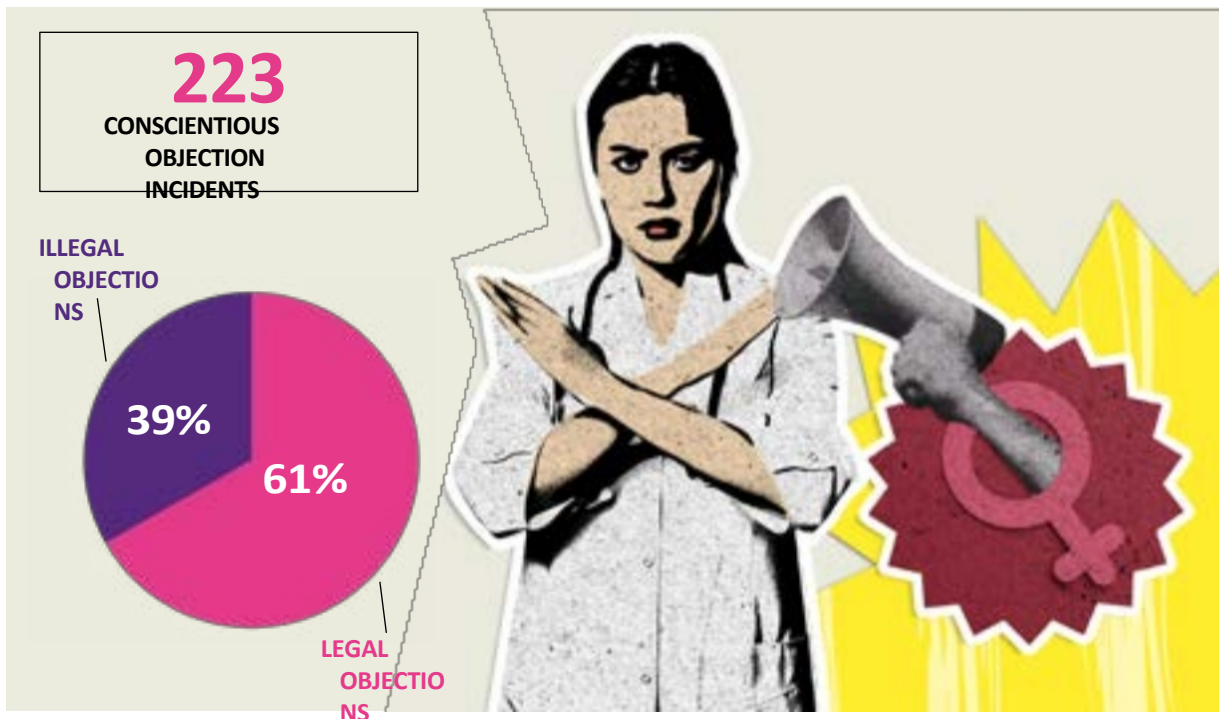
STRATEGIES OF ANTI-RIGHTS GROUPS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (LAC)

The rise of anti-rights groups in LAC is the result of well-articulated strategies and narratives aimed at influencing the population and state power. Among their main strategies and discursive elements are:

- **The strategic use of seemingly secular, democratic, legal, or scientific discourses to support religious and conservative values**⁴⁹. As some of the interviewees indicate: “[...] they use strategies that attempt to secularize the narrative somewhat; they no longer want to present themselves as religious, but rather begin to present themselves as scientists, more secular, more legally oriented, because they are developing a whole strategy centered on legal litigation to prevent progress in the regulatory sphere, for example, on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and all the freedoms related to a dignified life and the right to choose”⁵⁰. One can also identify an appropriation and reinterpretation of the human rights discourse: “they have shifted from religious discourse to that of human rights defenders advocating for the preservation of the family, the protection of children and their rights, so it is no longer a matter of religion but of rights”⁵¹.
- **The use of various welfare-oriented, patronage-based, and opportunistic mechanisms to recruit its social base.** For example, through incentives and scholarships at institutions associated with these organizations⁵²; also through the welfare-based approaches employed by religious entities and their networks in low-income regions with limited state presence⁵³, or by appropriating forms of activism characteristic of rights advocacy movements⁵⁴.
- **The creation of a structure of seemingly secular civil society entities or platforms—such as NGOs, foundations, organizations, institutes, universities, and associations—that compete for civil society’s spaces and resources**⁵⁵, enabling them to have organizations endowed with legitimacy and representation to exert influence over states and public policies; as one interviewee notes: “[...] elite political training projects of the highest caliber have proliferated to train political cadres. Highly trained individuals with this conservative outlook are beginning to emerge, for example, at the Universidad Marroquín in Guatemala”⁵⁶.
- **The creation or co-optation of party structures, political organizations, or the formation of alliances with political actors**, which allow them to intervene directly in electoral processes, occupy positions of political power, or exert decisive influence in decision-making spheres⁵⁷.
- **The infiltration, influence, or delegitimization of international human rights protection bodies**, as one interviewee notes: “[anti-rights groups] have devised a two-pronged attack strategy. On the one hand, they continue to launch external attacks, such as, for example, this strategic line of attacking multilateral human rights organizations, all this questioning of UN resolutions and the Inter-American System, or claiming that they receive conditional funding to impose progressive agendas [...]. But there is also a strategy of infiltration to create disarray from within; [they are] appropriating not only the concepts but also the spaces”⁵⁸.
- **The formation of significant opaque funding networks, supported primarily by economic groups, right-wing political parties, conservative foundations and anti-rights networks from the Global North**; as well as the consolidation of international networks linked to right-wing and far-right organizations in those countries⁵⁹.
- **The use of legal or regulatory loopholes to restrict people’s rights, such as the widespread use of the principle of “conscientious objection,”** which recognizes the right not to act in a manner inconsistent with the moral, religious, or ethical dictates of one’s individual conscience, but which in practice is used as a political strategy to impose religious morality on others’ bodies. Lack of knowledge about laws related

to abortion and the fear of facing legal consequences when providing abortion services promote the inappropriate and widespread use of conscientious objection⁶⁰. In many cases, health professionals declare themselves objectors, leaving entire hospitals unable to perform abortions, which disproportionately affects those who lack the resources to access private services or live in areas with limited healthcare provision. This prevents access to rights such as legal and safe abortion and reinforces inequalities that particularly affect poor, rural, and pregnant women in the most vulnerable situations.

A study on cases of conscientious objection in Argentina indicates that between 2021 and 2023, **223 instances of refusal to perform an abortion on grounds of** . Of these, it is estimated that **two out of every three incidents occurred illegally**, mostly due to institutional objections by public hospitals that lack non-objecting staff or fail to provide referrals when required. There were also individual targeted practices were also recorded that delayed or hindered access to safe abortion, including actions by health personnel who do not have the right to conscientious objection (administrative staff, assistants, sonographers, among others)⁶¹.



- **The monopoly on faith and the racist rejection of other beliefs are imposed by religious fundamentalist groups acting on behalf of broader and more diverse religious institutions and communities that do not share their values⁶².** These narratives seek to eliminate worldviews and spiritual practices that challenge their hegemony, particularly those originating from the region's Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples⁶³, in order to establish a “single truth” as a mechanism of control over people’s bodies under a heteronormative patriarchal model⁶⁴.

NARRATIVES THAT PROMOTE SETBACKS IN RIGHTS IN THE LAC REGION ()

Regarding the use of narratives by anti-rights groups, the development of simplistic and emotional narratives stands out; these offer partial explanations for a complex reality and resort to the manipulation of information, double standards, and dichotomous thinking (good vs. evil) and the assertion of singular truths⁶⁵, among other tactics that allow them to appeal to people through emotions such as fear or frustration, and to exploit vulnerability and social unrest⁶⁶. Among the main characteristics and themes of these narratives are:

- **The use of narratives that assert a supposed “natural and moral order”** in contexts of social crisis, appeal to the population’s insecurity and fear, and offer a normative vision of the family and society as a response to social problems⁶⁷.
- **The defense of the traditional-patriarchal family against a supposed “moral degradation” resulting from greater freedom for women⁶⁸** reinforces traditional gender roles (with an emphasis on the social mandate of motherhood) and can limit women’s control over their own bodies. The narrative of the “traditional family” is widely accepted in social norms and practices that regulate daily life, as one interviewee notes: “people long for a family [...] we know that those 'traditional' models that are promoted are unrealistic, because they do not correspond to the vast majority of families—since families are diverse—but the idea still persists that the family must be safeguarded and protected”⁶⁹.
- **The use of clichés related to guilt, punishment, or sin to appeal to people’s fears.** As one interviewee points out, these clichés constitute “mechanisms of the Church that influence both families and society, and through which we have been shown that salvation lies in one place and not another. This generates fear and uncertainty: if something bad happens to me, it is because I have sinned. These narratives control our bodies, our lives, and our practices”⁽⁷⁰⁾. These discourses focus primarily on women and pregnant people, and emphasize the role of motherhood and the exercise of sexuality for reproductive purposes within heterosexual marriage.
- **From this perspective, sexuality outside the heteronorm and the reproductive function are presented as immoral, wrong, and abnormal.** Women’s bodies are interpreted as “sinful territory” whose capacity for pleasure is restricted. Guilt and sin have a profound impact on the subjectivities of women and gender-diverse people and influence their decisions regarding abortion and family planning. These discourses also generate other effects in daily life, such as workplace or educational discrimination against single mothers or those with active sex lives, as well as the deterioration of mental health, with consequences such as depression and anxiety.
- **They proclaim themselves defenders of children against the supposed threat of comprehensive sex education,** which they present as strategies to “sexualize children” or “turn them gay,” through the use of false information and the exacerbation of deep-rooted social prejudices.
- **These discourses can generate effects of submission that reinforce multidimensional inequalities;** their impact is greatest on women and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, as confirmed by the following testimony: “[...] they demanded many things and, in doing so, put God first. ‘God wouldn’t like that; in the future, He will punish you,’ and you live with the constant fear that it is a sin to do so, and thus, submission. It greatly affects one’s ability to express oneself freely—who one is, who one wants to be”⁷¹.
- **Some factions within the churches, such as the neo-Pentecostals, promote a discourse that combines religious conviction with economic aspirations** and maintain that material success and well-being are linked to commitment to their church’s dogmas⁷². This discursive position has been termed “prosperity theology,” and it appeals to the economic expectations of the working class, linking them to obedience to moral and religious precepts.

2. IMPACTS ON RIGHTS AND THE WIDENING OF INEQUALITY GAPS

The persistence of inequalities and violence affecting women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people is **exacerbated by the growing influence of these movements, which promote agendas that undermine equality policies and the expansion of rights**, while fostering hate speech and the stigmatization of vulnerable people and human rights defenders.

This reactionary wave jeopardizes a series of gains in rights and freedoms across multiple spheres, such as education, health, the fight against GBV, autonomy, and the recognition of diversity. The influence of anti-rights groups has led to the dismantling, in several countries, of key institutions dedicated to combating gender inequality, gender-based violence, and discrimination against diverse groups. This is the case in Argentina, where the Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity was eliminated along with its main social programs⁷³, which the government labeled as “ideological”⁷⁴; or the case of Ecuador, which abolished the Ministry of Women and Human Rights citing the need for budget cuts⁷⁵. This section examines some of the impacts of anti-rights groups’ influence on people’s rights.

RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION

In the educational sphere, anti-rights groups have focused on limiting the incorporation of approaches that integrate perspectives on gender, diversity, and sexual rights. Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)⁷⁶ is a fundamental tool for promoting the right to comprehensive health, gender equality, and respect for diversity; however, these anti-rights groups have driven a growing movement against its incorporation into educational systems, **through a narrative that distorts its objectives, deepens stigmas surrounding sexuality, and deprives children and adolescents of the education necessary to make informed decisions about their bodies and their sexual and reproductive health**⁷⁷. The organization Ipas LAC notes in this regard: “Opposition to ESI exploits fears and assumptions related to abortion, contraception, gender equality, sexual orientation, and gender identity”⁷⁸. At the same time, these narratives challenge the public nature of education through arguments that claim sex education is the responsibility of the family and not the state, thereby framing it as a matter of values and morality to be taught in the private sphere and reducing the state’s responsibility to ensure education grounded in a scientific and secular approach.

In Honduras, the National Congress introduced a motion to promote Bible reading in schools, citing the “loss of values.” **The initiative undermines the principle of secular education and religious pluralism** by elevating Catholic and Evangelical religions as the “sole truth” and bringing them into the public sphere⁷⁹.

One of the most emblematic examples is the “Don’t Mess with My Kids” campaign, led by the “pro-life” movement, which mobilizes groups of parents, guardians, and institutions linked to the education system to oppose the gender approach and ESI in schools. This campaign, which originated in Peru, is part of transnational strategies that link so-called “gender ideology” with the indoctrination of children and whose objective is to restrict progress on gender equality and diversity. In this regard, one of its founders, in an interview with Argentine journalist and writer Diana Cariboni in 2019, states: “We started with sex education because that was what mobilized people the most, since it concerns their children, but what we really want is to eliminate gender—the word ‘gender’—in Peru and throughout the world”⁸⁰.

In several LAC countries, anti-rights groups have succeeded in limiting and even dismantling public policies aimed at incorporating a gender perspective and ESI into education systems. For example, the government of El Salvador ordered the removal of all content related to sexual diversity and the gender perspective from educational materials⁸¹ ; the Peruvian Congress, for its part, passed the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which was described as a mechanism aimed at eliminating the gender perspective from state regulations, policies, and programs⁸² .

RIGHT TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIV

Control over women's bodies represents one of the mechanisms through which religious fundamentalisms seek to uphold the traditional family structure, established gender roles, and control over reproduction⁸³ . This involves framing sexual life as a reproductive practice aimed at generating cheap labor for the heterocapitalist system and at birth control⁸⁴ .

“The body is the place where policies are enacted. Population control is exercised through the female body. Bodies are the very foundation of society”⁸⁵ .

In this sense, anti-rights groups oppose the right to make free, autonomous, conscious, and informed decisions regarding one's own body, the exercise of sexuality, and reproduction.

The influence of these groups contributes to the defunding of public health institutions, research centers and scientific knowledge production⁸⁶, and **limits universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services**. There is also a growing trend toward restricting international cooperation resources directed toward policies and programs in this field. Overall, the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has stagnated, and several major donors have already announced future cuts, a situation that exacerbates risks to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice worldwide⁸⁷ .

For example, the recent suspension of funding to UNFPA⁸⁸ jeopardizes access to essential maternal health services, protection against violence, care for survivors, and other vital care for millions of people. Such decisions are part of a broader strategy aimed at undermining protection frameworks related to sexual and reproductive rights.

THE RIGHT TO FREE, INFORMED, AND VOLUNTARY,

The right to decide on motherhood, including access to safe and legal abortion, is essential to human rights and public health; denying it constitutes a form of discrimination and undermines a set of globally recognized human rights⁸⁹ . Women's struggles for these rights have faced an intense counteroffensive by anti-rights groups anti-rights groups through campaigns such as “Let's Save Both Lives” or through the mobilization of so-called “pro-life” groups in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Legal restrictions on abortion have neither prevented nor reduced the practice; on the contrary, they have led to abortions being performed under illegal, unsafe, risky, precarious, and clandestine conditions, which increases maternal mortality and morbidity. According to the WHO, three out of every four abortions in Latin America are unsafe, and between 4.7% and 13.2% of maternal deaths are due to abortions performed under such conditions⁹⁰ . The risks arising from the failure to recognize the right to legal and safe abortion **affect women and pregnant people in historically marginalized situations most severely**⁹¹ .

The debate over legal abortion involves a profound dispute over decision-making power regarding women’s bodies, life plans, and autonomy⁹². On one side stands women’s right to decide about their own bodies; on the other, the so-called “right to life of the embryo,” which reduces them to a mere means for gestation⁹³, by valuing a potential biological life more than a full, dignified, and autonomous life. **This stance denies women’s citizenship and decision-making capacity, subordinating them to the mandate of compulsory motherhood⁹⁴.**

Current strategies by anti-rights groups to oppose the recognition of the right to abortion have included the construction of a narrative based on legal and medical arguments that support a patriarchal religious worldview. Some authors identify in this dynamic the **production of a “religious science”⁹⁵, in which scientific language is used to reinforce and conceal arguments of a religious nature**, such as the dogma that only God can decide on life⁹⁶.

The case of *Beatriz et al. v. El Salvador*, filed with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, is a proceeding in which **various anti-rights organizations have sought to intervene through legal channels**. During the hearings, the Salvadoran government delegation was supported by legal advisors linked to conservative organizations such as the *Global Center for Human Rights (GCHR)*—the group behind the “NoNextRoe” campaign—to defend, through legal arguments, the criminalization of women charged in connection with obstetric emergencies and to challenge the work of feminist organizations.

RIGHT TO A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE AND

Anti-rights groups share a common interest in maintaining the “neoliberal heterocapitalist” order⁹⁷, which essentially constitutes a regime of death and inequality, in which violence is inherent to its practices of regulation and control. Within this framework, gender-based violence against women and girls is presented as a *continuum* that is reproduced in all spaces of socialization and throughout the entire life cycle⁹⁸. **The normalization of violence—in its various forms—is a strategy employed by these groups that seeks to legitimize it as a tool for social discipline and control**, thereby enabling the subjugation, exploitation, and oppression of women and diverse groups.

Social media has given rise to new forms of GBV and has become a complex space that can both perpetuate and challenge gender stereotypes and violence. When young people were asked about places and situations where they have experienced violence, public spaces—such as the street (57%) and public transportation (46%)—were identified as the most frequent, followed by virtual spaces (41%). **The expansion of the digital environment, coupled with its limited regulation, increases the risk of suffering various types of violence**, such as exposure of private life, sexualization, online harassment, recruitment for sexual exploitation, and human trafficking⁹⁹.

The rise of these trends in LAC reinforces narratives that deny gender-based violence, alongside the defunding and dismantling of key GBV prevention and response programs. This is the case with the Argentine government, which has rejected the definition of femicide¹⁰⁰ and eliminated relevant programs in this area¹⁰¹. CLADEM has pointed out that the rise of right-wing governments and rhetoric, institutional crises, corruption, hate speech, and high levels of social violence are causing a setback in the fight against GBV, as evidenced by the persistence and even increase in femicide rates in several countries in the region¹⁰².

RIGHT TO G R GENDER IDENTITY

LGBTIQ+ people also face punitive and violent practices by anti-rights groups. Religious fundamentalisms strongly oppose sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions that deviate from hegemonic heteronormativity and even hinder the inclusion of their rights in public policy debates. The actions of these groups can be violent and are based on exclusionary and dehumanizing premises. For example, surgical procedures and hormonal treatments to align one's sex with their self-perceived identity remain illegal or inaccessible, while some religious groups continue to pathologize diverse identities and promote "conversion therapies" aimed at aligning gender identity with the cisheteronorm. **Several countries in the region have not recognized self-perceived gender identity or same-sex marriage and lack effective policies against discrimination and violence toward this population.**

RIGHT TO CIVIC AND E PARTICIPATION

The shrinking of civic space and attacks against human rights defenders are on the rise in the region as anti-rights groups gain strength. Those in positions of state power deploy strategies of repression, punitive measures, and militarization—particularly in countries where the rule of law is weak—with the aim of restricting movements defending these rights. Between 2012 and 2023, 35,077 attacks against human rights defenders and organizations have been documented in Mesoamerica¹⁰³. **These attacks tend to intensify against sexual and reproductive rights activists, feminists, or LGBTIQ+ individuals**, who are frequently victims of smear campaigns, stigmatization, slander, hate speech, and incitement to violence¹⁰⁴.

These groups also promote new regulatory frameworks aimed at restricting the work of secular NGOs, human rights organizations, women's organizations, and groups advocating for sexual and reproductive rights¹⁰⁵. **The criminalization of protest and various mechanisms of repression against human rights defenders, feminists, and LGBTIQ+ activists** are intended to discipline and deter their participation in the public sphere. These actions are often accompanied by hate speech, disinformation (*fake news*), and the stigmatization of activists in order to instill narratives in the public imagination that associate them with terrorism, vandalism, or violence¹⁰⁶.

In Bolivia, feminist activists were reported to the authorities and stigmatized by the media after creating protest graffiti¹⁰⁷; in Bogotá, International Women's Day demonstrations were violently suppressed by the police, violating women's right to peaceful protest¹⁰⁸; in Argentina, the "green tide" " have been continuously attacked by anti-rights groups through provocation, stigmatization, the dissemination of false information, and boycotts¹⁰⁹.



THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The media constitute one of the main channels through which anti-rights groups advance their regressive agendas. The financial support they receive, along with the alliances they form and their political power, facilitates their access to these spaces to spread narratives of hate, misinformation, and polarization that influence and manipulate public opinion. These groups also have significant resources to leverage new ICTs, including funding *bots* and social media accounts to disseminate their messages adapted to digital language.

Major social media networks and platforms enable these trends by allowing the proliferation of their discourse without effective regulation¹¹⁰, which can foster dynamics of exclusion and violence. This is the case with Meta (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), which has eliminated its fact-checking program under the pretext of promoting “freedom of expression,” a move that has directly benefited far-right political figures who use these platforms to launch attacks against the LGBTIQ+ community and the feminist movement.

Control of the media and the massive use of social media allow for decisive influence over the construction of common sense, through the selection of content disseminated and the circulation of denialist, anti-rights, anti-gender, or *fake news* messages.

3. R AND EMANCIPATORY RESISTANCE

In a landscape where the regressive agendas of anti-rights groups threaten human rights and social justice, various social movements working to defend and expand rights—such as feminists, LGBTIQ+ collectives, and human rights defenders—have demonstrated that **collective organization and the coordination of mechanisms are vital tools for the defense of rights and freedoms.**

This section highlights some of their key methods, which focus on changing social narratives, strengthening organizations, and building intersectional alliances, among other goals. It also offers reflections on how to counter the coordination of economic elites, conservative groups, and religious fundamentalists. Strategies of emancipatory resistance, the defense of the rule of law, democracy, and public systems are compatible and fundamental to protecting and expanding rights.

INITIATIVES FROM THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

In a landscape dominated by social discontent and frustration, one of the most significant responses to those who promote hatred and fear is the strengthening of solidarity and sisterhood among women’s organizations, feminist movements, LGBTIQ+ collectives, and human rights organizations, as it promotes the unity of diversities against systems of oppression and fosters the development of collective agendas for transformation that advance the construction of sustainable alternatives aimed at revaluing life and human dignity.

The development of networks and ties with diverse social actors and organizations working for human rights—such as trade unions, academia, environmental movements, land defenders, the scientific community, social leaders, and cultural and artistic actors, among others—strengthens and expands strategies for the defense of rights. In this regard, it is essential to promote political actions with a comprehensive and long-term perspective, grounded in networks and alliances that span from the local to the transnational level, that occupy public spaces, and that influence government agendas and local and international regulatory frameworks.

The anti-rights offensive is largely based on prejudices and hegemonic social constructs; therefore, many experiences of resistance, after exposing the violent and discriminatory nature of

a capitalist, authoritarian, and patriarchal system, prioritize education through the

promotion of democratic, inclusive, egalitarian, and social justice values in various spheres such as education, the media, political spaces, and everyday life.

Making anti-rights groups visible and critically analyzing them is the first step toward **understanding their mechanisms of influence and the interests they represent**. This involves questioning their representativeness and social leadership, exposing the political, economic, and religious alliances that sustain them, and revealing the exclusionary, oppressive, and violent nature of their discourses and practices.

Anti-rights movements also face resistance in personal spheres, through inclusive dialogue and the promotion of conversations with peers, within the family, and in the contexts of daily life. **These actions involve challenging positions that support the advance of anti-rights groups**, highlighting the relationships of oppression and inequality that affect women, diverse identities, and vulnerable groups, as well as exposing the objectives of hate speech and regressive agendas.

Religion and faith are fundamental in Latin American and Caribbean societies, making it necessary to build bridges between progressive movements and open, inclusive religious communities that support human rights in order to implement strategies aimed at resisting the anti-rights offensive, creating spaces for dialogue, promoting critical thinking, and proposing new interpretive frameworks for beliefs and social imaginaries. One of the most significant challenges facing feminist and LGBTIQ+ collectives is **to respond effectively to the macro-communication strategies of anti-rights groups, with the aim of dismantling them and building new narratives**. This involves promoting the deconstruction of an entire system of beliefs and values that are deeply rooted and normalized within dominant narratives. To this end, it is essential that social rights movements transform their own narratives into simpler, more emotional, and hopeful language that speaks from their own reality, values local experiences, and redefines forms of resistance.

The strategic use of ICTs and social media constitutes a tool for social change. Civil society, activism, journalism, and social movements are contesting these spaces in the face of hate speech and disinformation disguised as “freedom of expression.”

Activism and cyber-activism are tools of struggle that break into the civic sphere, produce new narratives that promote hope and mobilization, empower the collective, motivate social action, and position diverse feminist perspectives. The strengthening and dissemination of other feminist cultural practices, such as ancestral songs, community weaving, popular pedagogies, feminist theology, and ecofeminism, contribute to sharing transformative knowledge, building community, and consolidating spaces for participation and resistance.

COMMITMENTS TO DEFENDING PUBLIC AND

Advocacy in the legislative and legal spheres has been fundamental to the establishment of regulations and the defense of the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people; therefore, it is necessary to continue working in these areas to ensure the design, oversight, and monitoring of regulations and public policies with a rights-based approach, through alliances with political and institutional actors, as well as with multilateral organizations, academia, and civil society.

Anti-rights actors coordinate through mechanisms that increase the influence of elites over public institutions, such as lobbying, the revolving door, and private financing of political parties; therefore, **it is necessary to strengthen legislative and regulatory oversight and monitoring bodies**. In this context, it is essential to strengthen transparency and accountability, in addition to setting strict limits on private-sector contributions to campaigns and political parties.

A fundamental area of public policy for limiting extreme inequality, curbing elite abuse, and guaranteeing rights is fiscal policy, particularly tax systems. In this regard, **it is crucial to promote a new fiscal pact that explicitly prioritizes the strengthening of public institutions and policies aimed at guaranteeing rights**; simultaneously, progressive tax reforms must be advanced to expand fiscal space by

effective taxes on wealth, primarily targeting large fortunes; reducing tax evasion and preferential treatment of elites through tax breaks.

Finally, **the development of disaggregated statistical data is key to evidence-based decision-making**, in order to accurately measure the differentiated and intersectional impacts of anti-rights policies.

CONCLUSIONS

This document aims to promote debate on the rise of anti-rights groups and their impact on rights in LAC. The conclusions seek to highlight some of the main findings on these issues, with the aim of providing input for analyzing this phenomenon, identifying topics that require further study, and reflecting on response strategies from the perspective of rights advocacy.

Many of the cases presented in this document demonstrate the rise of anti-rights groups in LAC, resulting in a series of well-coordinated strategies that involve, in particular, the building of alliances at the national and international levels, the influence and capture of spaces of political power, the systematic attack on human rights organizations and defenders (especially feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations), and the promotion of narratives of hate and discrimination in public opinion.

Among the findings of this report, certain strategies used by these movements to influence political power and the public stand out.

First, the construction of a simplistic and emotional narrative that explains complex realities through the manipulation of information, double-speak, or dichotomous thinking, to appeal to people's feelings of fear or frustration. This discourse adapts to diverse audiences and is cloaked in a secular, non-religious, and democratic appearance to uphold fundamentalist and exclusionary values.

Second, the expansion of a network of entities and mechanisms aimed at broadening their social base, manifested in the emergence of various civil, religious, academic, and cultural organizations, among others, which play a significant role in ideological penetration and the mobilization of broad social sectors.

Third, a set of political strategies aimed at co-opting spaces of power, such as the creation of political parties, the formation of party alliances, the mobilization of the religious vote, or the infiltration of public institutions.

Fourth, the formation of opaque financing networks through which businesspeople and organizations from the Global North mobilize anti-rights groups in LAC.

These strategies pose challenges for human rights defenders seeking to counter the advance of anti-rights groups in LAC.

The expansion of anti-rights movements is evident in the significant setbacks in rights and equality being imposed by several governments in LAC. The facts presented in this report demonstrate this, as not only have processes of recognizing and expanding rights stalled, but public policies in many countries are being dismantled. Among the affected programs are those related to sexual and reproductive health, comprehensive gender-sensitive sex education, prevention of GBV, recognition of diverse gender identities, and closing multidimensional gaps. **This weakening has direct consequences on the lives of women, LGBTIQ+ people, and their communities**, as it increases the feminization of poverty, teenage pregnancy, maternal and infant mortality, death from unsafe abortions, GBV, and the various forms of discrimination that affect them.

Nevertheless, despite this discouraging scenario, the report also highlights **the resilience and transformative power of numerous movements and organizations that defend the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people**. These initiatives are finding new ways to confront anti-rights forces through intergenerational movements, the mainstreaming of social struggles, the renewal of progressive narratives, engagement in civic and digital spaces, and the creation of new forms of advocacy through art or everyday life.

In the face of the reactionary counteroffensive driven by anti-rights forces, it is urgent that democratic citizens, social movements, progressive political actors, and feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists strengthen their alliances, deepen their solidarity, and promote collective strategies to defend rights and policies aimed at equality and justice.

ACRONYMS

ACIJ: Civil Association for Equality and Justice

LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

ODA: Official Development Assistance

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

IACHR: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

CLADEM: Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights

IACHR: Inter-American Court of Human Rights

CRM: Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

ESI: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ISDEMU: Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women

STIs: Sexually Transmitted Infections

LGBTIQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and more (+)

OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

WHO: World Health Organization **NGO:**

Non-governmental organization **UN:**

United Nations **PNfV:** Political Network for

Values

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

EU: European Union

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

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