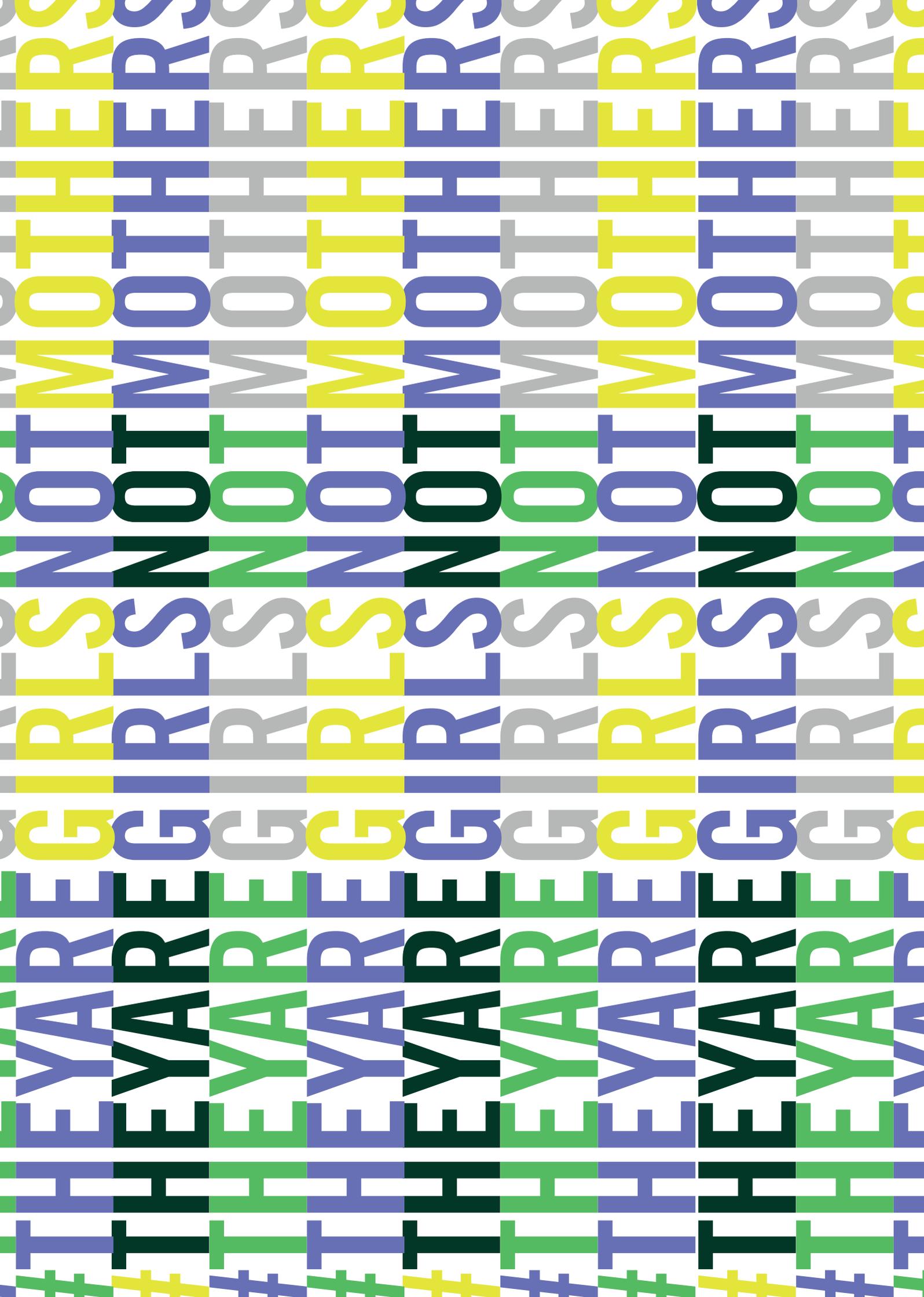


**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



**A MAZE WITH NO WAY OUT:
GIRLS IN PARAGUAY FACE SEXUAL VIOLENCE,
PREGNANCY AND IMPUNITY**



A MAZE WITH NO WAY OUT: Sexual violence, pregnancy and impunity

for girls in Paraguay



Sexual violence against children and adolescents has long devastated lives in Paraguay. For girls, this often results in forced pregnancies and truncated childhoods and life projects. This shocking situation is the result of the direct actions of perpetrators, but also of state failings, such as the absence of appropriate public policies and the failure to enforce existing laws to prevent abuse and provide redress when it does occur.

This Amnesty International research, carried out between 2019 and 2021, found that the highest authorities in Paraguay are not listening to professionals working to address sexual violence against girls. This is putting people who live in situations of vulnerability in danger and leaving them in a labyrinth of human rights violations that, for many survivors, seems to have no way out.

The research is based on 36 interviews in the field and 10 online interviews with experts and public sector workers in the fields of health, education, justice and child and adolescent protection and with input from civil society. This summary presents the main conclusions of the research and a synthesis of [a longer](#)

[report, "They are girls, not mothers"](#) which includes detailed recommendations for Paraguay on how to overcome this human rights crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing sexual violence against children and adolescents, its causes and consequences, effectively is not a simple task. However, there are a series of concrete measures that Paraguay can and must take as a matter of urgency. Some measures require investment while others only require political will to support and protect survivors and guarantee that their right to justice and reparation is respected.

Prevention:

Consult widely with civil society, including human rights organizations and specialists in gender and sexual and reproductive rights, to introduce Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) into the educational system, in accordance with international human rights standards, and provide children and adolescents with the skills and means to raise the alarm if they are at risk of or experience sexual violence.

Care:

Finalize and implement the long-delayed single pathway for providing comprehensive care to children and adolescents who are survivors of sexual abuse, as provided by Law No. 6202, adopted in 2018, to end the chronic revictimization of girls and prioritize survivor-centred justice and reparation. The pathway must be based on human rights and involve participation by civil society and other experts.

Justice and reparation:

Develop, implement and fund a national programme that addresses the specific needs of survivors of sexual violence, including girls who are pregnant, who have given birth or who are in situations of extreme vulnerability, in order to help them rebuild their lives and overcome the serious harm that sexual violence can cause in the long term. Provide access to safe abortion in cases where girls do not want to carry the pregnancy to term, because a pregnancy at this age poses risks to their lives and their physical and mental health.

The cycle of violence

Sexual violence, particularly against children and adolescents, is an open secret in Paraguay.

Despite some legislative advances in recent years, and the international commitments that the country has made, the authorities have not succeeded in implementing basic measures to protect the most vulnerable people in society.

There is a huge crisis. In 2019 alone, the Public Prosecutor's Office received an average of 12 complaints of sexual violence against children and adolescents every day. In 2020, Fono Ayuda 147, a telephone line run by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, received 3,809 reports of physical and psychological abuse and 1,032 of sexual abuse. Experts estimate that for every two cases reported, there are probably at least 10 more they do not hear about.

Most abuses take place in the family setting, at the hands of the victim's father, stepfather, neighbour or uncle, someone who is responsible for providing safety and protection and who often manipulates the survivor into staying silent.

In some cases, the abuse results in pregnancy. More than 1,000 girls aged 14 and under gave



birth in Paraguay between 2019 and the end of 2020. In addition, in 2019, more than 12,000 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 gave birth. Many of these pregnancies may have been the result of sexual violence, a lack of reliable information on how to prevent early pregnancy, or inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health services.

For these girls and adolescents, the options are often very limited, despite the enormous risks that childbirth at this age can pose to their bodies and their lives – girls under the age of 15 años are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications and are at a higher risk of giving birth prematurely.

Paraguay continues to have some of the most restrictive laws in the Americas regarding access to safe and legal abortion. Abortion is a crime that carries a custodial sentence, except in cases where the life of the pregnant woman or girl is in danger.

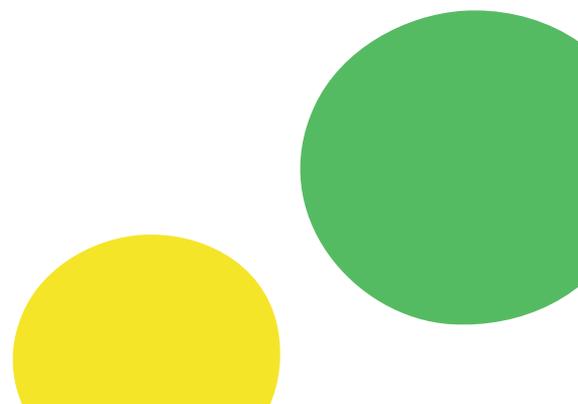
Without options, many end up living with their abusers or in children's homes where they are often pressured to take on the role of mothers,

subjected to further abuses and denied any possibility of a quality education. Forcing someone to continue with a pregnancy can be considered a form of ill-treatment or torture.

Faced with a case of abuse, the state focuses on the pregnancy and, in some cases, on the emotional support of victims, instead of listening to their views. This approach is reflected in the justice system which treats survivors almost exclusively as evidence for legal proceedings. Frequently, the lack of a comprehensive restorative process that includes long-term psychological support, as well as access to health, justice and reparation results in the secondary victimization of survivors.

This report shows that Paraguay does not have an adequate system to prevent sexual violence and protect those who survive it. Law No. 6202, adopted in 2018, which aims to prevent sexual abuse and provide comprehensive care for children and adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse, promised to address some of these deep-rooted problems. But three years after its adoption, it has yet to be put into practice. At the same time, curricula still do not include Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), a key element in providing children and adolescents with the knowledge and skills to demand their rights and enjoy protection from violence.

Meanwhile, some public sector workers try to do what they can, given the few resources available and the lack of political will and children and adolescents in vulnerable situations continue to pay a high price for these failures.



THE STATE IS NOT ADDRESSING violence against women and girls effectively

Laws and protocols vs reality

On paper, Paraguay has a robust body of law, including the Penal Code, which provides a series of protections against sexual violence. Paraguay has also ratified the main international instruments aimed at combating discrimination and violence against women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará).

More recently, the country has introduced a series of protocols and specialized services in each state institution, including for example in the National Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office, to support efforts to promote women's rights, which has helped increase public awareness.

At the same time, Paraguay has made a series of efforts to increase the protection, on paper, of vulnerable groups, through, among other things, the creation of specialized decentralized institutions such

as the Municipal Councils on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Consejerías Municipales por los Derechos del Niño, Niña y Adolescente, CODENI).

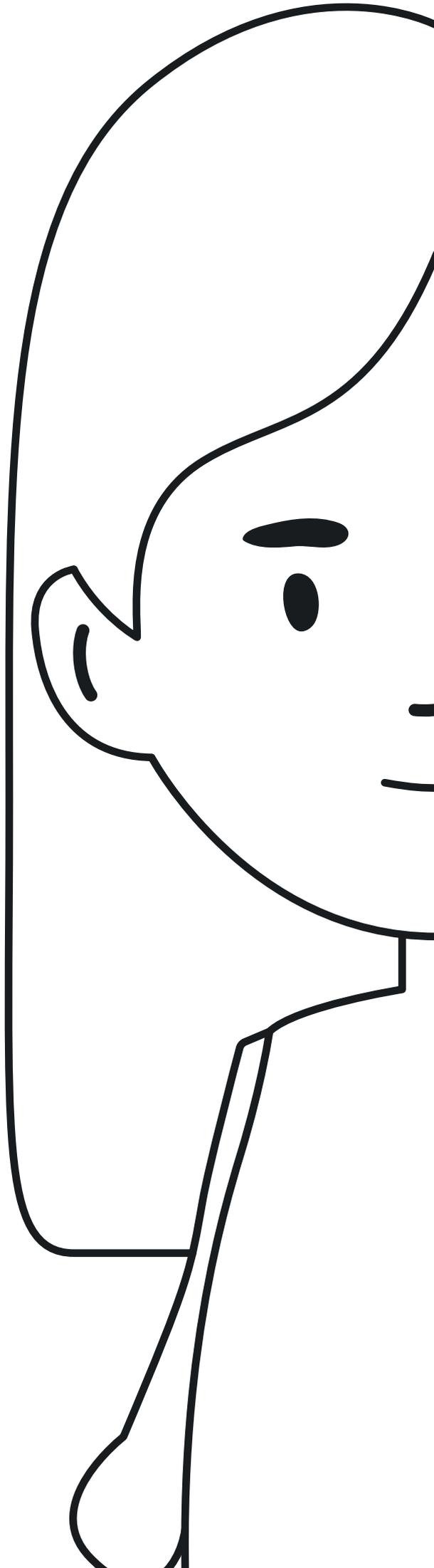
In addition, in 2016, Paraguay adopted a law that promotes positive parenting; in 2017 it modified article 135 of the Penal Code to increase penalties for crimes of sexual abuse against children and adolescents; and at the end of 2018, Law No. 6202 was passed, which sets out guidelines for public service workers on how to provide comprehensive care and prevent sexual abuse. The aim of this law is to prevent secondary victimization and discrimination, provide preventive measures and redress, protect survivors' right to privacy and take survivors' opinions and concerns into account.

It also identifies schools as key spaces for the early detection of sexual abuse in children and adolescents and introduces measures to support education and health personnel to report abuse and testify before the relevant courts.

It also provides for the development of an “Interinstitutional Intervention Pathway to Comprehensively Address Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents”. This pathway – which once developed and implemented should guarantee equal care for all survivors without secondary victimization – was to be developed by May 2019. However, almost three years after the law was enacted, it has yet to be published.

In June 2021, representatives from the Ministry of Children and Adolescents told Amnesty International that they were in the process of completing the pathway and that they aimed to complete it by the end of the year. They also stated that, in parallel and in partnership with various ministries, a pilot programme was being developed to test the pathway in the city of Caaguazú, department of Caaguazú, with a view to subsequently expanding it to other territories.

Although these are positive steps in the development of long-term plans, in practice, survivors of sexual violence continue to suffer from the lack of sufficient effective protection and care.



NORMALIZATION of violence

One of the many barriers preventing the laws adopted from being effective is the “normalization” of sexual relations between girls and adult men.

Experts explained to Amnesty International that this acceptance is particularly common when the man can financially support the whole of the family of the girl or adolescent.

In this environment, girls from marginalized contexts are particularly at risk of abuse. These concerns were highlighted during the UN review of human rights situation in Paraguay in May 2021. There, several participating states drew attention to both the alarming number of adolescent pregnancies and the particular vulnerability of Indigenous girls.

During its research, Amnesty International heard from various sources that Indigenous girls and those from rural areas are often subjected to *criadazgo* (when girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mostly from rural areas, undertake domestic work in higher-income family homes in exchange for food and lodging and the promise that they will attend school, a promise that is often broken). In this

context, far from their family and community, girls may be more exposed to abuse, including sexual violence.

To date, the state's efforts to address the deep-rooted cultural beliefs that justify and/or facilitate the crime of sexual abuse of children and adolescents have been inadequate.

Addressing the normalization of sexual violence and lifting the veil of silence that surrounds it are important steps in achieving the early and immediate detection of sexual abuse, ending impunity and, in the longer term, preventing gender-based violence.

THE STATE IS NOT TAKING

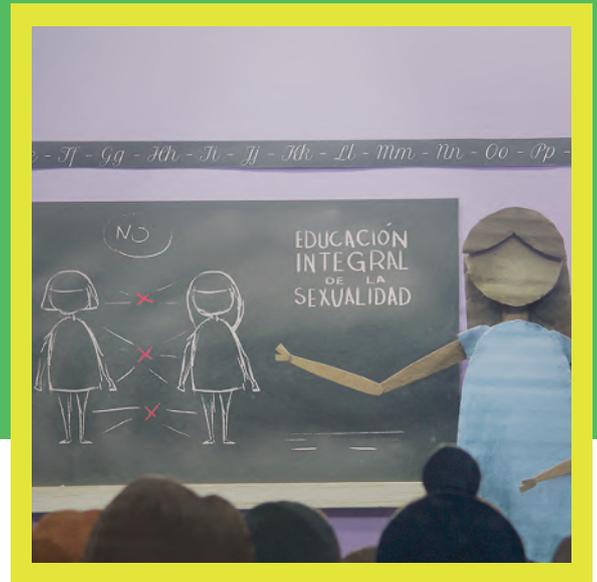
sufficient measures to prevent sexual violence against girls or provide them with adequate care

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) —which includes age-appropriate scientific rights-based information on sexuality, sexual relationships and sexual and reproductive health — is key to improving the health and well-being of young people and preventing sexual violence.

Raising awareness about sexual violence is a key strategy for preventing abuse or at least detecting it early on. The empirical evidence is clear; thanks to CSE, girls learn to identify inappropriate behaviours and to ask for help in time, which prevents abuse; allows girls to escape from the abusive situations in which they find themselves; and prevents unwanted pregnancies.

In addition, when this education includes information on gender and power it is much more effective in reducing HIV, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

Given that in Paraguay, the vast majority of cases of sexual abuse against children and adolescents takes place in a family setting, it is essential that this education is provided in educational settings, as recommended by international standards.



Despite this, in recent years, throughout Latin America, a number of anti-rights groups have opposed any kind of law, policy or programme that promotes gender equality and diversity or that attempts to stop violence and have spearheaded efforts to eliminate CSE in schools.

Their demands seem to have resonated.

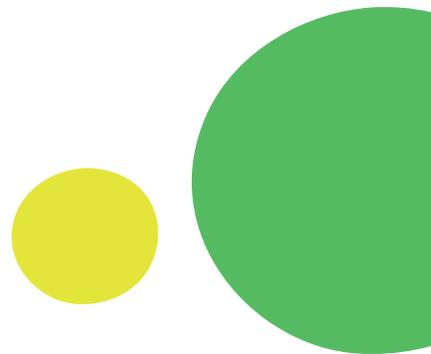
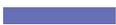
Although the Paraguayan Constitution recognizes the right to human rights education without discrimination and its Childhood and Adolescence Code affirms the importance of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, in 2011, the Ministry of Education and Sciences issued a resolution by which it withdrew “the process of socialization in the Pedagogical Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, as well as its implementation”, blocking a process promoted in framework of broad civil society participation.

In addition, in 2017, the same Ministry issued a wholesale ban on “the dissemination and use of materials...referring to gender theory and/or ideology in educational institutions.” In 2019, it banned the use of a Teacher's Guide on Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

These restrictions have practical consequences. In theory, the educational curriculum in Paraguay, which was given to Amnesty International following a request for access to information includes elements on sexuality. However, several people told Amnesty International that, in practice, sexuality education is limited to explanations from the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare on how to prevent teenage pregnancy. Some reported that in certain religious schools and universities, which are licensed by the state, the information provided on sexual and reproductive health is misleading and not science-based.

In May 2021, Ministry of Education and Science representatives told Amnesty International that they were committed to increasing public spending on education and improving teacher training.

The Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs, Fernando Griffith, explained that they were consulting widely with the aim of reforming the educational curriculum, which would focus on “values” and would include Comprehensive Sexuality Education. However, various professionals working in this field said they were not aware of any consultations taking place, or expressed scepticism that any new curriculum would include a focus on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, gender or diversity.



LIMITED CAPACITY to protect children

In much of Paraguay, the Municipal Councils on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CODENI) are, in theory, responsible for ensuring the protection, promotion and defence of the rights of children.

In practice, a series of challenges makes this task extremely difficult.

According to interviews with people connected with NGOs and CODENI, the multidisciplinary teams of lawyers, psychologists and social and community workers envisaged in the Childhood and Adolescence Code are rare, due to the lack of public funding. In fact, some CODENIs are actually made up of a single individual, who also has other municipal duties and even has to provide support to other institutions, such as the judiciary, although this is not part of their function.

Although the Childhood and Adolescence Code expressly prohibits the participation of CODENI personnel in the judicial process, in practice this is common. CODENI staff members interviewed by Amnesty International said that they rarely refused to carry out these tasks because they wanted to

support the girls and try to ensure that in their actions the authorities responsible took into account the best interests of survivors.

The lack of a single pathway for supporting girls who are survivors of violence, including those who become pregnant, creates a situation in which staff respond based on their individual commitment, conscience or workload, rather than fulfilling responsibilities clearly set out in the existing legal framework. Although staff are generally well-intentioned, many of those interviewed told Amnesty International that this lack of coordination between institutions can create additional problems such as the secondary victimization of girls. They also stated that in many cases staff lack specific training in children's rights and that there is a high staff turnover in the CODENIs.

INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES

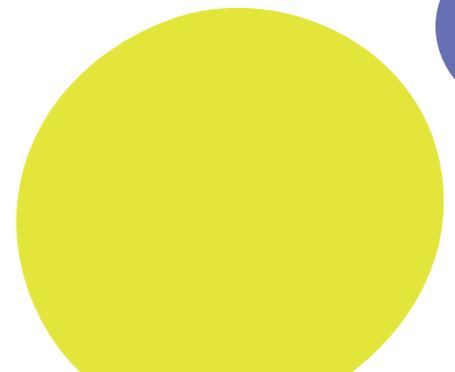
in community health systems

A key aspect of care for survivors, particularly those with limited economic resources, is access to special medical care through the public health programmes run by more than 800 Family Health Units (Unidades de Salud de la Familia, USF) distributed throughout the country.

Each USF covers between 3,500 and 5,000 people from economically disadvantaged areas and is made up of a multidisciplinary team of professionals, who carry out home visits.



However, several USF staff members explained to Amnesty International that they cannot always meet their goals because they are overworked and have to prioritize essential programmes, such as sanitation and the prevention of chronic diseases.



THE STATE DOES NOT provide survivors

with access to justice and transformative reparation

PRIORITIZING PROSECUTION OVER REPARATION

“The Public Prosecutor’s Office does not focus on the girls’ needs, the victim is an object of evidence, not a subject of care. Because what they [the prosecutors] are seeking is evidence of a crime.” Teresa Martínez, Minister for Childhood and Adolescence.

According to international human rights standards, states must strengthen the guarantees of protection during investigations and criminal proceedings in cases involving the rape of children or adolescents, especially if the sexual violence took place within the family. Failure by the state to act with due diligence in judicial proceedings can constitute institutionalized violence and increase the impact and trauma experienced.

In addition, states must provide a range of services to ensure reparation for survivors. According to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Inter-American Court), health centres must provide comprehensive, immediate and long-term psychological care that specifically addresses the “severe damage and psychological, even social, effects” of sexual violence and pregnancy, especially when the victim had a relationship

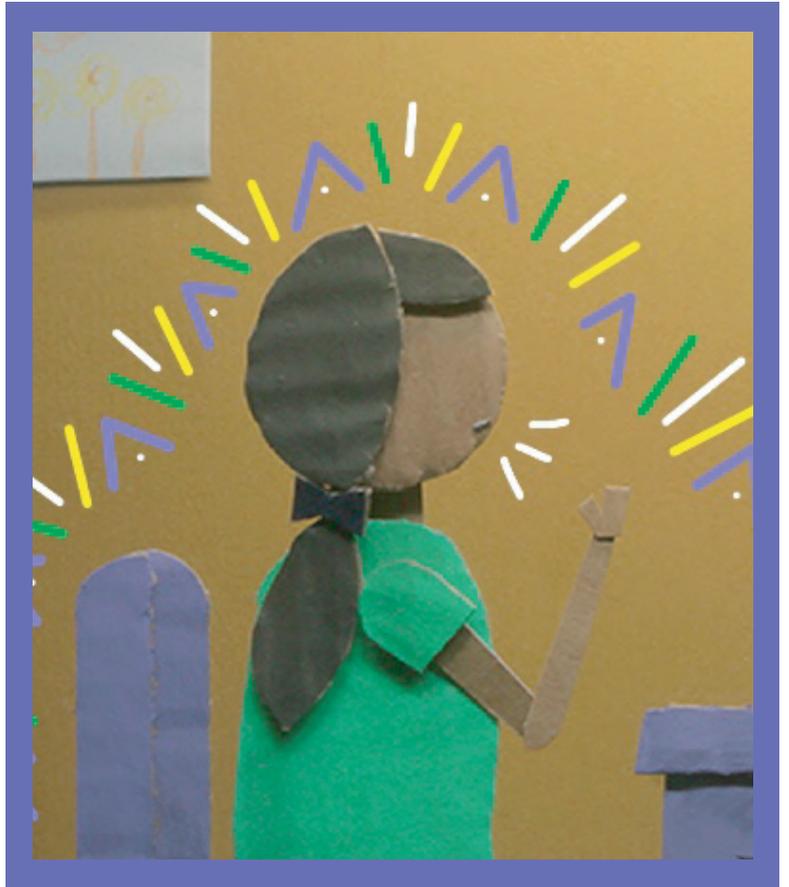


of trust with the abuser.

In Paraguay, various institutional protocols have been designed and implemented to address the needs of survivors of sexual violence in terms of medical care and access to justice. However, Amnesty International found that the authorities' priority in dealing with girls who report sexual violence or are pregnant appears to be gathering evidence to prosecute the alleged perpetrator rather than assessing all the needs of the survivor.

The country, for example, lacks a comprehensive programme for coordinating care and reparation for survivors of sexual violence. This means, in practice, that girls and those supporting them have to contact multiple state institutions, which barely

coordinate with each other, located in the country's main cities, in order to rebuild their lives after experiencing sexual abuse and being forced to carry pregnancies to term.



SECONDARY victimization

According to international standards, the authorities have a duty not only to refrain from inflicting further trauma, but also a positive obligation to ensure that girl survivors of sexual violence can participate effectively in judicial proceedings.

In Paraguay, secondary victimization is very common. One of the reasons for this is that each of the parties involved in the care pathway (teachers, medical professionals, CODENI personnel, psychology professionals, the Ombudsperson's Office, the prosecution, forensic departments and the courts, among others) have direct access to survivors and subject them to separate interviews at various times when sexual violence is suspected.

The lack of inter-agency coordination means that survivors must often report traumatic events over and over again, sometimes for years, which prevents them from healing and overcoming the trauma.

One strategy to avoid secondary victimization during judicial proceedings is using the Gesell Chamber as a way to obtain evidence and testimonies for judicial hearings in cases involving children and adolescents who are survivors of sexual violence. The Brasilia Regulations, written by representatives of the judiciary of the 23 Ibero-American countries, recommend that, in addition, they have an opportunity to give their testimony to the court

prior to the hearing, for example, by means of a video recording.

Another way in which children and adolescents who experience sexual violence can experience secondary victimization is when the institutions supposedly responsible for looking after them breach their confidentiality. According to the statements of various government officials and members of NGOs, significant information about pregnant girls and survivors of sexual violence has sometimes been leaked to the media.

This breach of victims' confidentiality can cause serious psychological harm and is especially problematic in a country like Paraguay, with a relatively small population and a conservative society that tends to blame survivors of sexual violence. When this is done by medical personnel working in the public health service, this breach of patient confidentiality may constitute institutional violence, in addition to violating national law.

QUESTIONING survivors

“In most cases, there are no physical signs of sexual abuse, particularly if the abuse is not reported within 72 hours of it happening. If we don’t find physical signs, that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen but this is sometimes how the prosecutors interpret it, and the girl does not see a forensic psychologist who could determine whether the sexual abuse happened or not.” Gynecologist working in the public sector.

According to the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), all pregnancies of girls under 14 years of age should be considered non-consensual and a consequence of sexual violence, except when they are the result of sexual relations between peers; that is, between young people of a similar age. Furthermore, in cases of violence against women, the testimony of the victim is fundamental evidence, as established by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Despite this, one of the main obstacles that girls in Paraguay face in accessing justice is the lack of weight given to their voices. Amnesty International found that their testimonies as survivors of sexual violence are not treated as credible or having probative value and their views are not taken into account in the criminal justice process.

Many of those interviewed by Amnesty International said that prosecutors often require survivors to undergo physical and gynecological examinations when they report the crime. But if a certain amount of time

has elapsed between the abuse and the report, there is little chance of gathering forensic evidence, unless the rape resulted in pregnancy.

According to Paraguay’s Criminal Code, sexual abuse includes a series of actions, including touching, that do not always leave physical signs. However, CODENI staff, teachers and psychology and medical professionals agree that prosecutors often do not give sufficient weight to survivors’ testimony if no physical signs of sexual abuse are found.

An aggravating factor regarding the tendency not to believe survivors of sexual violence is the severe shortage of forensic psychology professionals in Paraguay. In many cases, this means that the first appointment with a forensic psychologist does not take place until several months after the sexual abuse has been identified, which can result in the victim remaining with the abuser for a prolonged period of time.

Children and adolescents with disabilities and those from Indigenous communities or rural areas have even greater difficulty accessing public health services and may face additional barriers to effectively activating protection and care mechanisms.

“If it is not an emergency, or rape is not suspected, it can take six months from the time the prosecutor sends me the case before I am able to submit my final report. My diary is now full until February and we’re only in August.” Forensic psychologist

Forensic psychologists are not the only psychologists who are in contact with survivors. Each institution which they come into contact with (the hospital, the Ombudsperson's Office, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry for Children and Adolescents) has its own psychology teams that interview survivors, which fosters secondary victimization.

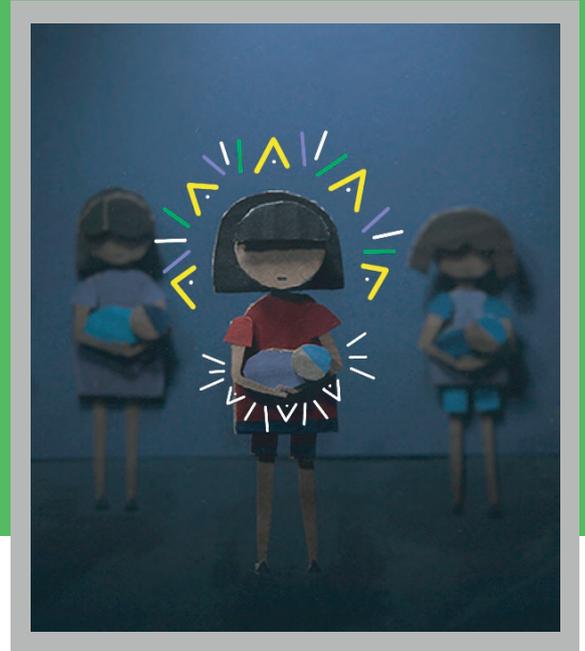
For this reason, the Inter-American Court has highlighted the need for the same professional, trained in dealing with survivors of sexual violence from a gender and children's rights perspective, to support victims throughout the entire legal process.

“It is not good that there are so many psychologists involved, with so many different and sometimes contradictory objectives. Some want information for the criminal case, others want to provide clinical care, others want to force the girl to bond with her new-born baby.” Clinical psychologist.



GIRLS FORCED TO GIVE BIRTH

girls forced to carry their pregnancies to term, institutional violence



“Motherhood is a decision not a destiny,”
Clinical psychologist.

Unsafe abortions are the third leading cause of maternal death in the world. In countries with restrictive abortion laws, such as Paraguay, maternal mortality and morbidity rates are higher. In addition, criminalizing abortion discriminates against women, girls and pregnant people, particularly those in marginalized situations.

Girls and adolescents who are forced to carry a pregnancy to term can face serious physical and psychological problems. Forcing a girl who is 14 years of age or younger to carry a pregnancy to term constitutes institutional violence, which may, in turn, amount to torture and other ill-treatment. This is why, at the international level, there is consensus that states must guarantee that the best interests of pregnant girls is prioritized and their decisions regarding their desire and ability to carry a pregnancy to term or not is listened to.

Although Paraguay’s Constitution and the

law on the comprehensive protection of women from all forms of violence provide for the right of women to freely decide the number, frequency and spacing of their children, Paraguay continues to have some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the Americas. Abortion is only allowed when the life of the pregnant woman or girl is in danger.

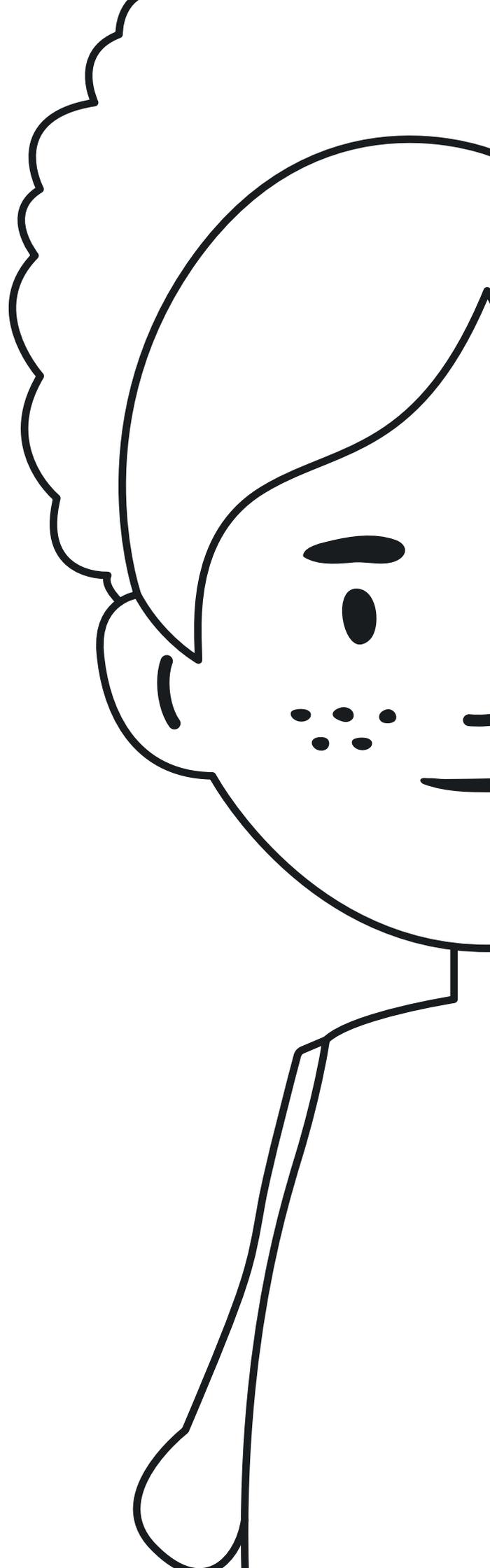
In Paraguay, girls and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 account for one in 10 maternal deaths and 13% of maternal deaths caused by unsafe abortions. Three in 10 women who die of pre-eclampsia (a medical condition characterized by high blood pressure during pregnancy) are adolescents.

While international human rights committees and bodies have asked Paraguay to guarantee access to safe abortions for girls, due to the high risk that pregnancy can entail for their lives, health and physical and emotional integrity, and to decriminalize abortions in certain cases, a

number of health professionals in various hospitals in the country said that this option was never offered to girls.

This demonstrates the need for a protocol that clearly sets out the circumstances in which health professionals can perform abortions on girls and adolescents due to the greater physical and psychological risk that pregnancy entails for their lives, in accordance with current law.

To be applied in the early stages of pregnancy, this protocol must be published effectively to ensure that girls have enough confidence to contact the health system, knowing that they will receive age-appropriate support and treatment.



FORCED to be mothers in children's homes

“Children need to recover as victims of abuse and not as objects that have to give birth to a fetus in the children’s homes where they are being held. They don’t think about the best interests of the young girl.”
Rosa María Ortiz, former member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and former Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

A small number of girls who become pregnant as a result of rape and those who are in situations of abuse are placed in children's homes in Paraguay.

These homes are often run by private religious institutions that are not effectively supervised by the state, putting girls at serious risk of further human rights violations.

Human rights organizations in Paraguay have highlighted a number of concerns about these centres, including issues related to poor living conditions and the lack of supervision of girls’ physical and mental health, the extreme control over the bodies, the lack of educational support, and severe restrictions on



their freedom of movement, for example not allowing them to leave the home except for medical appointments and under the supervision of one of the members of staff, who often provide care steeped in religious education.

“There is no comprehensive care in the homes: there is no reintegration, after their time in the home, into their community or in another part of the country. They simply focus on motherhood. Healthcare is restricted to matters of the birth and the arrival of the newborn.” ***Lourdes Barboza, National Commissioner, Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture***

Returning power and autonomy over their bodies to survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence is a critical part of the recovery process. However, according to statements given to Amnesty International by NGOs and institutions that work with girls and adolescents who have recently given birth, the information provided to girl survivors is either non-existent or too limited to allow them to make an informed decision

about their future or about the different pregnancy options they have, including that the baby is placed in foster care or adopted. On the contrary, Amnesty International has heard that girls are required to take on the role of motherhood, in some cases forced to breastfeed and care for the baby, even when they say that they do not want to have any kind of bond with them.



THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION for girl survivors



Most girl survivors of sexual violence frequently face a number of difficulties when returning to education after having a baby. These include limited access to nurseries during classes and stigma and discrimination from teachers, families and the educational community.

They also often face harassment from the rest of the student body and the parents of students do not want their children to play with them because they are considered a “bad influence”.

“The future is very uncertain, but they are clear that they want to go on studying. They do not lose sight of the future they want, but their current situation forces them to work. They have no other option but to take up the role of being a mother. There is significant moral pressure on them not to give the baby up for adoption. They are totally abandoned by the state.” Clinical psychologist

Although Paraguayan law provides for flexible studying for pregnant girls, that alone is not enough to address the discrimination in

education they face. The state has an obligation to guarantee that practical measures are implemented that promote access to education through flexible programmes that are adapted to the specific needs of these girls, and comprehensive educational grants, to guarantee that they can regain autonomy over their bodies and their decisions. But the law must be supported with practical actions.



Carolina, like many girls her age, liked to imagine what her life would be like when she grew up

One of the things she most liked to do was observe insects, especially the beautiful butterflies

She always participated in school and enjoyed it a lot

But that is no longer the case.

Why did her world change so much?

A few months after her 11th birthday, she began to suffer from tummy aches.

Her grandmother took her to various doctors, but they just gave her pain killers.

Carolina did not understand what was happening

Her grades suddenly fell, she looked sad and depressed...

His teachers assumed these were normal changes due to puberty. "Don't worry," they told her

... but the pain was getting worse and more overpowering

In desperation, her grandmother took her to another hospital, where she was told that Carolina was four months pregnant.

In front of the doctors, the Children's Ombudsperson...

... the prosecutors and the judge

Carolina had to repeat ...

... for months, the same story ...

... how she suffered in silence ...

... several years of abuse.

Carolina was sent to a home for pregnant girls

Where they forced her to continue with the pregnancy.

After giving birth, she did not want to raise the baby,

Because every time she looks at him,

She sees the face of her abuser.

At the home, she ask not to breastfeed the baby any more

Because it hurt a lot,

But they forced her to carry on.

No one listened to her cries for help.

Several months passed,

And now Carolina is back at her home.

Her pain and distress continue

She can't go back to school.

She dreams of returning to her life before all this happened,

... but she can't see any way back

CONCLUSIONS

Carolina's story and that of so many girl survivors of sexual violence and the trauma of carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term are avoidable.

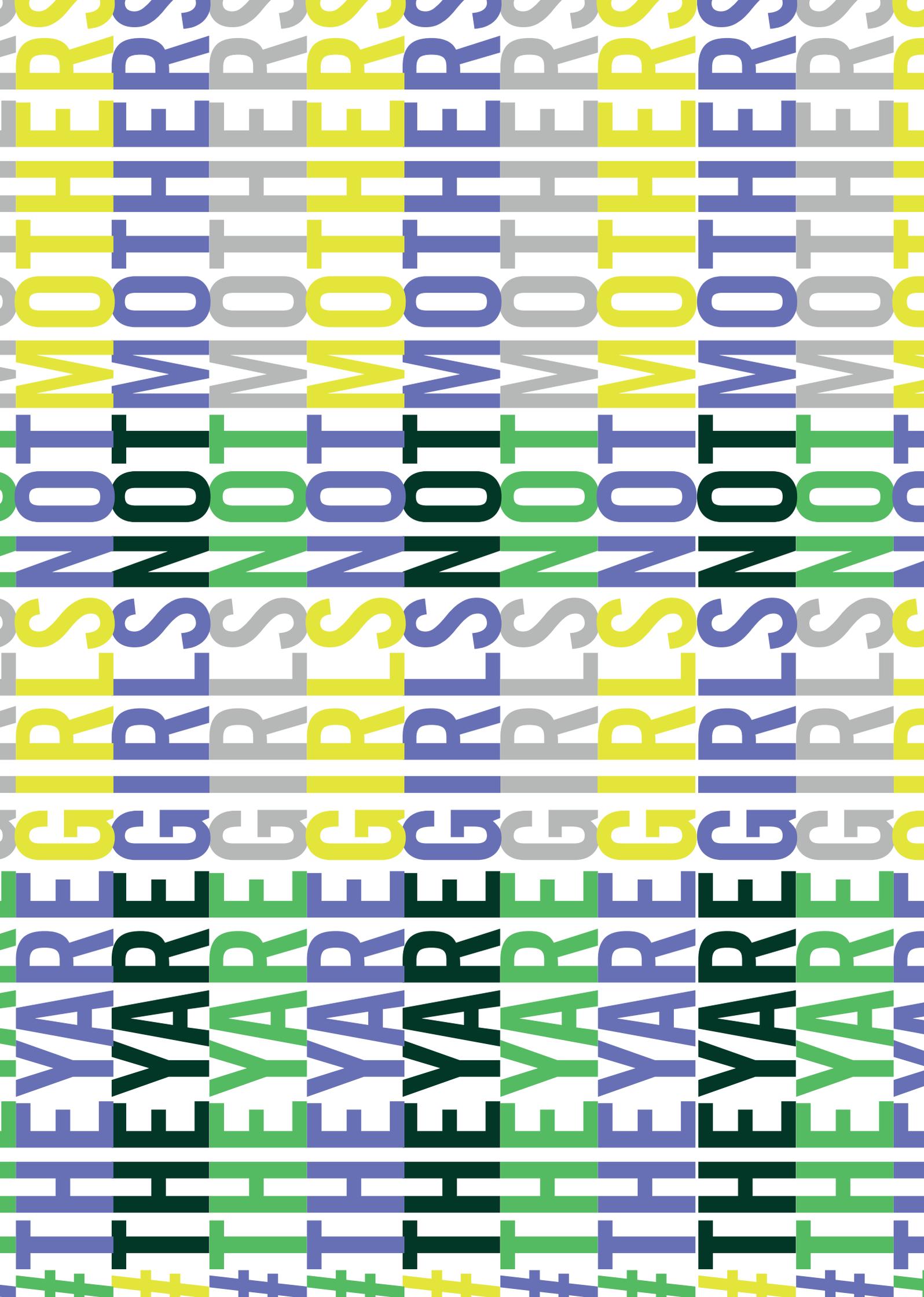
[In the full report that accompanies this publication and which can be found here](#), Amnesty International presents to the Paraguayan authorities, a series of detailed recommendations that are based on human rights and draw on three years of research and extensive consultations with teams of professionals working to address sexual violence against girls and adolescents in Paraguay.

This human rights tragedy can be avoided if the state complies with its international and national human rights obligations. The state must coordinate and improve its response in order to prevent sexual violence, promote early detection and provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education with a gender perspective and focused on the empowerment of children and adolescents regarding their lives and their bodies. The state must also protect survivors from secondary victimization and guarantee access to justice and reparation, for example, allocating sufficient funding and developing programmes designed to empower and support survivors, and their families, in their care-giving work.

Above all, the state must stop forcing girls to carry unwanted pregnancies to term, because by doing this it is causing them even greater harm, with serious consequences for their life projects, and

additional suffering, which can constitute torture and other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International also invites the authorities to imagine a different future. A future where they take a more proactive role in preventing sexual violence. A future in which the Paraguayan government prioritizes Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a form of prevention and long-term transformative reparation. A place where all girls can be girls and dream about their future and their life projects, and fulfil them.



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