

Platform Against Inequality in the Crisis
#QuedateEnCasa



Urgent call to COVID-19 emergency programs in Mexico



Lockdown as a public health strategy cannot work unless it is supported by the provision of services, resources and safety nets, that allow people to stay home with their basic needs met.

1. On the platform

We all want the impact of COVID-19 to be as low as possible in Mexico. Given the complexity of the context, we are interested in the government succeeding in the difficult task of reducing the number of infections and deaths and, above all, managing to lessen the impacts of the health and economic crisis.

With this objective in mind, from this platform, operated by the Alliance against Inequality in Mexico, Fight Inequality - Mexico and INDESIG (Institute of Studies on Inequality, AC), we seek to unite voices in calling the authorities (both federal and local), facilitate the knowledge of the various proposals that have emerged from civil society, and point out the minimum common points of all of these so that they achieve a greater scope and immediate impact on the government's response.

Below, we present a synthesis of the risky socio-economic context with which the country faces the health and economic crisis. Then, what is found is presented as common denominators in the different proposals of various civil society actors that aim to reduce the effects of the crisis. Finally, a synthesis and the link to each of these proposals are attached, so that those interested can read them directly.

2. The social, economic and family context in the face of the crisis

To control the epidemic it is necessary to avoid more contagions. To achieve this, the recommendation of international organizations and the main commitment of world governments has been the call to the entire population to stay at home. This, in turn,

depends on individuals and families having the means, resources and services that allow them to do so.

We know that in Mexico around 100 million people are poor or vulnerable, and 60 million of them have incomes below the poverty line. This means that three out of four have at least a basic deficiency, and that half of its population, who has a precarious job or lives in the informal sector, depends on their daily income to survive, and often not even that is enough to cover your most urgent needs.

Choosing confinement as a State policy, without providing the necessary protection to workers and families with a greater degree of vulnerability, is a bad choice, and reduces the possibilities of achieving "flatten the curve".

Although the virus has directly affected the health of approximately one thousand people throughout Mexico, the economic impacts are already a reality for individuals and families throughout the country, making it even more difficult for them to effectively stay at home.

The vast majority of those who work both formally and informally will have to go out to work to maintain the income they need to survive. **Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza** has indicated that by COVID-19 more than 40 million people in Mexico are in a situation of occupational risk.

On the other hand, according to **Oxfam Mexico**, 33 million people who work informally, do not have the labor benefits that allow them to stay home or be away for a few days without it representing instability or a complete loss of their income.

This is the case of domestic workers, who according to data shared by **Tejidos Feministas, Parvada and Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir**, 99% of them do not have a written contract, do not have social security in 97% of cases, and 50.7% of them face moderate or extreme poverty, which makes them a group of high social vulnerability, in which one out of three of these women is the head of the family.

According to **Oxfam Mexico**, the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 is not only because we do not know exactly the behavior of the virus, but because the inequalities faced by a large part of the Mexican population will simply prevent them from following the recommendations of the health authorities.

Techo Mexico and the Habitat International Coalition in Latin America (HIC-AL), together with nearly 100 organizations, activists and specialists, have urged to pay attention to the population that does not have access to water or adequate housing conditions to attend the measures of personal hygiene that are essential to avoid contagion. In this situation, more than 35 million people do not have a daily supply of water or water inside the home, and 13 million people lack quality and adequate housing according to CONEVAL.

On the other hand, the threat of eviction or eviction due to inability to pay rents or mortgages affects half of the population in Mexico. According to the **Instituto de Estudios sobre Desigualdad**, in the poorest households, up to 4 out of 10 pesos are used to pay rent.

Other aspects that limit the possibilities of isolation at home have to do with domestic violence and the particular conditions of different groups in vulnerable situations.

Elige Red, **GENDES** and **EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres**, along with other organizations that protect women's rights and work to eliminate gender-based violence, have warned that with the current measures to stay at home, the percentage of women who suffer violence at their households by their partners will increase, which according to the poll **ENDIREH**, affects more than 4 out of 10 women.

With confinement, tensions in the home increase, women's exposure to their aggressors increases, reporting is difficult, circulation and movement to safer places are limited and, due to the impact on income, conditions of dependence on the aggressor deepen. Worse still, as **EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres** has denounced, institutions designed to protect women from this type of violence - including the courts - have just reduced or suspended their functions in the face of the pandemic, without considering the impact this may have on the right of women to live free from violence and to access justice.

On the other hand, the **Mexican Institute for Community Development - IMDEC** has contributed to denounce that the precarious living conditions that migration implies make it difficult to maintain the hygiene, food, health and prevention measures necessary to prevent contagion. Migrants are not guaranteed their rights to medical care, formal employment, education and treatment without discrimination. Overcrowding in shelters prevents them from social distancing, and the threat of deportation prevents them from seeking access to public medical services.

Finally, the **Mexican Care Network**, along with other feminist organizations, have denounced the impact that the crisis can have on those who generally carry out unpaid care work in the country: women. If we live in a country in which much of the care is privatized, charged to families and unequally distributed within households, with the current crisis this burden will increase.

For all these limitations, support programs for the most vulnerable individuals and families and groups are critical to make the stay-at-home strategy work.

This is recognized by governments around the world that have already arranged around 165 different programs to make the stay-at-home strategy economically viable, 65 of which are social assistance programs, 47 social security programs, and 40 aimed at the labor market.

The response of the Mexican government seems clearly insufficient given the size and diversity of urgent needs and demands that this crisis is generating for the most vulnerable population. The problem, however, is not only that the response is being insufficient, but that calls for strong-arm policies may increase in these times. ***Intersecta*** has warned, following the recommendations of organizations such as UNAIDS, that these types of measures not only do not serve to address public health problems - such as that of COVID-19 - but can, in turn, contribute to criminalize poverty and to exacerbate existing inequalities in the country. In fact, many people and organizations - such as ***EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres*** - are demanding the opposite: depressurize prisons in the country, freeing women deprived of liberty, releasing older adults, reducing arrests for non-violent crimes, and privileging the use of precautionary measures other than those of preventive detention.

3. What is common in proposals to fight inequality during the crisis

Based on what has been found in the different proposals for a response to the economic and health crisis, it is clear to us that the urgency is shared in the following calls:

- It is urgent to **protect employment, income and access to quality and fair health services** for millions of Mexicans, including the informal sector and the self-employed. In addition, for the protection of the family economy in areas and groups with greater social backwardness, the implementation of an **emergency basic income program** is necessary.
- It is urgent to **suspend evictions** throughout the national territory and decree the **suspension in the payment of the rents** of real estate used for homes or small family businesses, and of mortgage loans or credits for households that lose or significantly reduce their income.
- It is urgent to **suspend cuts in domestic water and sanitation services**, as well as to establish urgent health and hygiene measures in settlements of the country in precarious or unrecognized conditions.
- It is urgent to **grant shelter** and / or housing alternatives **for those who have no place to stay**, as well as offering alternatives to guarantee the right to food and access to water for the most vulnerable groups.
- It is urgent to have **effective protection and care measures for women, heads of families, girls, boys and the LGBTTTIQA + population**, in a situation of vulnerability, who are at risk of experiencing different types of violence as they are confined in spirals of economic, patrimonial dependency and emotional on the part of family members in a patriarchal system that discriminates and violates these groups during this quarantine.

- It is urgent to **take care of those who care for us**, ensuring the necessary conditions of well-being and health for domestic workers, those who perform care work, provide health services and keep the food supply running.

These measures of immediate application for the period of health contingency must be **articulated with medium-term measures** that accompany families, individuals and vulnerable groups during the economic recovery, and consolidate as public policies that allow us once and for all to reduce the inequalities that make us permanently vulnerable to crises. We hope that this platform can serve to lay the groundwork for this longer-term dialogue as well.

Mexico, April 1st, 2020.

For more info:

Techo México and Habitat International Coalition +100, statement:
https://twitter.com/HIC_AL/status/1241491020782505985?s=20

About water access in Mexico: <https://www.spreaker.com/user/heraldo-de-mexico/agua-mexico-pobreza-podcast-vivienda>

Equis Justicia para las Mujeres report: <https://equis.org.mx/reprueban-poderes-judiciales-garantizar-proteccion-acceso-justicia-mujeres-violencia-covid-19/>

Instituto de liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir on domestic labor:
<https://www.animalpolitico.com/de-generando/covid19-y-trabajadoras-del-hogar-una-desigualdad-mas/>

Oxfam México's statement:
<https://www.oxfamMexico.org/sites/default/files/Posicionamiento%20OMX%20ante%20emergencia%20COVID19.pdf>