



Cross-Cutting Theme: Gender Justice



About CWS

Church World Service (CWS) is a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Our vision is a world where everyone has food, voice, and a safe place to call home.

CWS Approach to Gender Justice

Gender justice is an essential right of women and girls and other populations affected by systems of gender inequality around the world. Global commitments to gender justice are enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equality) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Yet gender justice movements and advocates continue to face backlash, and progress for true gender equality is slow to be realized. Within this frame, CWS works to advance gender justice through three complementary program areas including: 1) promoting the voice and agency of women and girls and populations with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)¹ 2) supporting the economic empowerment of women and girls and 3) working in partnership with women-led and refugee-led organizations to support survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

CWS | Areas of Gender Justice



¹ A kaleidoscope of definitions exist for the terms sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics which may vary significantly across global regions. For this reason, CWS does not define these terms here and instead refers to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) terminology which defines people with diverse SOGIESC as an [“umbrella term for all people whose sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and/or sex characteristics place them outside culturally mainstream categories.”](#)

Since 2021, CWS continues to expand its gender justice work via a twin track approach of specialized gender justice programming and gender justice integrated approaches with funding totaling more than US \$2M across U.S.-based and global programs. CWS' gender justice programming is locally-designed and context-based. Examples of CWS impact in gender justice include engagement with human rights bodies for the advancement of legal and policy frameworks, micro-enterprise development and improved livelihoods, nutrition and income for women and girls and provision of services to survivors of GBV.

CWS Gender Justice Program Highlights

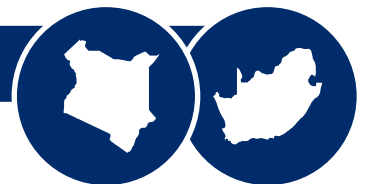
Latin America



- Duration:** 2021-2024
- Partners:** Red Internacional de Mujeres Familiares de personas detenidas (RIMUF)
- Funders:** CWS Program Unrestricted

A growing number of women and families of incarcerated individuals suffer the consequences of Latin America's prison crisis. CWS provides core budget support, on-demand technical assistance, and emotional and advocacy support to Red Internacional de Mujeres Familiares de Personas Detenidas (RIMUF) regional secretariat and members since their founding in 2021. RIMUF is an emerging network made up primarily of women with incarcerated family members across Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. Their mission is to fight for the respect of human rights of people deprived of their liberty and the rights of their families. Participating organizations include Amparar (Brazil), ACiFaD (Argentina), Families of the Incarcerated (Spain), Azul Originario (El Salvador), Familia Penitenciaria Unida (Costa Rica), Documenta (Mexico), and Mujeres Libres (Colombia). RIMUF is a respected regional actor, and its input is sought by UN agencies and the Inter-American system of human rights. RIMUF and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States are currently working on a Commission's official Resolution on the Rights of Prisoners' Families in the Americas (art 41, b).

Kenya & South Africa



- Duration:** 2014-2020
- Partners:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Cosmopolitan Affirming Community (CAC), Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM), HIAS Refugee Trust of Kenya (HRTK), Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK+), PEMA Kenya, and Help Heal Foundation, among others.
- Funders:** Arcus Foundation

CWS worked in partnership with faith leaders, organizations of people with diverse SOGIESC and immigrant communities to build a dialogue on the protection needs of diverse SOGIESC populations, develop resources on specific protection needs of forced migrants with diverse SOGIESC, and cultivate safe spaces for people with diverse SOGIESC to stay connected to their faith traditions. The project resulted in dialogue with more than 1000 religious leaders and diverse SOGIESC community leaders, increased use of inclusive language and practices in faith spaces (churches and mosques), building of a network of faith leaders who are allies and advocates for people with diverse SOGIESC, partnerships with four health centers who provide safe spaces and comprehensive HIV and sexual and reproductive health services, alongside supporting income generation among refugees with diverse SOGIESC in the Nairobi Metropolitan area.

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda



- Duration:** 2023
- Partners:** Farming System Kenya
- Funders:** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

In Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, CWS works with women small holder farmers to improve food security for their households. In 2023, CWS reached 5,012 (60% women) small holder farmers who organized into groups to receive training and support in sweet potato farming, beekeeping, and livestock management. CWS supported women to act as Lead Farmers, and they met regularly to receive training in good agricultural practices and basic marketing skills, as well as to share experiences. CWS worked closely with Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) and Uganda National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) to leverage the local extension and veterinary officials to train the farmer collectives and establish a standardized extension model for the farmers in the project. This model enabled the farmers easy access to local technical resources and the use of extension services after project closure.



Indonesia



- Duration:** 2020-2021
- Funders:** ACT Alliance appeal

In East Nusa Tenggara province, CWS worked with 50 women in two communities to complete a participatory vulnerability and capacity analysis looking at natural resources and economic opportunities for women. The results of the analysis revealed the need to invest in women's empowerment and economic resilience initiatives. As a result, CWS supported women to participate in business plan training and the launch of micro-enterprises focused on food production and processing, weaving, sewing and kiosks. Women formed seven collectives who work collaboratively on their micro-enterprises. Participants in the women's collectives benefitted from training on their rights and involvement in a series of entrepreneurship workshops including learning visits to businesses, business management training, and cooking classes. Women's groups also built networks with key stakeholders such as banks and made linkages with small and medium enterprises.



Paraguay



- Duration:** 2023 – 2025
- Funders:** Growing Hope Globally, Myers Foundation

Women's empowerment is one of the objectives of this three-year program that addresses the root causes of extreme poverty, food insecurity, and environmental vulnerability in nine indigenous Enxet Sur communities inhabited by 639 families in Paraguay's Lower Chaco region. Project objectives include improving food security through climate-smart agriculture and vegetable gardening, livestock reinforcement, beekeeping, formation of indigenous agricultural promoters, and rehabilitation and expansion of water infrastructure and hygiene education in coordination with Paraguay's water, sanitation, and hygiene authority SENASA. The project involves the empowerment of indigenous women and girls through Know-Your-Rights training and women-led advocacy and networking, alongside strengthening of a departmental-level (state level) roundtable on Climate Change.

Moldova



- Duration:** 2023-ongoing
- Partners:** RCTV Memoria
- Funders:** ACT Alliance & CWS Appeal

As part of its response to the Russian invasion in Ukraine, CWS began working in Moldova to serve displaced Ukrainians and vulnerable Moldovans. In partnership with CWS, Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (RCTV)-Memoria responds to the needs of Ukrainian women who are survivors of GBV, are pregnant or with small children, have chronic or severe illnesses or whom are affected by other forms of violence. RCTV Memoria meets survivors' needs through the provision of mental health counseling, psychosocial support, medical assistance, legal support, and limited multi-purpose cash assistance. Survivors benefit from comprehensive health screenings with medical and mental health specialists, one-on-one psychological consultations, group sessions to facilitate healing and resilience, referrals to external services, support with basic needs, and financial support for medications and diagnostics not covered by state health institutions. RCTV Memoria employs a holistic approach to better facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of those impacted by the invasion.



Egypt



- Duration:** 2022-ongoing
- Partners:** St Andrews Refugee Services
- Funders:** U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration

CWS is working in collaboration with St. Andrews Refugee Services (StARS) to provide community-led GBV prevention and response services to refugees. In response to the influx of women and girls fleeing the conflict in Sudan, StARS provides technical assistance and capacity-building to local community-based organizations who have trained GBV focal points serving as first responders. GBV first responders provide holistic GBV case management and psycho-social support to GBV survivors and increase their access to services through information dissemination in their communities. CBOs also provide additional wrap-around services to survivors including economic reintegration and access to safe shelter and cash assistance, while StARS provides access to protection and legal counselling. StARS has now extended its GBV prevention and response work into the school environment where it works on

training teachers and administration staff to respond to GBV disclosures in a child and survivor-centered way. StARS trains school counsellors who train students in the community on sexual harassment and reporting. The Children Education Program (CEP) is implementing 'peace clubs' for students; these act as safe spaces where children can engage sensitive topics such as violence and sexual harassment through peace building activities.

United States



Duration: 2022-ongoing

Funders: Office of Family Violence, State of Virginia

In Harrisonburg, Virginia, CWS is supporting survivors of GBV with survivor-centered and culturally competent GBV case management services provided by a local GBV advocate. The GBV Advocate plays a pivotal role in facilitating the connection between underserved survivors (immigrant/refugee/differing language populations) and specialized services, ensuring the integration of language-accessible and culturally responsive support. This includes immediate crisis intervention through coordination with emergency shelters, securing temporary protection orders, and developing comprehensive safety plans. The GBV Advocate coordinates women's wellness groups, conducted in six-week cycles. These groups are designed to enhance awareness of women's rights and available community resources while addressing and reducing stigma associated with domestic violence and other forms of GBV. The GBV Advocate is responsible for developing and disseminating Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials in various languages, ensuring these resources are accessible at local service points. The Advocate is also instrumental in liaising with community service providers and leaders to enhance awareness of GBV, facilitate safe referral pathways, and promote help-seeking behaviors within the underserved populations.



CWS Gender Justice Research Highlights

- [Exploratory study on LGBTI+ people and their rights in municipalities of South America's Gran Chaco region](#)
The study provides an overview of the situation for LGBTI+ individuals in the Gran Chaco region, which spans parts of Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Results highlight the significant challenges faced by LGBTI+ communities in ten municipalities of Bolivia and Argentina, including widespread discrimination, social stigma, and limited access to legal protections.
- [Socio-cultural aspects & Performance of Domestic Rainwater Harvesting Systems \(DRHS\) at The Rural Margins of Latin America and the Caribbean](#)
The study revealed that despite rural women and girls using and managing harvested rainwater, their voice, especially of those living in dispersed rural settlements, remains largely unheard, and mostly users' feedback mechanisms in place fail to fully collect and systematize their input in the evaluation of the performance of DRWH systems.

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