



## CHAPTER 2

# How to Build “Meaningful Bonds” with Poor Young Women?

*State Interventions during the Lockdown in Argentina*

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## Introduction

As in other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced social inequalities in Argentina and made life in poor neighborhoods even more precarious. This exacerbation of precarity has different impacts for girls and women compared to boys and men. Since the lockdown was put in place in late March 2020, gender-based crimes remain alarmingly frequent and calls to the official hotline for assistance related to experiencing violence have ratcheted up. The data gathered from graphic and digital media from all over the country shows that during June 2020, twenty-one femicides occurred, making a total of 162 in this year at the time of writing. In 69 percent of the cases, the femicide victim was a partner or ex-partner of the perpetrator, and 70 percent of the femicides took place in the victim’s home.

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Notes for this section can be found on page 47.

In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which the Argentine state assists victims of violence and manages the prevention of violence against poor girls and young women, in a context in which social isolation has increased their vulnerability in specific ways and restricted the state's interventions in the areas in which these women live.

As other research in the Buenos Aires suburbs shows (Gaitán 2017; Llobet et al. 2013), prior to COVID-19, these social programs, which were implemented in child and youth centers, were places where girls and young women could access resources and find support if they were experiencing various forms of gender-based violence. Because of the lockdown, many of these places, although located in their communities, had to close their doors since neither they nor their workers were considered essential in the context of the pandemic.

Despite the closure of these state-operated centers, the lockdown did not erase the state's presence, but rather converted it (Arcidiácono and Perelmiter 2020). It suspended the regular meeting points between clients and public policies, thus demanding great versatility from officials, state workers, and community and social leaders to keep support channels open and active and to try out new responses (Heredia and Perelmiter 2020). I focus in this chapter on state actions carried out to assist poor girls and young women in the suburbs of Buenos Aires and to prevent violence aimed at them, and I review the many challenges that the state encountered during the lockdown. I address two questions: "How does the state provide care and support with limited territorial interventions?" and "How does the state maintain this bond when it must dispense with the facilities and types of interaction that are built on daily life and proximity?" To do this, I use contributions from political anthropology and feminist studies, particularly those that have problematized the state from below. These disciplines understand the state not simply as a form of centralized control over a given territory, in which power is exercised as a coherent whole, but, rather, as a contradictory articulation between and among institutions, practices, and people (Fraser 1989; Haney 1996). Both the practices, relationships, and demands of the clients on the one hand, and the regulations that are deployed to control their lives on the other, build and rebuild the state (Das and Poole 2008).

In the first section, I describe the main measures that were adopted by the national government to address gender-based violence, slow down contagion, and mitigate the pandemic's health and socioeconomic ef-

fects. Since social policies are implemented in a decentralized manner in Argentina, local governments play a key role in shaping what a given policy looks like in their territory (Rodríguez Gustá 2014). Because of this, in the second section I explore how those lines of action took shape in a commercial middle-class district that I have called Las Luciérnagas to safeguard the identity of the people who collaborated with me on this research project. Finally, I offer some preliminary reflections on the (in)ability of the state to address gender-based violence and guarantee girls' and young women's rights during the lockdown in the suburbs of Buenos Aires.

I derived the data from a qualitative research design, which was affected by the restrictions on circulation imposed from late March 2020. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Argentina, I was working on qualitative research from an ethnographic perspective on the implementation of social policies for young people. The research was based in the Las Luciérnagas district of Greater Buenos Aires, where I carried out the fieldwork for my doctoral thesis (2012–17).

The public measures to contain the spread of the virus, and in particular the lockdown implemented by the national government in March 2020, placed significant obstacles to ethnographic methodological strategies, such as participant observation.

Face-to-face fieldwork became impossible, so adjustments were needed. As an alternative to meeting with interviewees in public offices and the neighborhood settings where the policies were implemented, interviews were conducted through Zoom. These were semi-structured and in-depth interviews that lasted between sixty and ninety minutes.

Online interviews were conducted with community activists and officials who worked at local, state, and federal public agencies responsible for both gender and children and youth public policies. All the interviewees were informed of the research aims and consented to participate in it. To protect their identity, I do not use their names, nor do I identify the specific districts or neighborhoods in which they work. Only the denominations of the public agencies and the state policies have been maintained.

In addition to the interviews, the analysis also encompasses the norms and official communications regulating the national lockdown, and the social media activity deployed by public agencies regarding their social policies aimed at children, youth, and women, at the local, state, and federal levels.

## Facing the Pandemic Means Facing Inequalities

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Argentina, the country was already facing great challenges linked to an ongoing economic crisis, increasing poverty, and difficulties in accessing international financing. The new national, provincial, and local administrations that took office in December 2019 found worrying issues regarding, for example, what could be done about the health and social protection systems, precarious working conditions, the distribution of care assignments, access to technology, and issues of violence.

In this complex scenario, and as the pandemic began to unfold, the Argentine national government implemented early measures to slow down contagion and mitigate the effect of the pandemic on health and on socioeconomic conditions. On 20 March, a lockdown was enforced throughout the country for those people who did not work in health or in essential sectors of the economy. This implied the restriction of movement for the general population, the suspension of face-to-face classes at all educational levels, the shutdown of shops, and the closure of international and provincial borders. Children were not allowed to leave their homes until 26 April when Decree 408/2020 enabled weekend recreational outings with their caregivers.

Together with the lockdown, the national and provincial governments launched a set of specific economic and social measures aimed at alleviating the impact of the crisis on the sectors deemed most vulnerable. The national state created the Emergency Family Income (IFE) for informal workers and self-employed workers with lower incomes (Decree 310/2020) and delivered special bonuses for people who received social plans and the universal child allowance (AUH) (Decree 309/2020). It also established maximum prices for basic consumer products, froze housing rental prices (Decree 320/2020), and suspended basic service cuts for nonpayment (Decree 311/2020) and home evictions.

As in other countries in the region, this crisis has particularly affected poor neighborhoods in which inhabitants live in precarious and overcrowded houses without assured access to key basic hygiene services. For them, the national government outlined a strategy called “Community isolation” and launched a program called “The neighborhood looks after the neighborhood,” in which national, provincial, and local governments, in coordination with the social organizations in the communities, work to establish mechanisms for the protection of people’s health and access to

food. A prominent place is given to the organized work cooperatives and nonformal workers and the unemployed who make up what are known as popular economy workers. They have their own union-like structures to fight for the defense and promotion of their rights and their communities, so they assume the role of community promoters, walking through their neighborhoods to help people at risk, implement preventive measures, and work towards establishing hygienic safety in the community. Assuming that the lockdown makes women, girls, adolescents, and LGBTI+ people even more vulnerable to gender-based violence, those preventative measures also include providing information about national and local hotlines that deal with reports of violent situations. In these unusual circumstances, these vulnerable people are often forced to live with their aggressors and with more restricted possibilities for leaving their homes and seeking help.

Although there are no official and public statistics on the occurrence of femicide during the lockdown, in public statements made three weeks after it began, the National Minister for Women, Genders and Diversity indicated that, while the rate of general crimes had decreased, reports on what were most likely to have been gender-based murders showed a steady high rate. In addition, she specified that after the lockdown began, the daily average of requests seeking assistance for gender-based violence through the national 144 hotline was 39 percent higher than in the previous days (Frontera and Alcaraz 2020).

A few months before, in December 2019, the brand-new government created the National Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity, a space whose creation the local feminist movement had demanded historically. In line with this national decision, Buenos Aires provincial state also created its own women's ministry. Both are led and coordinated by feminist activists from the fields of human rights, trade unionism, and popular organization. The lockdown found them still under construction, with no buildings or offices of their own and with officials yet to be named in their positions. Faced with this in an unforeseen health situation, the national ministry promoted many measures related to gender and diversity. Specifically linked to addressing gender-based violence were three lines of action: comprehensive assistance; interinstitutional and intersectoral articulations; and the strengthening of community and solidarity ties. These same lines, with their nuances, guided the provincial ministry's work in coordination with the district offices dedicated to gender and diversity.

Among the comprehensive assistance measures, the 144 hotline was declared an indispensable service and its service channels were reinforced.

This line provides information, advice, and support throughout the country, 24/7, and can call on 911 in emergency situations.<sup>1</sup> In addition, other communication channels were generated through email along with a direct contact line through WhatsApp, and a free downloadable application complementary to a hotline was set up. A guide was also uploaded on the web pages of both national and provincial ministries with the geolocated resources with which the 144 hotline works. Two weeks after the lockdown started, the national ministry issued Resolution 15/2020, which clarified that instances of gender-based violence are included among its force majeure exceptions, thus allowing women and LGBTI+ people to leave their homes.

The national ministry, like the provincial one, promoted intersectoral and inter-ministerial articulations with the offices of Security, Social Development, and Justice; with other state entities such as the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court, and its Women's and Domestic Violence offices; and with universities and trade unions. Actions aimed at strengthening community and solidarity ties were initiated; the #CuarentenaEnRedes (#LockdownInSocialMedia) communication campaign was launched and, at the provincial level, the slogan *Seguimos Conectadas* ("we stay connected") was adopted. In the same way, the directorates of territorial approaches and articulations worked on strengthening the networks of community accompaniment in situations of gender-based violence.

However, among the main national measures to assist victims and to address and prevent gender-based violence, there is nothing specifically directed toward girls and young women. No explicit inter-ministerial links have been found in the wide array of state agencies responsible for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents. Facing existing doubts among the population regarding the transfer of children and adolescents between parents who do not live together, the national ministry promoted Resolution MDS 132/2020, which establishes exceptions to social isolation in cases of duty of assistance to children and adolescents by their parents or guardians, in accordance with Decree 297/2020. Meanwhile, with regard to the provincial women's office, although there are also no specific initiatives with the Provincial Agency for Children and Adolescents, there are links to the Ministry of Education. Together with social organizations and trade unions, both ministries distribute brochures and materials that address gender-based violence, along with food bags from the School Food Service and booklets for the pedagogical continuity of students lacking digital connectivity.

Other offices have deployed various kinds of digital or virtual lines of action targeting girls and young women. For example, within the framework of the National Plan for the Prevention of Unintentional Pregnancy in Adolescence (ENIA), the National Ministries of Health, of Social Development, and of Education have tried to guarantee the online continuity of spaces for comprehensive health counseling in secondary schools in some provinces. The aim is to adapt these to counseling on sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, and legal termination of pregnancy in a virtual way to guarantee a listening channel. The ENIA inter-ministerial plan also works with the provinces to provide and guarantee children and adolescents' access to contraceptive methods and the legal termination of pregnancy in health centers, free of charge. Following the recommendations of the World Health Organization, these two sexual and reproductive health services were declared essential by the national government.

Through the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the Family (SENAF) of the Ministry of Social Development, the state provides a free and confidential hotline (the 102 hotline) that offers a service for listening, support, and guidance for boys, girls, and adolescents. Through it, SENAF coordinates, in conjunction with other state agencies, possible interventions needed in cases of the violation of their rights. Unlike the 144 hotline its scope is not national, and some provinces have their own lines. For this reason, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights national 137 hotline, aimed at dealing with situations of family or sexual violence, is crucial. This is also free and provides 24/7 containment, assistance, and accompaniment, 365 days a year. During the lockdown it incorporated service channels by email and WhatsApp. The Ministry of Health has a nationwide specific line (0800-222-3444) for consultation on sexual and reproductive health matters. It provides information and advice and removes obstacles to accessing sexual and reproductive health goods and services. In addition, the Youth Institute of the Ministry of Social Development, through its institutional website *hablemosdetodo* ("let's talk about everything") and its social media accounts, produces content and disseminates relevant recommendations for young people who are going through violent situations.

Reflections on the state by feminists and political anthropology experts have warned that to understand how state programs operate, it is not enough to study their formal designs, and we need, rather, to analyze how they are implemented and anchored in the daily and concrete lives of

their clients. These contributions have indicated the importance of incorporating a vision of the state as a network of relations between those who implement the policies, the territorial networks, and their clients (Haney 1996). Therefore, in the next section, I explore the actions deployed by both the national and provincial governments during the lockdown in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area when it came to guaranteeing rights, assisting victims, and preventing gender-based violence against poor girls and young women. Taking Las Luciérnagas district as a reference, I analyze how the resources aimed at the social inclusion of children and young people—which, prior to COVID-19, allowed poor girls and young women to access help and find support when they were facing violent situations—indicate how the state converted itself in relation to these actions aimed at continuing to assist these groups.

### Updating Challenges in Building “Meaningful Bonds”

Inaugurated due to political concern about the impacts of poverty and educational and labor exclusion in the last two decades, a set of programs and centers have emerged in Latin American countries for children, and especially young people with what are known as violated rights or those who are at risk of exclusion. In Argentina, the emergence of these centers and programs was framed in the context of the institutionalization of children’s and adolescents’ rights, so specific procedures and arrangements were deployed to affirm the formal statements of human rights and social inclusion. These arrangements orbited around definitions of children’s participation and voice (Llobet et al. 2013). Although their objectives usually revolve around integrating adolescents into the educational system and the labor market, they could also be places where poor girls and young women could access resources and find support when facing violent situations (Gaitán 2017).

As a way of reestablishing the relationship between the state and children and young people in poor neighborhoods, while distancing themselves from repressive state agents like the police or the judiciary, these social programs are intended to be a space of contentment and listening. To this end, they follow the actions and knowledge of other actors like social activists, community leaders, and volunteers. Thus, their deployment in poor neighborhoods and in being part of the intervention with the knowledge of community leaders, these programs build their own identity



(Llobet et al. 2013). Their workers are also dedicated to carrying out an affective and physical hands-on intervention (Gaitán 2017) that may be especially valuable at a time in children's or young people's lives that is institutionally understood as vulnerable and filled with potential harmful exposures. In these hands-on interventions, state agents are personally and affectively involved and committed. Their professional careers, technical knowledge, and ethical-political positions are intertwined in bonding with adolescents. In this quest to bond, many workers have managed to get children and young people to open up and provide sensitive information about their lives, something that can allow them, in some way, to guarantee or protect their rights. Although all the workers were attentive to achieving this bond with their clients, it was the neighborhood actors who were most successful in forging these relationships, which were characterized by their availability, mutual affection, and trust, since they knew and walked through the neighborhood in a different way to the outside workers with a technical profile. These actors also had another relationship with the clients and their families and could even influence their personal actions through the mobilization of interpersonal relationships that existed prior to the arrival of the program in the neighborhood (Gaitán and Paz Landeira 2020). In their relationships with some of the state agents, many clients were able to solve temporarily some of the situations resulting from the intersectional oppressions they experienced because of being female, young, and poor. These institutional contexts and these attentive workers connected the clients to the possibility of expanding their possibilities for making decisions about themselves (Gaitán 2017; Llobet et al. 2013).

These child and youth centers were not considered essential by National Decree 297/2020, so they had to close their doors when the lockdown began. This happened in spite of what some local authorities in Las Luciérnagas felt. A member of the Youth Policy Directorate in Las Luciérnagas said,

It is clearly a reference space for the kid. Also, understanding that in there [the neighborhood] the quarantines are not inside the houses, they are communal, so the kids are circulating. So, it seemed important to me that they can have that point [youth centers] of reference because in the houses they may live [in] some complex situation of violence, because they are locked up, because they need to relax, because they need a space like the one we made, more pleasant for those who live in daily life, with people who are much more empathetic than their family. I mean, there is a lot of things that make these devices relevant and essential for boys and girls, understanding that quarantine is not inside their home.

After losing that battle, these youth centers and support structures in Las Luciérnagas had to transition, partly, to a virtual mode. As a first step, efforts were made to ensure follow-up via WhatsApp and telephone by the technical team (social workers and psychologists at the center) in the situations with which they had already been working. These workers are in charge of articulating remotely with the rest of the children's and adolescents' rights protection system as part of the Local Service and the Secretariat of Comprehensive Policies on Drugs of the Argentine Nation (SEDRONAR).

Currently, an offer of online activities has been added to the personalized virtual follow-up. These range from a space for comprehensive sexual health counseling and access to legal abortion under the ENIA plan to school support, vocational guidance service, and workshops (rap, physical training, drawing, and so on). With the community centers having moved to a virtual mode of action, most of the state agents' work is done remotely from their homes, far from the neighborhoods. As expressed by the municipality's Childhood, Adolescence, and Young People officials, actual visits and interventions are carried out only in what are called urgency situations, when there is suspicion or certainty that the clients' rights are being violated.

As the Las Luciérnagas Youth Director told me in our last communication while he was in quarantine, he and four of his workers had had to preventatively isolate themselves after attending an emergency in the poor neighborhood La Estrella, which was what he called a "worrying point of contagion" for the district. A sixteen-year-old adolescent had fled from the Shelter House where he was temporarily staying to visit and stay with one of his older brothers in the neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> Faced with this situation, the workers went with the technical team to look for him so that he could have at least a first approach from the neighborhood's youth service. They wanted him to have this as a reference structure even though it would be implemented remotely. After the intervention, the teenager tested positive for COVID-19 and was isolated in a hotel for his recovery. The workers and the official, although they did not test positive, had to comply with the fourteen days of preventative quarantine in their own homes.

The fact that the official had to step publicly into the territory and perform tasks that, in another context, the technical team probably would have solved by themselves, exemplifies what Mariana Heredia and Luisina

Perelmiter (2020) note—in the current circumstances, the task divisions and hierarchies within the state structure have become more flexible, with more porous boundaries.

The local authorities took office in December 2019. In March 2020, the Childhood, Adolescence, and Young People Office was only at the beginning of its reorganization and planning process when the pandemic hit the country. In addition, the changing phases of the lockdown meant constant restructuring of the forms and distribution of work. During the first fifteen days of the lockdown only the highest-ranking officials attended the central offices, and the street-team workers circulated in some central areas of the district but, after a while, as the Director of Children Policies told me, they “could not take it any more with their body.” Faced with these limits, rotating guards were organized to deal with Local Service situations with the workers who live closer to the central offices and do not have to take public transportation to get there. (Without the pandemic, the offices of the Local Services would have operated in the territories and not at the headquarters of the Undersecretary for Children and Youth, located in the center of the municipality of Las Luciérnagas.) In the event that people from the community cannot reach the central offices, if sexual abuse or mistreatment cases are reported, teams, although restricted, restructured, and with hygiene protocols, are deployed in the territories.

The eruption of the virus during the planned work of the new administration entailed reinventions and new strategies. In addition to fueling uncertainty regarding the possibility of achieving the basic goals set, it reactivated some challenges that transcend the particular context. As the Undersecretariat for Children and Youth in Las Luciérnagas put it,

It is not enough to open an Instagram [account] and communicate through it to reach boys and girls. There is a challenge and an obligation and a permanent responsibility to think about how we may create the conditions to bond effectively and meaningfully with the kids. Well, there we have to offer public policy proposals and forms of communication that are meaningful to them and to which they can be receptive. It seems to me that this forces us to think because there is also great heterogeneity. That is why we talk about youths, there are inequalities that we have to consider: economic, cultural, and generational inequalities. Not only in the universe of young people, but between the actors who try to enter into communication, the state actors in their various forms and the youths in their diverse varieties. It is a permanent challenge to see how we find ourselves, how we bond, how we communicate.

## **“When You Do Not Have the Voice of Children You Have to Trust and Articulate with Actors”**

As noted, the phases of lockdown restructured the children’s and adolescents’ rights protection system, posing restrictions that in many cases have been adjusted and resignified by the workers in order to guarantee their goals and prevent the violation of rights, or restore them. The halting of face-to-face school classes and the closure of the children’s and adolescents’ community centers placed serious obstacles in the communication channels with them. The virtualization of all communication meant that local childhood and youth workers had to try new articulations with state and nonstate actors and to trust in old ones, in order, as the Director of Childhood policies told me, “to reach their voices.”

Although the first stage of lockdown found these actors primarily dedicated to guaranteeing food assistance, coordinating with the Social Action Ministry, and trying to rebuild relationships with families neglected by the previous administration, over the course of weeks, their actions began to expand. This involved a strengthened link to other local, provincial, and national state areas in which they worked to prevent mistreatment of, and gender-based violence against, children and adolescents and to deal with situations involving sexual abuse. As the Director of Childhood Policies commented, since they do “not have the voice of the children and young people,” they must trust and establish links with other actors that mediate with them. Among these actors are the schools, the Primary Health Care Centers, and the women’s police stations, from which the largest number of complaints came.

Las Luciérnagas’s Gender Area (the local government’s office in charge of designing, assessing, and implementing public policies on gender and diversity, with a transversal approach to all other areas of government) has also been a relevant actor, not only through the local gender violence assistant resource, but also through the work that the district promoters of gender equality carry out in the communities. Women workers from this Gender Area went out to the territories to advise their neighbors that the local gender violence assistant center was working and to inform them about the hotlines. These brief conversations and the handing over of brochures continue to take place within the framework of other national programs such as “The neighborhood looks after the neighborhood,” either in health post or in supplying daily food through popular dining rooms.<sup>3</sup>

These actions by the local Gender Area are also part of broader initiatives promoted in the territories by the Buenos Aires provincial Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity. From the beginning of its administration, this new ministry deployed and articulated work with the local gender offices, which were convened together with political, feminist, social, and union organization leaders to build networks of companions in the face of situations of gender-based violence. This was implemented first in the framework of “The neighborhood looks after the neighborhood” and then within the provincial program Bonaerenses Solidarios (“solidarity of the people of Buenos Aires”). The goal is to incorporate rights promoters who have the skills to detect situations linked to obstacles in access to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. As a coordinator at the provincial Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity pointed out about these promoters and the changing lockdown rules,

[w]e were not going to be able to work on raising awareness—for example, I mean, they will have to be with the neighbors with their gender stereotypes such as they were—but to quickly bring tools that allow network construction and a dialogue with the state so that, in situations of vulnerability, particularly of gender violence, there could quickly be a communication channel.

In relation to the last relevant actor in the children’s and young peoples’ assistance programs, which are the social organizations at the community level, it is worth noting that these are not a new element within the social bureaucracies of the Argentine state, but, rather, a long-standing one that assumes greater importance in this special context. As Heredia and Perelmiter (2020) point out, the role of social organizations in guaranteeing the “capillarity of the state presence” (n.p.) has been enhanced during the pandemic.

As indicated by one of the Evita Movement activists in Las Luciérnagas, if their “task has always been to have eyes and tools to bring the state to the territory,” during this crisis their “main task is to keep the bonds alive and to ensure food supply for the neighbors.” Referring to the harsh lessons learned during the four years of government by the right-wing Cambiemos Alliance, which gravely increased poverty, the activist explained that “now it is time to hold on tight, we already know how to organize ourselves, we are not going to leave anyone behind.”

Like other organizations and social movements with territorial anchorage, the Evita Movement’s focus is not only on guaranteeing food and hygiene supplies, but on working toward women, children, girls, and

LGBTI+ people having violence-free lives. This work is done through networks and community centers of their own, established prior to the pandemic, which are now articulated with COVID-19-specific programs such as “The neighborhood looks after the neighborhood.”

## Open Reflections

Before COVID-19, social programs implemented in child and youth centers were places where girls and young women could access resources and find support when they experienced gender-based violence. Because of the lockdown, these resources in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, many of them located in the communities, had to close their doors. Neither the support centers nor their workers were considered essential in the pandemic context, so they had to transition, partly, to a virtual mode. This transition took place in a context in which access to electronic devices and internet connectivity is still far from being a fundamental right securing the lives of children and adolescents.

Although workers in the childhood and adolescence office in Las Luciérnagas appraise work virtualization favorably, they are aware that because the pandemic and lockdown took place in a context of preexisting inequalities, any remote work presents many obstacles; it makes access difficult for those children and adolescents with disabilities, since not everyone has internet at home or on their cell phones, or even a device with which to connect. Many may actually have to share devices with the people with whom they live, so these conversations are exposed to adults who regulate their use. As indicated by the local Director of Childhood Policies, virtual work with children is even more complex than with adolescents, because many of them do not have their own devices. Given this situation, the house-to-house visits to the children’s houses carried out by one of the territorial leaders who worked at the support resource were crucial. These “small acts allow life to be knitted pair by pair” (Das 2012: 139); these care practices, core to the social production and reproduction of life in common (Rosen 2019), are carried out mainly by territorial actors and precede the lockdown (Franco Patiño and Llobet 2019; Gaitán and Paz Landeira 2020). At present, they seem to have doubled their efforts. These territorial actors and social leaders are the ones who were attentive to food management and hygiene aspects from the beginning of the lockdown, and they are also in charge of giving the warning notice not

only of COVID-19 contagion, but also of gender-based violence situations or cases of police brutality.

When the analytical lens is directed to the territories, where policies are actually embodied, it is evident that the protection of girls and young women's rights, as well as their assistance in situations of gender-based violence in the pandemic context, rest mainly on the informal arrangements and norm adjustments that state workers make. They rest more on the actions of territorial networks and social organizations than on formal work moved to some kind of virtual mode.

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## Notes

1. This is an emergency assistance telephone number.
2. According to Provincial Law 13,298, Shelter Houses are the first instance of an “inside-institution” protective measure for children and adolescents. They host them until the implementation of other measures has been evaluated.
3. These health posts distribute basic supplies such as bleach, soap, sanitizers, and masks. People working in these posts also provide services and information on healthcare issues and gender violence situations. They also trigger the assistance protocol for people with symptoms compatible with COVID-19.

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