

STUDY ON THE PROFILE AND IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER SERVICES TO CISGENDER WOMEN AND GIRLS, TRANSGENDER WOMEN, AND FEMINIZED TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN PUERTO RICO

BACKGROUND

This document presents a summary of the **Study on the Profile and Impact of the Community Organizations that Offer Services to Cisgender Women and Girls, Transgender Women, and Feminized Transgender People in Puerto Rico**, an initiative by the Fundación de Mujeres in Puerto Rico, Inc. (FMPR), with the objective to document and analyze the profile and impact of these organizations in the community.

FMPR is a nonprofit organization founded by women in the diaspora and in Puerto Rico, dedicated to promoting economic, physical, and health security, as well as reproductive autonomy and the empowerment of women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals across the archipelago. Its mission focuses on supporting these communities and **strengthening the social fabric** by backing initiatives that contribute to comprehensive development and the reduction of inequalities.

METHODOLOGY

The **objective** of the study is to **document and analyze** the profile and impact of these organizations within Puerto Rico's social and economic context. The applied methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to validate and cross-reference findings, thereby offering a comprehensive analysis of the organizations and their role in Puerto Rican society.

It is important to highlight that, as the **first study of its kind** focused on this sector of organizations in Puerto Rico, an empowerment research approach was adopted. FMPR established an **Expert Advisory Committee** on the subject, which was involved from the outset to collaborate with the consulting team in developing research definitions and constructs, as well as in designing the methodology and data collection instruments.



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Tasks carried out as part of the study:

PHASE I: ORGANIZATION & DESIGN OF THE METHODOLOGY

- Expert Committee
- Review of Research Questions
- Definition of Concepts and Constructs
- Design of Methods, Sampling, Instruments, and Protocols for Data Collection and Management
- Communication and Engagement Strategy
- Inventory of Organizations

PHASE II: DATA COLLECTION

- In-depth interviews with women opinion leaders
- Self-administered survey for organizations identified in the inventory
- Life stories from the population served by community organizations
- Cost-benefit analysis

PHASE III: ANALYSIS & INTERRELATION OF FINDINGS

- Interrelation of findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

PHASE IV: DISSEMINATION

- Meetings and other dissemination efforts

Operational Definition Used for the Purposes of the Study: Community Organizations that Provide Services to Cisgender Women and Girls, Transgender Women, and Feminized Trans People in Puerto Rico.

This refers to nonprofit entities that may or may not be formally established (e.g., nonprofit corporations, cooperatives, community groups, and collectives). These organizations, although they may offer services to other populations, primarily focus on serving cisgender women and girls, transgender women, and feminized trans people in Puerto Rico, from birth onwards. They engage in activities such as activism, advocacy, raising awareness, and/or provide direct services in areas like housing, economic development, recreation and sports, social services, arts and culture, environment, health, education, philanthropy and volunteer promotion, legal advocacy and defense, as well as emergency response to natural disasters, man-made crises, or public health emergencies. These activities and services are carried out with a gender and social justice perspective.

59

The number of Community Organizations that Provide Services to Cisgender Women and Girls, Transgender Women, and Feminized Trans People in Puerto Rico, identified through the tasks carried out in the study.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH OPINION LEADERS | N=25

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT WORKS WITH A GENDER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE LENS

Community organizations that operate from a gender and social justice perspective are perceived by interview participants as “inclusive” and committed to a participatory model in which “they listen, learn, and adapt to people’s needs.” According to participants, these are organizations that understand that the differences between men and women are primarily social, not biological, and they work toward “equity” in both their staff and educational programs, applying it transversally across all their activities.

According to the participants, these are entities that respect diversity and work from a place of solidarity. They defend and advocate for human rights, promote equity, and engage in the development of public policy.



“It doesn’t come from charity, but from solidarity. People aren’t struggling because they want to, but because there’s a patriarchal, racist, and speciesist system — the way life and the world are organized excludes many people... - [They recognize] that even though they — referring to the organizations — can do important work, the State must be held accountable and must take action.”



“These are organizations that have taken an inward look at their own processes, from decision-making... - [to the] way the organization is structured and functions; and they do external work to put into practice what they say they do.”

From the perspective of the services offered, they are perceived as entities with significant social impact. They offer a wide range of services and support activities, addressing key areas that respond to the diverse needs of the communities they serve.



SERVICES IDENTIFIED BY INTERVIEWED PARTICIPANTS



NEEDS FACED BY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community organizations, however, face diverse needs that can be classified into administrative, programmatic, and fiscal areas, which limit their ability to sustainably fulfill their missions.



NEEDS THAT ORGANIZATIONS FACE: PERSPECTIVE OF THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED



ADMINISTRATIVE

- Staff with knowledge of administrative and fiscal management
- Technical assistance, "...need for training in administrative and fiscal areas, strategic planning, mentoring, and skills provision (e.g., organizing fundraising activities)."
- Staff experiencing burnout are experiencing "...a lot of work with limited time or few people."
- Agile administrative structures that facilitate service delivery and compliance.

PROGRAMMATIC

- Competitive salaries for staff with expertise in service delivery to facilitate resource recruitment and reduce staff turnover and ensure continuity of services. "When you don't have the means to pay people, you have to let them go. People with knowledge and sensitivity are being lost."
- Update knowledge on informed, evidence-based practices and innovative models.
- Provide childcare spaces for women's children, as the lack of this support resource can be a barrier to receiving services.
- Ensure communities understand the work they do and its magnitude, in order to obtain support from the communities themselves (volunteering, participation, and financial support).

FISCAL

- Funds for administrative expenses (e.g., administrative staff - management, office workers, tax agent -, rent, telephone, broadband internet, etc.). "...they allocate very little to administrative expenses, which is why that area is affected, and therefore there is a domino effect that affects the programmatic and direct service provision."
- Recurring or long-term grants (more than one year). "...the funds depend on the situation." Politics... Who are the ones holding the pot at the state level and controlling who will receive and who won't receive"

CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



According to the leaders interviewed, community organizations play a fundamental role in Puerto Rico, performing work that, in many cases, fills the gaps in the state.

Complementary work with high social impact

They perform essential tasks that the state cannot cover, addressing immediate social problems and improving people's living conditions. They act as the voice of communities, identifying needs and connecting them with appropriate resources. Influence on public policy.

Influence on public policy

They directly influence public policy, ensuring that laws are enforced and that appropriate legislative tools are designed to address the needs of citizens, without having the financial resources that are usually allocated for these tasks in government.

Development of innovative models and initiatives

They implement innovative programs and models that can be replicated to maximize social impact, offering practical solutions in areas such as justice, education, health, employment, and childcare.

Optimization of resources and community partnerships

They leverage financial resources efficiently, achieving greater reach and impact. They easily foster partnerships and guarantee respect and recognition for the communities they work with.

Promotion of new perspectives and social transformation

Organizations such as feminist organizations foster debates and new ways of thinking that generate hope, transform lives, and bring urgent social problems to light. Without them, government agencies would lack key information about community realities.



"We are the ones who show our face... what would become of PR if we stopped providing service?"



"They promote the development of fair and equitable public policies; they advocate for the repeal of those that violate the well-being and dignity of human beings; and they fight to stop the development of discriminatory policies."

SURVEY OF ORGANIZATIONS

N=18

A total of 18 organizations participated in the survey, representing 31% of the universe of entities identified as part of the Study.

PROFILE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

100%

are non-profit
organizations

2007

Average year
established



7 out of 10
organizations provide
direct services

340

Median number of
people served per year

5

Median number of
people employed in the
organization

9

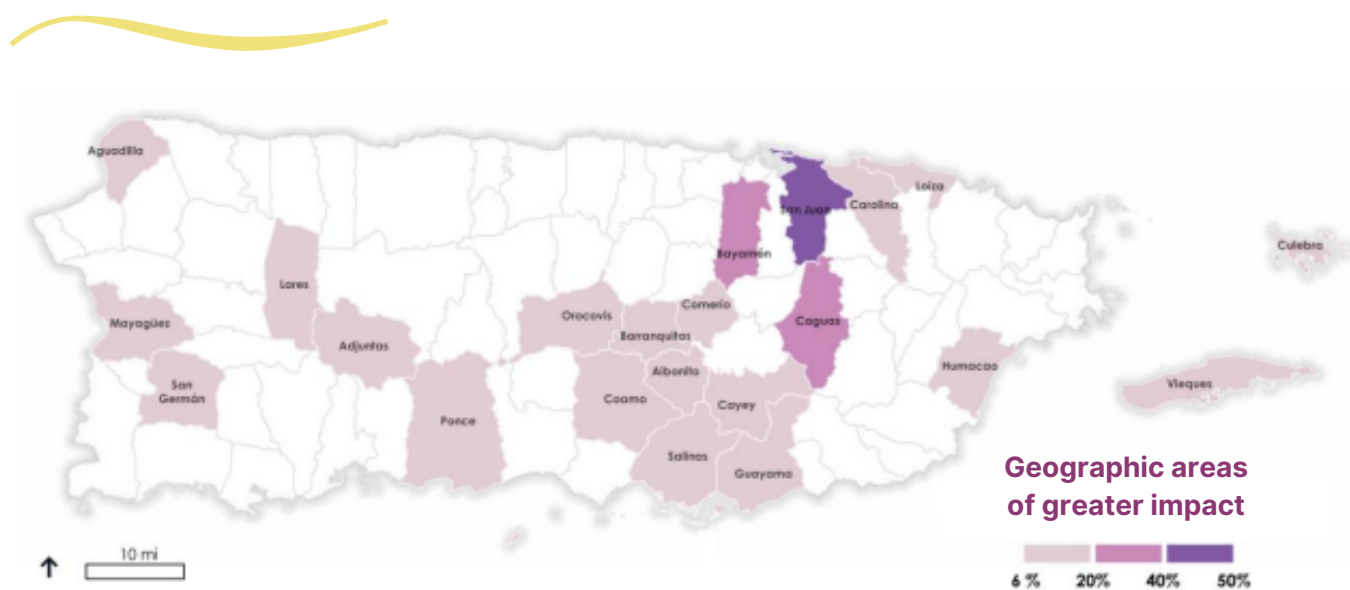
Median number of
volunteers in the
organization

MUNICIPALITIES SERVED BY THE SURVEYED ORGANIZATIONS



**Municipalities served by the
surveyed organizations**

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF GREATEST IMPACT FROM THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SURVEYED ORGANIZATIONS



SERVICES

The study reveals that the participating organizations' main areas of action focus on gender-based violence (77.8%) and awareness-raising and educational activities on the rights and needs of women, girls, and feminized people (55.6%). Among the organizations that offer services related to gender-based violence, 64.3% provide case management, and 57.1% provide both advocacy and other support services for people fleeing situations of violence.

Approximately 72.2% of the organizations report offering direct services, with a median of 340 people served in 2022. Using the median as a reference point and considering the 59 entities identified, it is estimated that these organizations serve more than 15,000 people annually.

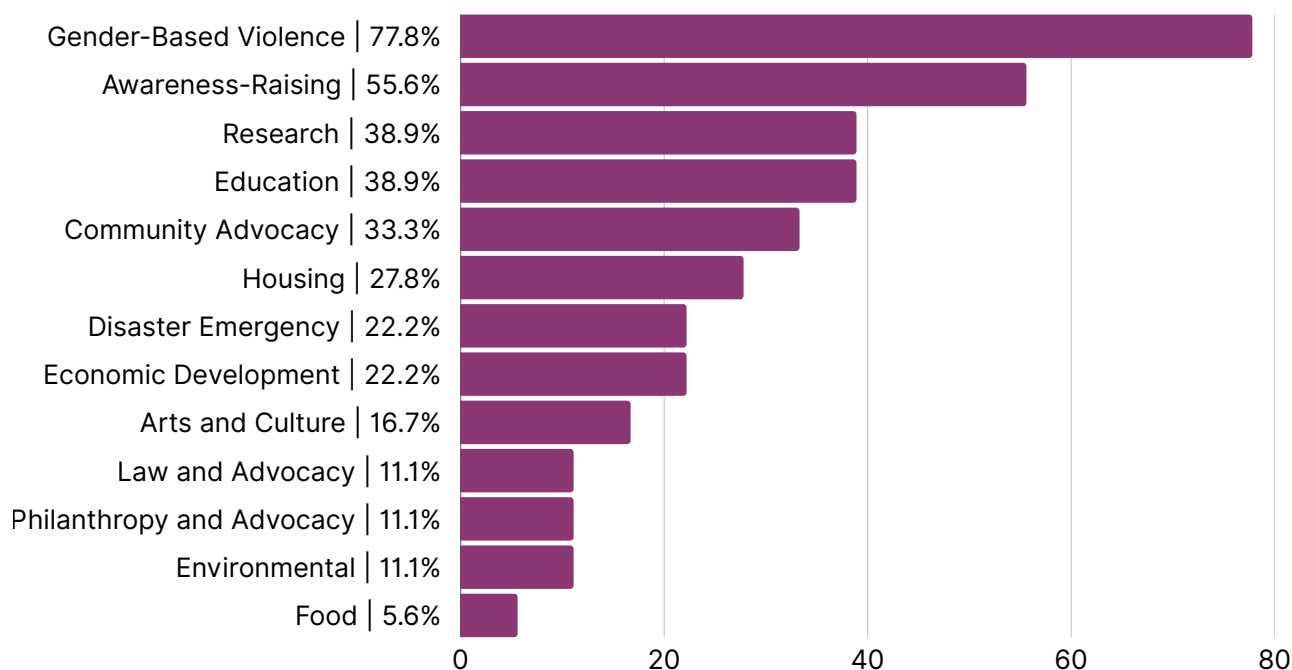
Regarding the population profile, an average of 61.1% of the people served are cisgender women over 18 years of age and 16.4% are cisgender girls under 18 years of age. Fifty percent of the organizations offer services to both cisgender and trans women and girls, as well as feminized trans people. The most served subpopulations include women living below the poverty line and victims of gender-based violence (100%), the LGBTQI+ population (92.3%), women in rural areas (92.3%), and the community at large (84.6%). In addition, half of the organizations also provide services to boys, men, and trans masculinized people, of which 77.8% specifically serve men and trans masculinized people.



15,000

The estimated number of people served annually by community organizations that provide services to cisgender, transgender, and trans-feminized women and girls in Puerto Rico

Areas of action and/or services provided by the surveyed organizations



Main subpopulations served

- **Women living below the poverty line | 100.0%**
- **Women victims of gender-based violence | 100.0%**
- **LGBTQI+ population | 92.3%**
- **Women living in rural areas | 92.3%**
- **General community | 84.6%**
- **Women of reproductive age | 76.9%**
- **People with a mental health condition | 76.9%**
- **Unemployed people | 76.9%**
- **Girls victims of abuse or neglect | 61.5%**
- **People with disabilities | 61.5%**
- **Victims of disasters | 61.5%**
- **Immigrants | 61.5%**
- **Homeless people | 53.8%**
- **Students | 46.2%**
- **People with problematic drug use | 38.5%**
- **People with a positive HIV diagnosis | 30.8%**
- **People with problematic alcohol use | 30.8%**
- **School dropouts | 30.8%**

Note: The numerical base of this table is composed of the 18 organizations participating in the survey. Because this is a multiple-choice question, a separate count is performed for each of the responses mentioned, and the percentages may not add up to 100%.

MAIN BENEFITS OR IMPACTS OF THE SERVICES AND ACTIONS PROMOTED THROUGH THEIR WORK

Safeguarding lives and personal safety:

- Access to emergency shelters, helplines, and comprehensive services to escape situations of gender-based violence.
- Protection and support in legal proceedings.

Emotional and socio-emotional support:

- Counseling, crisis management, and support groups that promote emotional stability and collective well-being.
- Stress reduction through activities such as weekly relaxation and anti-stress workshops.

Empowerment and self-sufficiency:

- Development of capitalizable skills and preparation for job searches.
- Support in personal and organizational decision-making processes.

Inclusive education and prevention:

- Workshops on gender perspective, gender-based violence prevention, and equity.
- Educational programs for women, with a focus on racism, social justice, and human rights.

Financial Support and Access to Resources:

- Food distribution, emergency relief funds, and access to housing.
- Connection with medical, legal, and employment services.

Visibility and Influence on Public Policy:

- Raising awareness of gender-based violence and other issues in the media.
- Analysis of legislation and advocacy to guarantee human rights.

Transformative Community Health:

- Co-creation of health practices based on community needs and realities.
- Promotion of collective well-being and confrontation of narratives of oppression.

Community Strengthening:

- Grassroots organizing and community empowerment in health and equity.
- Active participation in community and university spaces to confront gender-based violence.

Inclusion and Representation:

- Safe and respectful spaces where people can freely express themselves according to their identity.
- Promotion of non-stereotypical roles and diversity in educational and social settings.

Media and Cultural Impact:

- Publication of relevant topics for vulnerable populations in the media.
- Community education and awareness on how to support feminized and marginalized people.

MAIN NEEDS FACED

The main problem or need most frequently mentioned by participants in fulfilling their mission was **funding** (recurring funding, diversification of funding sources) at 55.6%. Overall, five main areas of need are observed:

55.6%

**Insufficient funds and
lack of diversification
of sources**

27.7%

**Insufficient staff
and difficulty
retaining them**

16.7%

**Adequate
physical space**

16.7%

**Administrative
and fiscal
strengthening**

11.1%

**Specific operational
limitations**



The funds depend on the political situation... who is holding the pot at the state level and controlling who will receive and who won't."

Interviewees' opinion



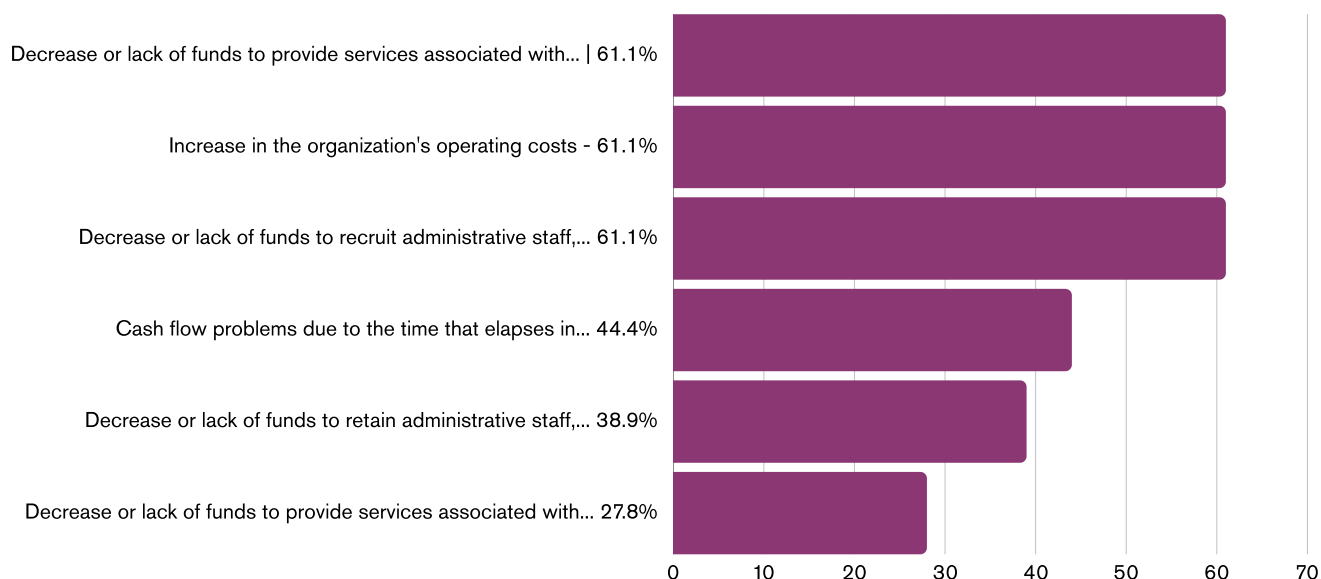
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Interviewees' opinion

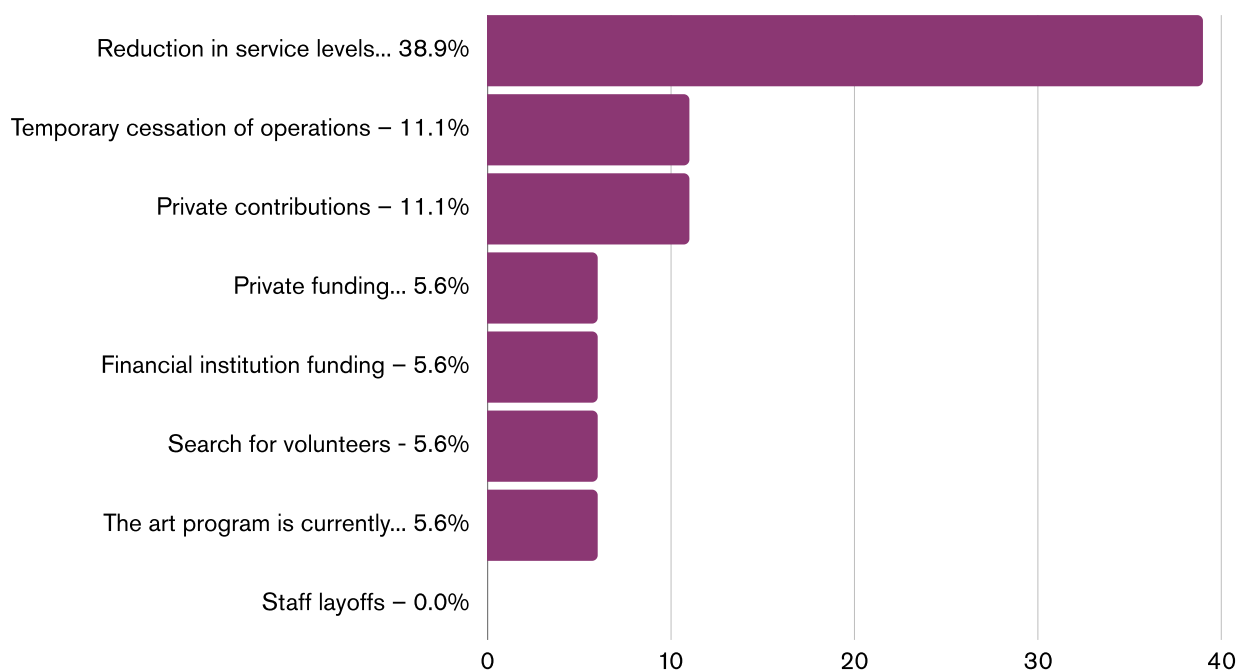


Average budget median: \$307,500

At any point during the past year, has your organization, group, or collective faced any of the following situations:



What actions, if any, has the organization, group, or collective taken to address cash flow constraints?



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LIFE STORIES

The interviews conducted as part of the study recount **life stories** marked by adversity, highlighting how the participants, facing contexts of domestic violence, social exclusion, or family rejection, found in community organizations a safe space for healing and transformation. Their stories reveal a **process of seeking support** that, in many cases, was motivated by recommendations from friends, educational institutions, or social workers. These initial experiences, filled with courage, marked the beginning of a path of personal and community empowerment that allowed the interviewees to redefine their lives and **build strong support networks**.

The participants recount experiences marked by adverse situations such as domestic violence, social exclusion, and family rejection. These experiences prompted them to seek **support from community organizations**, especially those that offered a prejudice-free environment for exploring personal identity. Their arrival at the organizations generally occurred through **recommendations** from close networks or professionals in the educational, legal, or psychological fields. This approach was a transformative act that marked the beginning of their emotional recovery and personal strengthening.

The interviewees accessed a **variety of services**, from psychological support to technical training in traditionally male-dominated trades such as carpentry and plumbing. The emotional support and mentoring allowed them to break cycles of violence and **recognize their rights**. The technical training not only promoted their economic **independence** but also helped them **challenge gender stereotypes**, cultivating self-sufficiency and renewed self-esteem. For many, the organizations became a space of belonging and fundamental social support.

The shared experiences reflect resilience and a **strong commitment to social change**. Several participants became involved as **volunteers** or facilitators, extending the support they received to others. This new role strengthened their identity, purpose, and desire to replicate community initiatives focused on empowerment and inclusion. The process of personal transformation was marked by the acquisition of skills and values that reinforced their active role in **collective well-being**.

After joining the organizations, the interviewees reshaped the way they used their time, participating in **workshops** on urban agriculture, recycling, sewing, and self-defense. **Volunteering** became a way to channel their **personal growth** and establish meaningful **connections**. These activities fostered **solidarity**, expanded support networks, and reinforced a culture of **mutual aid**. The participants were able to integrate social commitment into their daily lives, actively contributing to strengthening their communities.

ANA MARÍA, A NEW BEGINNING

Ana María came to the organization at a critical moment in her life, marked by unhealthy relationships and a difficult childhood following her mother's abandonment. Without realizing it, she had been trapped in a cycle of domestic violence.

"Before coming to the [organization], I didn't recognize what domestic violence was," she reflects. A friend recommended she seek support from an organization dedicated to helping women and girls overcome similar situations in Puerto Rico.

The impact was transformative from the beginning. Ana María received psychological services, mentoring, and workshops that gave her tools to gain self-confidence and rediscover her worth. Activities such as a self-portrait workshop allowed her to explore her emotions and better understand herself.

"We drew what we felt, and the counselors helped us interpret it," she recalls. She also received practical support, such as the loan of computers for her parenting workshops, which facilitated her learning process.

Thanks to the organization, Ana María learned to identify warning signs in her personal relationships and set healthy boundaries. She also completed a carpentry workshop, earning a diploma that gave her new purpose and hope for her future.

"Now I am a free, happier, and more sociable woman," she says proudly. Although she is still working to regain custody of some of her children, Ana María feels optimistic. The organization not only provided her with emotional tools, but also a place of belonging where she found constant support.

"It's a place where you change, where you become the best version of yourself," she says excitedly. Today, Ana María lives in a healthy and respectful relationship with her new partner, definitively breaking the cycle of violence. With a smile on her face, she concludes: "Thanks to the [organization], I am a free, happy, and expressive woman." Her story is a testament to the transformative power of support and solidarity.



"I received psychology and mentoring, and thanks to the tools they gave me, I can now say that I am a free woman."



SOFIA'S STORY: A REBIRTH

Sofía never imagined she could break out of the cycle of domestic violence that dominated her life. As the mother of two teenagers and coming from an unstable home, her story was filled with challenges from an early age, with constant moves and financial constraints that affected her emotional security.

Although she managed to complete school, her adult life was marked by an abusive relationship. Despite her efforts to balance work and family, the violence she suffered left her feeling trapped, until one day she decided to take action and seek help from [organization], recommended in court after filing a complaint against her partner.

The [organization] became the emotional and practical refuge Sofía needed. There she found legal assistance, psychological support, workshops, and activities for her children, allowing her family to heal and rebuild.

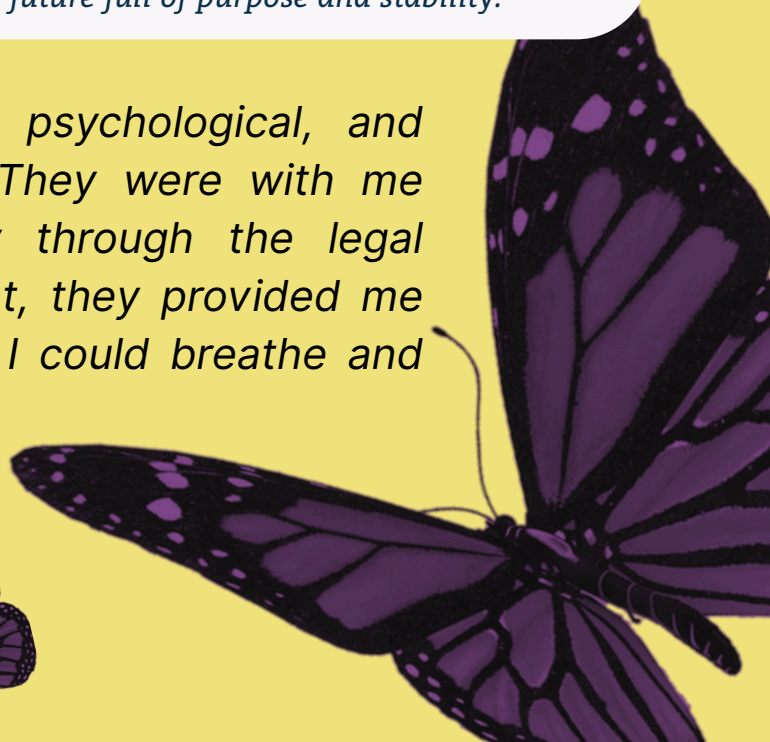
"They offered me a safe place where I could breathe and feel protected," she recalls with gratitude. Beyond the services, the organization provided her with a space of empathy and understanding, helping her confront her past and begin to believe in herself as a survivor. Through workshops and mentoring, Sofía regained her self-esteem and developed emotional tools to become more aware as a mother and to face the challenges of her new life with confidence.

"I learned to slow down and not carry the guilt of what happened," she reflects. This process not only transformed her, but also positively impacted her children, who began to heal alongside her, strengthening their family ties. Today, Sofía uses her experience to help other women, participating as a workshop leader and sharing her story to inspire hope. "It's important for them to know they are not alone," she says with conviction. Looking back, she recognizes the transformative impact of her journey.

Now she is an empowered, confident woman, aware of her worth, grateful for the support she received, and determined to build a future full of purpose and stability.



They offered me legal, psychological, and social work assistance. They were with me every step of the way through the legal process, and beyond that, they provided me with a safe place where I could breathe and feel protected.



ANGÉLICA: REBUILDING HER LIFE

Angélica grew up in a conservative home, surrounded by traditional expectations and taboos regarding topics such as the LGBTQ community. Everything changed when she enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico to study Social Work, a space that allowed her to discover herself and empower herself.

However, the process wasn't easy. Upon revealing her sexual identity, she faced rejection from her mother and had to leave home, thus beginning a journey of self-discovery and resilience. Years later, Angélica met the [organization], an entity that offered her more than carpentry training: an inclusive space where she found emotional and professional support. There, she not only perfected her technical skills but also strengthened her confidence.

"This is very queer, literally the queerest of all the queer programs I've been to," she recalls with a smile, highlighting how the program broke stereotypes and provided her with a safe environment to fully develop.

The organization's impact was transformative, opening up opportunities such as a paid internship and professional projects. Her participation also facilitated an important reconnection with her father, who now trusts her skills and collaborates with her on carpentry work. This connection has been a key point in her personal and family growth, strengthening a relationship she always admired.

Today, Angélica combines her passion for carpentry with community commitment. Through the organization Protecho, she contributes to rebuilding roofs after hurricanes, giving back some of what she has learned.

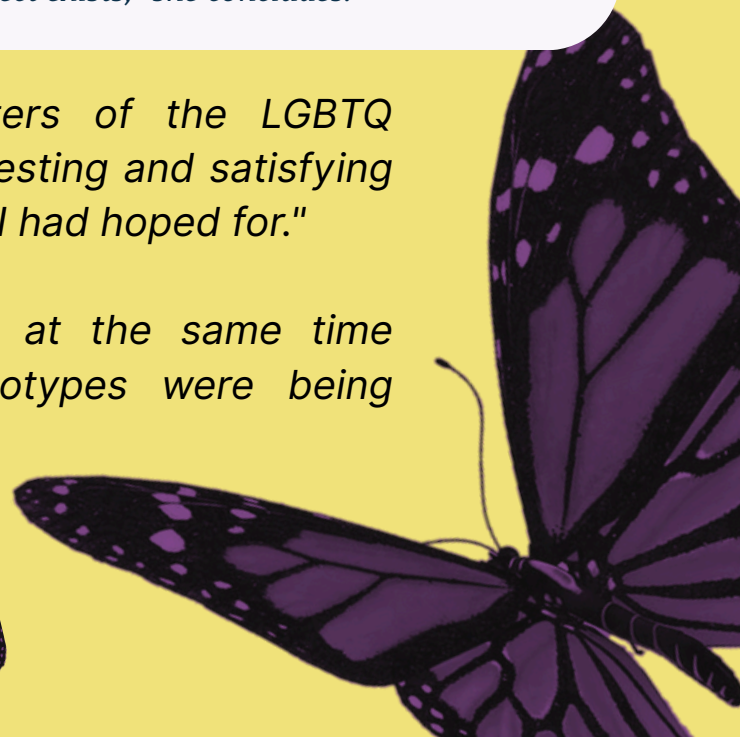
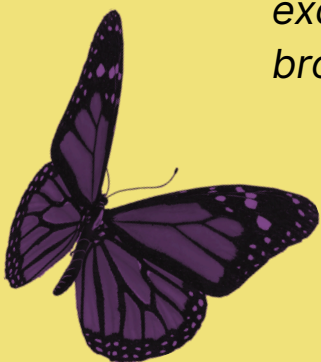
Her story is a testament to how an inclusive space and the right support can transform lives, guiding her toward a life full of purpose and gratitude.

"I am very grateful that this project exists," she concludes.



"We represent all the letters of the LGBTQ community. It was very interesting and satisfying to see that it was everything I had hoped for."

"I felt very welcomed and at the same time excited to see how stereotypes were being broken."



COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

- ✓ The cost-benefit analysis allowed for the evaluation of key social programs, such as shelters for people fleeing violence, case management and support services, and job training programs, in order to justify the investment and guide public policy decisions.
- ✓ The Hogar Nueva Mujer, Casa Juana, and Albanistería La Brega programs were selected because they had sufficient information on costs and impacts. The methodology was based on similar program models in the United States, adjusted to the economic reality of Puerto Rico.
- ✓ For Hogar Nueva Mujer and Casa Juana, the avoided cost of reducing revictimization was calculated, adjusting expenditure and salary data to the local context. In Albanistería La Brega, the benefits analyzed included increases in employment, income, and health improvements.
- ✓ This analysis provided an accurate assessment of the programs' economic and social impact, highlighting their effectiveness and sustainability in the Puerto Rican context and serving as a key tool for strategic social investment decisions.

HOGAR NUEVA MUJER & CASA JUANA

The cost-benefit ratio of the Hogar Nueva Mujer and Casa Juana programs was estimated at 3.38, as they generated benefits of \$5,744 with costs of \$1,700 per participant. This means that every dollar invested produces more than three dollars in benefits, highlighting the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of social and economic returns. These benefits include not only direct improvements in the living conditions of participants, but also a significant contribution to reducing social costs associated with gender-based violence and homelessness.

\$3.38
For every dollar

ALBANISTERÍA EN LA BREGA

The Albanistería En La Brega program also generated positive net benefits. Its cost of \$304.3 million and it produces benefits of \$1,251.9 million per beneficiary, for a cost-benefit ratio of 4.11. This demonstrates that every dollar invested in the program produces more than four dollars in benefits, highlighting its ability to promote economic self-sufficiency and improve the living conditions of beneficiaries through the development of technical and job skills.

\$4.11
For every dollar

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS OF RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSIONS



- 59 community-based organizations were identified in Puerto Rico focused on cisgender women, transgender women, and trans feminized individuals, offering essential services such as shelters, emotional support, and advocacy, and promoting gender equity and public policy changes.
- These organizations operate in a difficult environment with small structures, a high dependence on volunteers, limited annual budgets, and diversified funding primarily through donations and fundraising activities, offering comprehensive services in areas such as housing, health, education, and advocacy.
- They face significant challenges such as limited funding, a lack of specialized personnel, administrative and operational needs (physical spaces, reliable energy), and the need to update programmatic approaches and generate greater community support to sustain their initiatives.
- They directly contribute to the well-being of more than 17,000 people annually through shelter, emotional, legal, and economic support, and the creation of inclusive spaces that foster empowerment, self-sufficiency, and social mobility.
- They utilize innovative and evidence-informed approaches, such as trauma-informed programs, art for healing, and intersectional models, achieving significant social and economic impact, with benefits that in some cases quadruple the investment.

AREAS OF RECOMMENDATION



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Promote the implementation of recurring and long-term grants to provide financial stability to entities.
- Explore financing mechanisms through partnerships with the private sector based on the cost-benefit of the programs implemented by entities.
- Promote the simplification of administrative processes to facilitate access to funds.


AREAS OF RECOMMENDATION, CONT.



DEVELOPMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

- Provision of training in areas such as fiscal management, strategic planning, and administrative management.
- Establishment of technical assistance networks and peer technical assistance (with compensation) to share successful and innovative practices and address challenges.
- Promote training and access to technological tools that optimize both programmatic and administrative management.
- Strengthening capacities for the systematization and evaluation of initiatives, including the implementation of evaluation projects that include monitoring and impact assessment systems for initiatives, for accountability, and also for making decisions on the replicability and scalability of initiatives.

COLLABORATION AND THE LAW

- Strengthening cross-sector partnerships between community organizations, government agencies, and private companies to maximize resources
 - Using information like that generated by this study to increase public policy advocacy to promote structural reforms aimed at gender equity and social justice
- 

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