Alternative gender data sources to close gaps & achieve equality: “Cosas de Mujeres” case study

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Achieving Better Outcomes with Better Gender Data: Gender Data Network Webinar, Jan 26, 2022
The problem

In the context of the largest migration flow in recent history, gender-based violence (GBV) along the Colombia-Venezuelan border is a largely hidden epidemic (Zulver 2019). Donors, humanitarian response organizations and public service providers asked for timely, actionable data about GBV that could justify and guide their responses.
Our solution: Cosas de Mujeres

Cosas de Mujeres is a gender data project that addresses gender-based violence in Colombia.

1. We **leverage Whatsapp** to connect Colombian and Venezuelan women to available services that prevent & respond to GBV;

1. We partner with grassroots feminist organizations and local service providers to **map and ‘ground-truth’ service availability**;

1. We **generate actionable data** about the problem of and potential solutions to GBV.
What does the data look like?
We take qualitative data (messages), quantify it, and publish it into mixed-methods policy reports.

- Types of violence
- Barriers to accessing existing services (distance, opening hours, requirements)
- Quality of existing services
- Types of services or supports needed and desired
- Unforeseen and emerging issues (COVID-19)
How do we make the data actionable?

Meet medium to long-term and short-term gender equality goals:

● (Medium/long) We routinely share insights and recommendations with state institutions, humanitarian & development organizations, donors & civil society through Spanish & English data briefs; webinars; trainings.

● (Short) Provide women with current, ‘ground-truthed’ information about the services that do exist.
Possibilities of our alternative gender data project

- Timely data
- Elevates women’s voices, perspectives, needs, priorities
- Meets some short-term needs while helping address longer-term problems
Limitations of our alternative gender data project

- **Representativeness**: It doesn’t capture everyone

- **Not all data needs can be met**: Data disaggregation must be weighed against privacy & safety considerations

- **No gold standard for data rights**: Need to think through issues of consent, changing tech policies and regulations
Example 1: Collaboration with conventional data sources

Cosas de Mujeres may not capture everyone, but our "thick description" data provides additional nuance and texture to national statistics.

Our partnership with DANE, the national statistical agency, brought two kinds of data together for a richer picture of migrant women’s lives in Colombia.
Example 2: Dealing with data rights by using the feminist library & consulting widely

- **Human rights agencies** for what standards are being developed (e.g. UN)
- **Feminist scholars** who are working on data/AI privacy and protection (e.g. the Feminist AI network)
- **Tech and data science experts** who understand how data works
For more on what we’ve learned connecting alternative gender data to action…
Thank you!

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