



Pregnant women... *victims*, who have been **DISPROPORTIONATELY** affected by the pandemic

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In just a few days we will commemorate the International Women's Day, so it is important to highlight the fact that among the different inequalities we were able to observe during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was particularly noticeable the one that affected pregnant women around the world, especially in Latin America; according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).



The difficult experiences pregnant women faced during the pandemic

In Latin America and the Caribbean, at least 365 thousand pregnant women got infected by COVID-19, with a dramatic result of 3,000 deaths in that area. That was caused by the limited access to professional public health services, assistance given too late, and the suspension of prenatal services; those were the main reasons why maternal mortality rates increased in that area.

At least 1 out of each 3 pregnant women was unable to get opportune assistance to urgent cases, and considering the severe crisis in the

region, the scenario did not look favorable at all for women and newborns. The fact of having high rates of infections and deaths is a catastrophe, because at least in Latin America, you are currently able to find enough vaccines so that pregnant women should be protected.

The virus is especially dangerous for that sector since the natural mechanism of the body is focused on providing the baby with all he/she needs, which puts mothers at risk because her immune system is not strong enough.

Maternal mortality during the pandemic

The PAHO showed the results of its latest study, and the experts mentioned that in the region between March 2020 and November 2021, 447 women unfortunately passed away. Indicators related to that revealed that 90% of them had different symptoms that might represent a risk for them when being admitted to the hospital, 77% of them delivered their babies prematurely, and 60% of the babies were born with low birthweight.

The current strategy, according to experts in prenatal health and experts from different health organizations around the world, is to improve the access to vaccines and accelerate the immunization process for pregnant women, and also to continue working hard with local healthcare services. This is important to mention because during the peak of the pandemic in Mexico, high-specialty hospitals became COVID centers; which stopped the options to provide prenatal assistance and enough attention during the delivery.

Due to that fact, COVID-19 morbidity and mortality rates of pregnant women in Latin America are among the highest rates in the region.



One of the most affected sectors during the pandemic, at least in Latin America and the Caribbean, was the sector of pregnant women.

SUMMARY

The outbreak of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 exposed the different gaps related to inequality and deprivation around the world, and more particularly those related to gender. According to the last report provided by the Pan American Health Organization, Latin America and the Caribbean are among the regions around the world that may be considered the most dangerous areas for pregnant women; which urges people to take action in the framework of the International Women's Day.



Healthcare assistance is still deficient

Although health organizations and sanitary institutions made efforts to assist pregnant women, acceptance levels are still very low, according to PAHO. It is primordial that healthcare focusing on that sector of the population becomes constant in order to protect both, mother and newborns.

In addition to that problem, important inequality gaps that were detected before the pandemic became bigger, so it is urgent to pay attention to the programs focused on indigenous, afro descendant, and migrant women; who are more vulnerable to risks due to social and gender matters.

Professional women working in the healthcare



Among all those problems, we also have to highlight the situation of professional women who work in the health sector during the pandemic. So far, professional women in the healthcare sector are 72% of the cases detected so, we can observe that women have disproportionately been more affected.

The virus does not stop

Although the infections caused by the virus in the region decreased for a sixth week in a row, the pandemic is not over. It is important to keep on working to control the consequences, particularly those related to the different gender gaps. Being aware of the uneven effects that the sanitary crisis caused will be crucial to understand the importance of the actions we have to take in order to improve the current context of many girls, teenagers, and women.

