



# The Americas

Though rich in resources and culture, the Americas region is plagued by stark inequality and a lack of opportunity for young people. Particularly in Central America, barriers to education, high youth unemployment, and violent gangs have pushed many to migrate in search of safety and opportunities. Across Latin America, additional layers of violence from the drug trade, civil conflict and harmful gender norms have a deep impact on children and youth who are both direct targets and traumatized witnesses. Girls and young women are at heightened risk and suffer the greatest burden of sexual violence and coercion at shockingly early ages. Education remains hard to access and provides incomplete preparation for an independent future. Ethnic and racial minorities, LGBTQ youth and children with disabilities continue to be pushed to the margins.

Thankfully, GFC's grassroots partners are addressing these challenges head on, working in the heart of the communities they call home. Whether supporting young migrants in their journey, opening eyes and doors to the power of learning, transforming gender power relations, or teaching a culture of peace with justice, many use a youth-led approach. As a result, young people are prepared to take charge of their futures, become leaders among their peers, and speak out for change.

## CURRENT INITIATIVES

### EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

This four-year collaboration leverages a cohort of 18 community-based organizations to promote gender equality and advance girls' rights and opportunities across Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.



### CHANGING GENDER ATTITUDES, HEALTHY MASCULINITIES

Since 2014, five local organizations in Quintano Roo, Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras have explored, piloted, and reflected together on how to support boys and young men to reflect critically on how their own attitudes and behaviors impact girls and women, and encourage them to be a positive force for gender equity in their families and communities.

### CHAMPIONING THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT GIRLS

A dynamic network of 12 local partners is working to protect the safety and rights of adolescent migrant girls in Central America, Mexico, and the US, while raising public awareness about the challenges and heightened vulnerability these girls face throughout their journey.

### In Numbers...

**48** Local Partners

**10** Countries

**\$830,000**

provided in grants in  
FY2019

**50,000**

children and youth  
supported in 2018

## DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Global Fund for Children is committed to supporting local organizations that work for *gender equity, youth empowerment, opportunity through education, and freedom from violence and exploitation* with and for children and youth in their communities and beyond. In the Americas, GFC sees emerging and persistent challenges alongside critical opportunities where grassroots civil society is already responding, and where GFC's model of investment, support and connection can contribute to social change.

**Migrant children and youth** – Children and youth are on the move, heading north from Central America, south from Nicaragua, and out from Venezuela, girls and boys alike, some with their families, some alone, and some already young parents themselves. They need support and protection as they are uniquely vulnerable on the journey, and they are also courageous young leaders, creating new paths to better futures where none existed before.

**Inequality in education** – While basic education has become broadly accessible in Latin America, many children are left out of the promise education makes for a fulfilling future, from scarce early childhood learning, barriers for children with disabilities and speakers of indigenous languages, to high secondary school dropout rates, and an economy and society demanding new socioemotional and technology skills.

**Girls' empowerment and healthy masculinities** – Girls and young women are powerful leaders in the movement for gender equity in Latin America; boys and young men must also be challenged to reflect on the *machismo* that has shaped them and its impact on their families and society.

**Adolescent pregnancy** – Latin America has the second highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the world, and they have barely improved at all in the past 40 years, forcing girls, often involuntarily, into early motherhood and stunting their development into independent, educated young women.

**Building cultures of peace** – Whether in rural post-conflict Colombia, gang-controlled urban neighborhoods, a first date gone very wrong, or social media at its worst, children and youth need mentors to help them stay safe and find non-violent ways to heal trauma and resolve conflict.

**LGBTQ youth** – As children enter adolescence and may begin to feel different from their peers, they face a dominant culture that often harshly rejects sexual and gender diversity, leaving many LGBTQ youth at extreme risk of harassment, violence, homelessness, depression and suicide.

**Afrodescendant and indigenous children** – The diversity of cultures, languages and identities across the Americas should be enriching to children's lives, but instead they are regularly the excuse for discrimination, marginalization, and forced assimilation that have both an acute and lasting impact on afrodescendant and indigenous children's opportunities to flourish.

**Child's rights and youth activism** – Young people are powerful voices for the issues that impact their lives and new ways of living in harmony with each other and the planet, and they deserve to be heard.

GFC will continue to focus on **Central America and Mexico**, while also looking to strengthen our focus on marginalized children and youth in **Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia** (with special interest in supporting **Venezuelan migrant families**). We also see critical and unique needs in **Haiti** and **Brazil**.

### For more information:

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