

Press Release No. 15

Food Monitor Program Commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Havana, November 25, 2023

Since 1999, November 25 has been celebrated as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to the United Nations General Assembly, this scourge encompasses not only physical and sexual violence against women but also includes more subtle forms such as psychological abuse, threats, coercion, or deprivation of liberty.

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the government incorporated women into productive work, presenting it as a symbol of female emancipation. However, Cuban women have had to face additional burdens generated by cyclical social and economic insecurity in the country.

In addition to their professional work and domestic responsibilities, Cuban women bear the burden of intrafamily nutrition, which results in psychological, physical, and economic violence. Due to the pressure imposed by their role as food providers for their families, they are the ones who feel the loss of food the most due to energy insecurity in Cuba. For example, after prolonged power or water outages, women are the majority in groups of people taking to the streets to protest or block public roads as a form of demand. Government responses to the precarious situation of women in these expressions of discontent have included arrests, evictions, the filing of criminal records, and threats to take away their children due to negligence.

Furthermore, the scarcity resulting from the current economic and food crisis on the island increases the intrafamily burden. In most Cuban households, women spend long hours queuing to buy the few available foods or monitor exchange sites, parallel sales, and alternative recipes on social networks. When they obtain the food, they are responsible for preparing and distributing it, prioritizing the most vulnerable members of the household. FMP surveys have revealed that women are the first to sacrifice to ensure a protein portion for their children. For instance, while the Cuban educational system does not guarantee a healthy and safe diet, mothers are the ones who ensure their children bring food from home. This state of vulnerability deepened during the Covid-19 pandemic when women were more exposed to the virus. Not only was their health at risk, but also that of their families, especially in single-parent families of unmarried mothers with school-age children.

Various studies demonstrate that men in households experiencing food insecurity are twice as likely to engage in violence against their partners. This is compounded by an increase in alcoholism, depression, and anxiety, which in turn contributes to domestic violence.

For the mothers of more than 1878 people detained since July 11 for political reasons, ensuring the nutrition of their incarcerated children becomes a significant burden. The prison system in Cuba does not guarantee healthy food or drinking water, systematically

violating the Mandela Rules, and forcing the families of inmates to provide additional provisions. Women who have their husbands and children detained bear the double burden of ensuring the household economy without essential family members, and providing for people in unjust conditions of vulnerability. Due to all these causes, Food Monitor Program alerts about the different types of violence related to food that Cuban women have been experiencing for decades.