

# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE



Organization of  
American States | More rights  
for more people



The Committee of Experts of the MESECVI<sup>1</sup> recommends that States adopt provisions criminalizing obstetric violence and that they define by all appropriate means the elements that constitute a natural process before, during, and after childbirth.



## WHAT IS OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE?<sup>2</sup>

“The appropriation by health personnel of women’s bodies and reproductive processes that is expressed as dehumanizing treatment and abuse of the medicalization and pathologization of natural processes that leads to the loss of autonomy and the capacity of women to take free decisions regarding their bodies and sexuality, with negative impact on women’s quality of life.”

Of the 19 States that participated in the Second Follow-Up Report, only:

**Argentina,**  
**Suriname,** and  
**Venezuela**  
reported that they have criminalized obstetric violence.

Challenges: The explicit criminalization of obstetric violence, training and raising awareness among health personnel, providing timely and truthful information to pregnant women, including information tailored to indigenous, illiterate, and rural women, among others, so that they can freely make informed decisions and be respected.

## WHAT DOES THE BELÉM DO PARÁ CONVENTION SAY?

Article 9: The States Parties shall take special account of the vulnerability of women to violence (...) Similar consideration shall be given to women subjected to violence while pregnant (...).

Additional source and resources: Second Follow-Up Report on the Recommendations of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, available at <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-SegundoInformeSeguimiento-EN.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Follow-up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, “Belém do Pará Convention.”

<sup>2</sup> Article 15, paragraph 13 of Venezuela’s Organic Law on Women’s Right to a Life Free from Violence. [http://venezuela.unfpa.org/doumentos/Ley\\_mujer.pdf](http://venezuela.unfpa.org/doumentos/Ley_mujer.pdf)