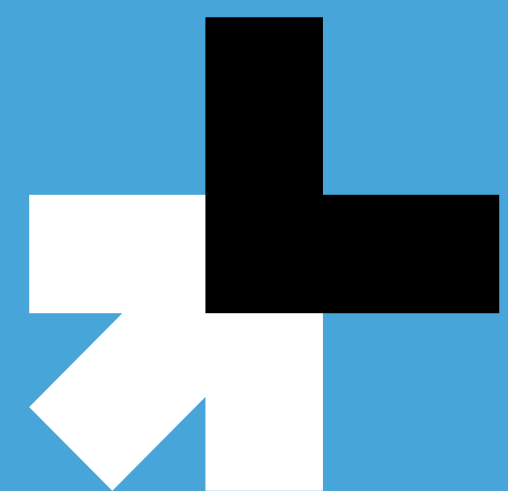


**Proven  
Solution**

Ending Gender-Based Violence



**HeForShe**

# **University of São Paulo Organizing to end gender-based violence at university**



## Global Context

**The sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) re-emphasizes that violence against women is a major impediment to gender equality.**

It impairs women's full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including equal participation and leadership in public life. The CSW65 also recognizes that sexual harassment leads to a hostile environment, including in educational institutions.

Brazilian institutions have promoted many efforts to tackle Gender-based violence. These include promulgating the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women (1996), enacting the Federal Law 11.340 of 2006 (also called the Maria da Penha Law) to restrain violence against women, and expanding relevant councils and secretaries. However, an average of 4,621 women were murdered annually between 2008 and 2018, revealing the structural aspect of GBV in our society (Atlas of Violence, 2020).

Most Brazilian universities don't have agencies dedicated to gender equality. A 2015 survey showed that 67% of female students had suffered violence, and 42% were afraid of violence. We created the USP Women's Office (USPWO) in 2016 as a pioneering initiative for facing GBV and reducing sexual harassment in our campuses.

"Changing the University of São Paulo scenario to end gender-based violence and empower women and girls to achieve gender equality is a path of no return. We have a responsibility to engage men and boys to transform cultural values, practices, and actions, addressing gender-based discrimination and stereotyping in education to promote an environment that is more inclusive, just, sustainable and equal in opportunities for all.

We remain committed to this challenge and we will go further, reinforcing our internal initiatives, overcoming the obstacles that still exist to ensure access to education, meaningful participation and a voice for women and girls in an academia free of GBV."

**Vahan Agopyan**  
President, University of São Paulo



**We have a responsibility to engage men and boys to transform cultural values, practices, and actions, addressing gender-based discrimination and stereotyping in education to promote an environment that is more inclusive**

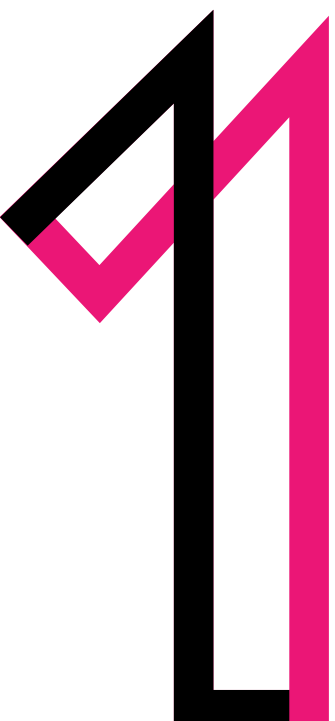
**Vahan Agopyan**  
President, University of São Paulo

## Key Stages of Implementation

### Step 1 Incorporating the gender agenda at the core of the administration

The first step to address the gender equality agenda within the University was to recognize the topic's relevance at an institutional level. It meant creating a formal agency with defined responsibilities, allocated staff, and dedicated resources reporting directly to the Presidency. USPWO was created in 2016 to advise the central administration and coordinate actions with other internal and external institutions.

**Having a properly founded and recognized agency within the institution brought support and legitimacy to our efforts. The central administration's strong commitment to the gender equality agenda gave the USPWO the capabilities and credibility it needs to fulfill its mission.**



**In 2019, the gathering of internal data on parental leave requests helped to diagnose economic vulnerabilities. Based on this study, a program was created for female postgraduate students and professors.**

### Step 2 Tackling gender-based violence from different perspectives

The USPWO has a permanent team operating in four areas: formulating programs and educational actions; organizing and leading research; communications; and partnerships. In programs and educational actions, we have regularly produced materials to engage senior leadership and give visibility to GBV. In cooperation with other areas, we ran campaigns (posters, banners, billboards, and cards) and developed guidance material (5,000 printed booklets). Since 2016, this area has also promoted 60 debates on gender inequalities and 75 interviews and press articles and organized annual reception campaigns for new students.

Notably, undergraduate courses that approached gender or women's issues have increased from 23 in 2009 to 96 in 2016. This area has also helped map vulnerable

places on campus, which guided the redesign of lighting, thereby diminishing sexual harassment. We also cooperated to create the app Campus USP, with a service for denouncing sexual harassment. In 2020, services for women experiencing GBV were mapped with updated information. During the pandemic, a protocol was established to assist women who experienced GBV at USP, including counseling, advocacy, and information about rights and resources. In this period, we collaborated in innovative initiatives such as the first graduate meeting of USP Women do Science.

The research area has produced innovative knowledge about GBV and other gender inequalities within our community. In 2017, USP conducted an online survey to measure students' perception of discriminatory behavior and violence incidence. The survey revealed that female students and other minority groups were more victimized. In 2019, the gathering of internal data on parental leave requests helped to diagnose economic vulnerabilities. Based on this study, a program was created for female postgraduate students and professors. In 2020, we also released the survey on the impacts of Covid-19 on women and men at USP, which observes the increasing or diminishing of domestic violence among students, professors, and technical staff, among other questions. Data were collected from a sample of 840 respondents and are in the final stage of analysis.

The communications area opened conversations with the public by creating FAQs and other social and traditional media content and supporting our educational campaigns.

The team also produced USPWO events. During the pandemic, the team collaborated in campaigns highlighting the threat of domestic violence, including in dorms and frat-houses, and the tendency for unequal sharing of domestic tasks between women and men.

The partnership area is initially focused on generating opportunities for black female doctors to advance in scientific careers. After the first celebration at USP of the International Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diaspora Women's Day in July 2020, the USPWO constituted a workgroup to discuss the ideas presented in the event such as encouraging postdoctoral projects dedicated to black female doctors.

**The main takeaway from this second step is the finding that it is impossible to isolate the phenomenon of gender-based violence from its intersections with other structural inequalities.**

**It is also relevant to mention that, despite the Brazilian context's challenges, the USPWO areas realigned their actions to respond to Covid-19 with a gender approach.**





### Step 3 Engaging educational units in the gender equality agenda

Human Rights Commissions have been created at USP to reach all our 95,000 students, 6,000 faculty, and 14,000 staff over eight cities in São Paulo state. There were nine commissions in 2015, rising to 39 in 2019. The commissions engage with people who have suffered rights violations at the university, formalize and investigate complaints, support the resumption of academic and personal activities, monitor accountability processes, and propose educational activities for cultural changes. The partnership among these commissions and USPWO encourages the university to end GBV and propose new policies to promote gender equality.

With these three steps, we obtained as measurable results a practical commitment to the gender equality agenda in the whole University's community, creating tools and protocols, and the increase of the campus's internal vigilance.

In turn, these outputs impacted the decreasing of denounces related to sexual harassment. In 2017 it was one, in 2019, two, and in 2021 it was one again.













**However, we are aware that this is a tangible face of Gender-based Violence. The University of São Paulo understands its challenge to keep advancing to the ending of less visible forms of GBV, which combines itself with other inequalities. This social phenomenon – which might be nominated as structural sexism – remains a permanent challenge to be confronted by changing an entire culture in our University and Brazilian society.**

**Human Rights Commissions have been created at USP to reach all our 95,000 students, 6,000 faculty, and 14,000 staff over eight cities in São Paulo state.**

### Contact

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### Resources

-  **CSW65 Agreed Conclusions:**  
[https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/65/csw65\\_agreed\\_conclusions\\_advance\\_unedited\\_version\\_29\\_march\\_2021.pdf?la=en&vs=5504](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/65/csw65_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_29_march_2021.pdf?la=en&vs=5504)
-  **Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women - Convention of Belém do Pará (1996)**  
<https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-61.html>
-  **Federal Law 11.340 of 2006 (also called the Maria da Penha Law)**  
[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2004-2006/2006/Lei/L11340.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2004-2006/2006/Lei/L11340.htm)
-  **Atlas of Violence, 2020**  
<https://www.ipea.gov.br/atlasviolencia/download/24/atlas-da-violencia-2020>
-  **Creation of the USP Women's Office and website:**  
<http://www.leginf.usp.br/?portaria=portaria-gr-6766-de-10-de-agosto-de-2016>  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/>
-  **Interactions at USP study and access to online video:**  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/pesquisa-interacoes-na-usp/>  
<https://jornal.usp.br/universidade/para-mais-da-metade-dos-estudantes-usp-e-machista-e-racista/>
-  **Avon Institute Survey (SCAVONE, M. 2015):**  
<https://avongroup.vteximg.com.br/arquivos/violencia-contra-a-mulher-no-ambiente-universitario.pdf?v=637075242343970000>
-  **Video and websites of some Local Human Rights Commissions at USP:**  
<https://www.prefeiturarp.usp.br/page.asp?url=cav-mulheres>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN5kpflseds&t=1s>  
<https://ww3.icb.usp.br/comissao-de-direitos-humanos-cdh/>
-  **USP Women's Office campaigns in the context of Covid-19:**  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/a-usp-mete-a-colher-na-violencia-domestica/>  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/usp-mulheres-lanca-campanha-pela-igualdade-de-genero-no-contexto-da-pandemia-de-covid-19/>  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/moradias-estudantis-sem-violencia-de-genero/>
-  **USP Women's Office Impacts of Covid-19 on women and men at USP survey:**  
<http://uspmulheres.usp.br/escritorio-usp-mulheres-lanca-pesquisa-sobre-os-impactos-da-covid-19-entre-as-mulheres-e-os-homens-da-usp/>
-  **Protocol for assistance to women who experienced GBV at USP:**  
<https://sites.usp.br/sas/violencia-de-genero-na-usp/>
-  **Campus USP App:**  
<http://www.puspsc.usp.br/aplicativo-campus-usp/>