

International Organizations, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Police Implementation of Domestic Violence Policies in Liberia and Nicaragua

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Domestic violence is the predominant form of violence against women in most countries in Africa and Latin America. Scholars have theorized the adoption of domestic violence laws and policies in both regions. However, policy implementation is understudied and under theorized. Therefore, we compare how international organizations and women's nongovernmental organizations have influenced the implementation of domestic violence policies by police officers in Liberia and Nicaragua. We introduce the concept of the *transnational implementation process* and describe how international organizations and women's organizations have employed training, institutional and policy restructuring, and monitoring to influence police behavior at the street level. The effects of these strategies have been conditional on the political environment. We identify two patterns of international and domestic influence on street-level implementation: internationally led and domestically supported implementation in Liberia, with domestically led and internationally supported implementation in Nicaragua.

Keywords: Women's rights, implementation, violence against women, domestic violence, Liberia, Nicaragua, women's policing, transnational advocacy

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Transnational activism by women's organizations placed violence against women (VAW) on the agenda of the United Nations and other international organizations (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Walsh 2016b). Since then, global, regional, and subregional organizations have mainstreamed VAW into their programming and have influenced states to develop laws, policies, institutions, and programs to address domestic violence and other forms of VAW.² They have also built the capacity of women's organizations and have supported them with funds to develop and implement a variety of programs in this area.

Women's organizations and international organizations have argued that these initiatives are necessary because the police have typically failed to adequately address domestic violence (Jubb et al. 2008, 2010). Studies from across the globe show that despite major improvements in some countries, police have tended to trivialize domestic violence and to exhibit many of the gender biases found in the wider society (UN General Assembly 2012; UN Women 2011). In Africa and Latin America, these biases have often resulted in a failure to record women's complaints and to investigate or arrest the accused, which have also led to police revictimization of women who have been battered (Medie 2019; Walsh 2016a; Walsh and Menjívar 2016). This revictimization has severe physical and psychosocial implications for women. It often results in women returning to the same abuse from which they sought protection. Additionally, the lack of appropriate policing further empowers abusers who realize that they will not be held accountable, leaving survivors more vulnerable to retaliation and heightened violence. In Central America, systemic policing failures have also caused women to flee and seek asylum elsewhere, even though many are then deported back to the home countries that failed to protect them in the first place (Menjívar and Walsh 2017).

Consequently, the United Nations and women's organizations, through international instruments such as the Declaration of Violence against Women (DEVAV), have sought to promote new domestic violence norms. They have advocated for the adoption of domestic violence laws and policies and for the creation of specialized institutions and programs that are meant to correct weaknesses in police responses to female victims. Subsequently, legal and institutional measures have been adopted in most countries throughout Africa and Latin America.

2. The term 'domestic violence' refers to intimate partner violence against women.

However, with a few exceptions, the gender and politics literature is mostly silent on how these international and domestic actors have affected the street-level behavior of the police in these settings. Street-level bureaucrats, such as police officers, are civil servants who have direct contact with the general public. They function as policy decision makers.

Policies are not static; rather, they are continually being made through agency regulations and street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1980). These powerful political agents have the latitude to make decisions that impact implementation, and their street-level behavior can enforce or undermine written policies. Thus, their near absence from the literature constitutes a major knowledge gap.

We address this gap by advancing a typology of the implementation process that involves actors at the international and domestic levels. These processes differ from and extend those that have been proposed to explain policy adoption and implementation (Montoya 2013), and we contribute to building a theoretical framework for explaining street-level implementation in developing countries. We draw on more than 350 interviews conducted in Liberia and Nicaragua to compare how international organizations and women's organizations in both countries influenced implementation by street-level actors, namely police officers. We focus on two indicators of improved street-level performance in the implementation of VAW policies: (a) the reduction in practices that revictimize survivors who report domestic violence in Liberia and Nicaragua and (b) the referral of cases to courts in Liberia. We argue that international and women's organizations employed training, institutional and policy restructuring, and monitoring of the police to influence street-level policing and that their involvement was crucial for improving police responsiveness to domestic violence. We introduce the concept of a transnational implementation process as the coordination of efforts among international and domestic organizations that contribute to women's policy implementation. These processes contributed to a reduction in revictimizing practices and to an increase in the rate of referral of domestic violence cases for prosecution. We also demonstrate that the transnational implementation process is not linear, as exemplified by the recent reversal of implementation measures in Nicaragua.

This comparison of Liberia and Nicaragua demonstrates variation in the relative roles and influence of international organizations versus domestic women's organizations across different contexts, but both were key to improving police response to VAW in these countries. Liberia exemplifies an internationally led and domestically supported

transnational implementation process involving a UN-led reform of the police force. However, Liberia's strong women's movement also exerted pressure on the government and the United Nations to hold perpetrators of VAW, particularly sexual violence, accountable. The Liberian National Police (LNP) collaborated with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to establish a specialized unit of the police force — the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS). Although UNMIL and LNP were at the forefront of the reform process, women's organizations also participated in the restructuring of the police force and in the training and the monitoring of police officers. Thus, Liberia is a case of an internationally led and domestically supported transnational implementation process.

Nicaragua exemplified a domestically led and internationally supported transnational implementation process from the 1990s through 2017, when women's police stations (WPSs) were constructed and operated. Domestic advocates proposed the idea of specialized policing for women, attracted funding from international cooperation agencies, and worked with these agencies and with the government to improve police responses to domestic violence. Domestic support from civil society has continued for women's policing in Nicaragua, but decreases in international donor support and the disappearance of state support has contributed to the recent decline in implementation.

These findings advance the international relations and gender and politics literature by specifying the mechanisms and pathways through which actors that are external to the state, including international organizations, influence street-level implementation in developing countries. The findings are also relevant for policy and practice. Notably, however, profound weaknesses in police performance persist in both countries despite these improvements, and advances are susceptible to reversal (Nagelhus Schia and de Carvalho 2009). For example, a lack of infrastructure and equipment in Liberia has led officers to take actions that undermine democratic and gender-responsive policing (Medie 2015). Nicaragua recently reversed most of its advances in policing for women and is now utilizing government-supported security forces to arrest, torture, and even murder citizens protesting and opposing recent government policies (Amnesty International 2018). By 2017, the WPSs had closed due to a lack of government support and declining international funding (Córdoba 2018; Neumann 2018). The increasing consolidation of the Ortega regime that had begun to close itself to external influence by 2008 was an early warning sign of what is now a

national crisis for citizen security that has completely undermined previous policing advances for women.

We recognize that the referral of cases to court does not always result in prosecution and that prosecution does not guarantee deterrence. Also, women, including many who report domestic violence to the police, often do not seek the arrest and prosecution of their partners (Horn et al. 2015; Hossain et al. 2014; Medie 2015). However, the referral of cases for prosecution is an important indicator of the seriousness with which the state and its officials judge the problem of domestic violence, and it can serve as a measure of their enforcement of the law.

In the next section, we review the literature on police responses to domestic violence in Africa and Latin America and highlight the commonalities and differences across these regions. We then review the scholarship on the implementation of VAW laws and explain that although emerging literature shows that international actors shape implementation, most of this work has not examined the relative roles of international versus domestic actors, nor has it investigated their impacts on street-level behavior. We follow this with a discussion of the methods, followed by backgrounds of Liberia and Nicaragua. We then explain how international and domestic actors engage in transnational implementation processes that entail collaboration between international organizations and domestic women's organizations. Through our case studies, we demonstrate how the mechanisms of training, institutional and policy restructuring, and monitoring influence street-level behavior.

POLICE RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Across Africa and Latin America, police represent one of the least trusted institutions (Bailey and Dammert 2006; Gallup 2018; Medie 2018). Although marked differences exist across countries, this lack of trust is widespread. Exceptions do exist, but policing in Africa and Latin America has a history of placing the protection of the political elite above the protection of and service to everyday citizens (Alemika 2009; Cruz 2006; Osse 2016; Tankebe 2011).

Political leaders and elites have used the police force and its resources to suppress opponents in the populace and to maintain their grip on power (Hills 2007). They have also diverted resources from responding to the populace's calls for help and from investigating reports, executing arrests, and referring cases to court. This prioritization of elite interests is an

extension of colonial-era policing in Africa and Latin America, during which the role of the police was to protect the colonial establishment from the indigenous population (Alemika 2009; Tankebe 2013) and the landed oligarchy (Amaya 2006; Cruz 2006). In Latin America, the cooptation of police forces by elites was widespread during civil wars when dictatorships used police as agents of repression (e.g., the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua).

This politicization of the police is one of the reasons why policing in many countries falls below the standards of democratic policing (Ungar 2009). Bayley (2001) identifies four elements of democratic policing: (a) police prioritization of the needs of individual citizens and private groups; (b) police accountability to the law, rather than the government in power; (c) police protection of human rights; and (d) transparency of police activities. This politicization of the force, combined with corruption and ineffectiveness at enforcing the law, has also contributed to distrust of the institution and to the persistence of undemocratic policing in most African and Latin American countries (Armah-Attoh, Gyimah-Boadi, and Chikwanha 2007; Fruhling, Tulchin, and Golding 2003). In surveys conducted in 2002 and 2005 in 12 African countries, 80% of respondents saw the police as the most corrupt of 11 government institutions (Armah-Attoh, Gyimah-Boadi, and Chikwanha 2007). Inadequate training and poor remuneration, as well as the lack of infrastructure, logistics, and equipment, also contribute to unethical practices in the force and to undemocratic policing in Africa (Medie 2018) and Latin America (Macaulay 2012). Thus, although some police forces perform better than others, policing in these two regions has largely failed to meet the needs of the majority of the population. Female victims of violence are particularly underserved by the institution (Menjívar and Walsh 2017).

Despite some improvements, women are underrepresented within the police forces in Africa and Latin America (Gaanderse and Valasek 2011; Ortega 2018). In 2011, Liberia's police force was 15.42% women and Nicaragua's was 26% women (Kerr-Wilson et al. 2011). Even though Nicaragua has, until recently, had a comparatively high proportion of female officers, these are still male-dominated institutions. Although the presence of female officers is not necessary for gender-responsive policing and is no guarantee that the interests and well-being of women will be prioritized, their absence is a strong indicator of a failure to recognize that policing is gendered and of the seriousness that is attached to VAW. Indeed, the police in many African countries exhibit behaviors that lead to the revictimization of victims of domestic violence and other forms of

VAW and to ineffectiveness in handling their cases (Medie 2017, Jubb et al. 2010). Although most complainants in domestic violence cases do not want their partners to be prosecuted, they typically want an intervention to stop the violence (Hautzinger 2007; Horn et al. 2015; Medie 2015). They also want to be treated with kindness and respect. However, reports suggest that this has typically not been the case in most nonspecialized police stations in Africa and Latin America (Jubb et al. 2010; Medie 2015, 2018). The police have generally not viewed domestic violence as a serious offense, and they have often failed to record and investigate reports and to refer cases to court, even when this is the complainants' preference (UN General Assembly 2012; UN Women 2011). Furthermore, gender norms that cut across societies worldwide have tended to blame women for this violence. This kind of treatment by police amounts to a revictimization of survivors. In addition to leaving women vulnerable to the violence, it emboldens perpetrators who know that they will not be held accountable by the formal justice system.

In response to the weaknesses and failures of the justice system to respond adequately to women victims, states have passed new laws, strengthened existing ones, and established specialized police stations. Pressure from and collaboration with international organizations and women's NGOs has often led to the creation of these specialized laws and policing. Specialized policing has been promoted by the United Nations in Africa (Medie 2018, 2019). Coordination between various international donors and domestic actors has diffused the model of specialized policing for women within Latin America (Jubb et al. 2008). In Africa, these specialized police stations have proliferated in postwar states such as Liberia. Although they hold the potential to improve how survivors will be treated by the criminal justice system, the literature suggests caution in viewing specialized policing as a panacea in Latin America (e.g., Hautzinger 2007; MacDowell Santos 2005). However, where changes have been made, actors external to the state have often been crucial to these advances (Jubb et al. 2008). Therefore, it is important to understand how efforts by international and domestic actors have influenced policing in the area of domestic violence.

LITERATURE ON THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICIES

Scholarship on state responses to VAW largely does not address street-level behavior, but it does reveal that international organizations and women's

nongovernmental organizations are crucial for policy adoption, the creation of institutions, and institutional reforms. For example, Laurel Weldon's 2002 cross-national study measures countries' responsiveness — the degree and speed with which governments make seven advances: legal reforms, funding for shelters and crisis centers, government training programs and initiatives, and the development of policy agencies and prevention strategies. She finds that responsiveness improves with the presence of a strong, autonomous women's movement that reinforces state institutions. In a study of postcommunist countries, Olga Avdeyeva (2007) conceptualizes implementation of VAW laws as the ratification of and compliance with human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She finds that women's organizations and international organizations influence implementation through coercion, persuasion, and acculturation. For example, women's organizations in Croatia and Slovenia shamed the government into developing police training programs and sponsoring shelters for battered women. In Kosovo, coercive strategies employed by the UN mission led to policy implementation by the government.

Celeste Montoya's (2013) cross-national analysis of the European Union measures the implementation of VAW laws by the extent of institutional reforms, including advances in protocols, regulations, and guidelines, as well as the development of a broad range of state agencies, programs, regulatory practices, training programs, and public awareness campaigns. She argues that a lack of local commitment and/or capacity are obstacles to implementation, and that international organizations can help build capacity and women's networks. Montoya (2013) also notes three types of policy reform processes: domestically driven, transnationally driven, and internationally driven. She argues that countries are more likely to implement VAW laws where reforms are domestically driven because they have the highest levels of commitment and capacity. Although Liberia and Nicaragua do not fit into her framework of a transnationally driven policy reform process,³ they exhibit transnational efforts to implement

3. Montoya's transnationally driven reform framework for policy change describes a process through which local actors trying to advocate for legal reforms experience a blockage when these reforms are proposed to the state, and then call upon international actors to pressure the state. This is similar to Keck and Sikkink's (1998) boomerang model. However, this theory does not neatly apply to policy implementation in Liberia and Nicaragua, where there was not a blockage caused by an overall lack of political will. The state, as a site of contestation, was not uniformly opposed to these institutional changes. Obstacles to police reform were more in the form of a lack of local resources or capacity, and one important role of international organizations in these two countries was to help fund women's policing units, which helped to overcome this lack of local resources.

institutional reforms. In our research, we sought to understand how international organizations and women's organizations have influenced street-level policing on domestic violence in Liberia and Nicaragua. Furthermore, we have built on this literature by moving beyond the creation of institutions to study implementation at the street level.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

We have conducted a comparative analysis of Liberia and Nicaragua to identify the processes by which international and domestic actors impact street-level implementation of VAW laws. We have leveraged these cases as heuristic case studies (George and Bennett 2005, 74) to identify relevant new causal mechanisms and causal pathways for strengthening and weakening implementation. This research draws on the "grounded theory" approach that generates theoretical insights through qualitative research (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1994, 273–285). Therefore, we employed inductive theory building rather than theory testing.

Respectively, we conducted extensive field research with the objective, among others, of understanding the factors that have shaped police responses to domestic violence and rape. In Africa, Medie conducted more than 150 semistructured interviews in Monrovia and Gbarnga in Liberia in 2010 and 2011. This research included interviews with 50 police officers, other officials in the police and courts, UN officials, survivors of domestic violence, and women's rights advocates, some of whom worked for women's NGOs.

In Central America, Walsh conducted more than 50 semistructured interviews in Nicaragua as a part of a broader research project with over 200 interviews in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua over the course of 22 months from 2004–2014. Interviewees in Nicaragua within and outside the police stations included police officers, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, judges, state officials, bureaucrats, survivors of domestic violence, journalists, and women's rights advocates, some of whom worked for domestic or international NGOs.

We both also drew on secondary sources of data including newspapers and reports produced by the police and by international organizations. Data coding was guided by the literature. We sought to identify the explanatory variables specified in the literature and the frequency of their occurrence in the interview data. However, we also sought to inductively

identify explanations that are largely absent from the literature because this area is understudied.

THE CASE STUDIES: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE POLICE IN LIBERIA AND NICARAGUA

Although institutional reforms are an important part of implementation, we have focused on the aim of these reforms, which is for state agents working in these institutions to be more responsive to women. In the case of policing, we conceptualize implementation as improved street-level performance. Two indicators of improved performance are reduction in the revictimization of survivors and an increase in the rates of referral for prosecution. Although we do not have quantitative measures of the first outcome, we have drawn on our interviews with police officers, women's rights advocates, government officials and officials of international agencies, and survivors of violence to assess police performance on this indicator.

We conceptualize the process of implementation for Liberia and Nicaragua as transnational and as generalizable to countries with shared characteristics. We argue that implementation is achieved through transnational implementation processes in which actors outside of state institutions (in this case, international organizations and domestic women's organizations) collaboratively engage in training, restructuring institutions and policies, and monitoring police behavior. These actors help overcome challenges to implementation in contexts where capacity is lacking. Liberia had an internationally led and domestically supported transnational implementation processes, whereas Nicaragua had a transnational implementation process that was domestically led and internationally supported, which reversed when the Ortega government consolidated power and closed itself to external influence. Although international and domestic non-state actors have been necessary for implementation, their impact has also been dependent on the government being open to pressure and assistance from them.

Liberia

Domestic violence, prosecuted as simple and aggravated assault, is the most prevalent form of VAW in Liberia, and it comprises the majority of VAW cases reported to the police. Although no systematic study of VAW in pre-civil war Liberia has been undertaken, interviews with women's

rights advocates suggest that this problem was prevalent in the country and was rarely reported to the police (Medie 2012). Women's activism drew attention to widespread sexual violence committed by the warring factions during the country's 14-year (1989–2003) civil war (African Women and Peace Support Group 2004; Medie 2012). Although domestic violence during Liberia's civil war has been understudied, research from the wars in Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, and elsewhere shows that domestic violence does not cease during wars (Hossain et al. 2014; Okello and Hovil 2007). Furthermore, the end of a war does not end this violence that women face within the home.

Liberia's most recent demographic and health survey shows that 33% of women had been subjected to physical violence by their partner in the previous year (LISGIS et al. 2008). The types of violence they were subjected to include kicking, dragging, forced sex, and beating. Approximately 1,183 cases of domestic violence (simple and aggravated assault) were reported to the police in 2010 (Medie 2012). However, domestic violence in Liberia, like in most countries across the globe, is underreported. A 2008–2009 study across five of Liberia's 15 counties revealed that only 1% of domestic violence cases was reported to a formal authority such as the police (Isser et al. 2009).

Most cases were resolved within informal institutions such as families or customary courts. The failure to report this offense to the police is partly influenced by Liberians' distrust of the police force and by the existence of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The Liberia National Police (LNP) and the courts are two of the least trusted institutions in the country (Medie 2018; Wambua 2015). This is not surprising. From its inception, the LNP has been politicized and has failed to conform to the principles of democratic policing (Akpan 1973). Political leaders have also used the force to silence the opposition and suppress dissent (Akpan 1973). Furthermore, the LNP did not recognize domestic violence as a category of crime before the war, which was reflected in how complainants were treated. Only the most grievous incidents were referred to court, and the police tended to blame women for the violence (Medie 2015).

According to Deddeh Kwekwe, head of the Ministry of Gender and Development's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Unit, "The police didn't know how to handle sexual and gender-based violence. If someone came to report domestic violence, the police would say, 'It's your fault you were beaten.' If a woman reported rape, the police would suggest she had caused it. They would make it worse, and women would

be traumatized” (in Bacon 2012, 3). Given this lack of trust in the police and their ineffectiveness in helping victims, it is not surprising that most survivors preferred to resolve the case in informal dispute resolution forums. The LNP’s Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS), which was created in 2005, was the first mechanism of its kind in Liberia and sought to address these weaknesses. Its creation coincided with advocacy by a strong women’s movement that pressured the transitional government to address VAW, particularly sexual violence, in the aftermath of the country’s civil war. Therefore, we want to understand how international actors, who collaborated with the government to establish the specialized section and women’s organizations that called for improved police performance, have influenced street-level responses to domestic violence. We have asked the same questions in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua

Studies of Nicaragua indicate widespread and persistent domestic violence, similar to Liberia. Leftist Sandinista revolutionaries overthrew a right-wing dictatorship in 1979, followed by a decade of civil war between the revolutionary government and US-funded “contras,” counter-revolutionaries. Sexual violence was widespread during the Nicaraguan civil war, though not to the extent that it was committed during wartime in Liberia. In a 2006–2007 survey in Nicaragua, 48% of respondents who once had a partner (married or unmarried) reported that they had been a victim of verbal or psychological abuse (ENDESA 2006–2007). Furthermore, 27% reported that they had been subjected to physical abuse, and 13% reported sexual abuse by their partner or ex-partner (ENDESA 2006–2007, 29). Other surveys in Nicaragua report even higher levels of VAW: 52% of never-married women reported having experienced physical partner abuse at some point in their lives (Ellsberg et al. 2000).

The structure of policing has changed dramatically in Nicaragua in two periods: the first was the rise of the WPSs in the 1990s, followed by their initial decline in 2008 and closure by 2017. Before 1979, the police were used as a repressive apparatus of the state during the Somoza dictatorship (then, police were called the National Guard). After the 1979 Sandinista Revolution, the old Guard was replaced by new, primarily Sandinista officers, and the system was restructured to focus on citizen-based policing. Even so, many women who reported domestic

abuse to the police were treated as if they had deserved it. Thus, many women became wary of the police providing public security.⁴

In protest to police mistreatment of victims, a movement emerged to create WPSs through a domestically led and internationally supported transnational implementation process. They formed alliances with women working in the police as well as international cooperation agencies from the Netherlands among others, to help fund and create specialized policing units to respond to victims of domestic violence (Córdoba 2018). Female police officers worked with women's organizations to strengthen the response to domestic violence. This coalition attracted the attention of international donors by having a strong gender perspective on policing as well as the VAW problem. International cooperation agencies collaborated with local advocates to create Nicaragua's first WPS in 1993. By 2015, there were 162 such stations throughout the country; they served women and children and were operated by female officers (Neumann 2018). This collaborative effort also strengthened street-level responses to domestic violence. The Nicaraguan WPSs were credited with helping the police gain legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the general public; the police once placed second in an image ranking of Nicaraguan institutions (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007).

However, this period of collaboration between the state and nonstate actors began to decline in 2008, a year after Daniel Ortega returned to the presidency (Córdoba 2018). Women's police stations began to close *de facto* in 2009 when the Ortega government began to prohibit women's organizations from accompanying victims (Córdoba 2018). In 2014, President Ortega issued an executive order that weakened the Nicaraguan VAW law (Law 779). Instead of directing victims to WPSs with integrated services, police were instructed to direct women to newly created Family Councils that discouraged women from advancing legal cases (Córdoba 2018).

During the period when WPSs still operated, there were deficiencies within the police and the WPSs, including a lack of funding and marginalization within the broader police force. These limitations and setbacks have been written about elsewhere (Neumann 2018; Walsh 2016a). The advances of the WPSs from the pre-WPS era were still vast and demonstrate the impact of international and domestic actors' collaboration with the WPSs on victim services. However, revictimization is on the rise as a result of WPS closures in the context of the Ortega government closing the state to external influence and assistance. The section on Nicaragua examines

4. Anonymous interview from Nicaragua. Interview conducted by Walsh on October 29, 2013.

the improvement during the period of WPSs and the initial reports of failing institutional performance since their closure.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSAULT LAWS IN LIBERIA

Liberia exemplifies a transnational implementation process that was internationally led and domestically supported. Implementation was led by the United Nations, and strongly supported by the state and by women's organizations. In this article, we consider implementation as the performance of street-level police officers, and we focus specifically on the reduction in the revictimization of survivors and the referral of domestic violence cases to the courts. Officers of Liberia's Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the police force are tasked with receiving all forms of VAW. The WACPS was established in 2005 under a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Children Fund and the Liberia National Police (LNP) in response to widespread rape during and after the country's civil war. The section was created as a part of the police reform process led by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) that began in 2004. The first cohort of WACPS officers graduated from the police academy in 2005 and the first unit became operational in September 2005. Within eight months, six units had been established across the country and by December 2008, each of Liberia's 15 counties had one WACPS unit.

External actors, particularly the United Nations, played a key role in the establishment of the WACPS. UN officials proposed the idea to the transitional government, which was under pressure from the country's strong women's movement to strengthen the police force to better address the widespread sexual violence that persisted after the end of the country's civil war. The transitional government lacked the capacity to independently address the problem. The UN's proposal and support for it were, therefore, key to the establishment of the section. Some funding for the construction and renovation of police stations came from the Norwegian government, which funded the construction of district headquarters. However, we argue that the impact of international actors is not limited to the establishment of the WACPS but also extends to the performance of officers in the section (Medie 2013).

Furthermore, domestic women's organizations also shaped how officers of the WACPS enforced the law on assault. These international and

domestic actors have been able to influence street-level implementation through: (a) training, (b) institutional and policy restructuring, and (c) monitoring the performance of police officers.⁵

Training

The UNMIL led the training of WACPS officers within the police academy. In addition to this training, the United Nations and international NGOs such as the Norwegian Refugee Council also organized continuous development workshops in which officers were trained in how to address domestic violence and other forms of VAW. Women's organizations, often with funding from donors, also organized training sessions for police officers. These trainings were important because they helped police officers understand that survivors of domestic violence should be treated with care and sensitivity. A female officer explained that the WACPS training had taught her to be motherly toward victims of domestic violence, to always protect them, and to make them feel safe.⁶ Another female officer explained how the creation of the WACPS and the training changed practices in the LNP:

So the office we were using, when victims would come, we just used to put both of them [accused and complainant] there, suspect looking at victim, victim looking at suspect, all those things happened then. Because we had only one office at that time... When we had not gone through the training, we would ask the victim "Is this the guy who did this that to you" then we would ask the suspect "Do you know this girl here, is that what you did to her, is what she is telling us true?" But when we went through the women and children protection training we learnt that the victim and suspect should not be in the same room while the investigation is ongoing.⁷

This training, provided mainly by the United Nations and complemented by some women's organizations, was reinforced by the section's policies.

Institutional and Policy Restructuring

The UNMIL led the restructuring of the police force to create the WACPS and along with women's organizations, shaped the section's policies. The

5. Medie (2013) discusses how international and domestic actors influenced street-level implementation of the rape law using these and other strategies.

6. Interview, Officer #6, Monrovia, October 13, 2010.

7. Interview, Officer #12, Monrovia, June 2011.

section's first director, Vera Manly, graduated from the police academy in 2005 and created four squads, including a domestic violence squad, within the WACPS. Her training, and that of other senior officials, by UNMIL ensured that the section's structure and policies were crafted by leaders who had been introduced to international norms on how to respond to domestic violence. Furthermore, UN Police (UNPOL) officers were embedded within the WACPS. Six UNPOL officers were stationed in the WACPS headquarters between "2005 and 2011 to provide on-the-job training and guidance" to their Liberian counterparts (Bacon 2012, 5). Their presence at the center of the WACPS decision-making structure ensured that they offered advice that shaped the section's domestic violence policy. Members of the National Gender-Based Violence Task Force included various UN agencies and a women's NGO, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia. Task force members participated in crafting the section's 2009 handbook, *National Standard Operating Procedures for Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence*. This handbook was created to guide officers on how to handle cases of sexual and other forms of VAW, including domestic violence. The WACPS structure and policies, combined with the training received by officers, influenced police behavior (Medie 2013). They signaled to officers that there could be repercussions for not referring cases to court and encouraged many of them to avoid the withdrawal of cases (Medie 2015).

Monitoring

International organizations and domestic nongovernmental organizations also monitored performance. Liberia's gender-based violence (GBV) task force, which was chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, consisted of NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of Justice, including the police. Task force meetings were held monthly in each county in forums where NGOs reported on their programming. These forums were also arenas to which these organizations brought their concerns before the police. They identified problems in policing within their respective communities and then charged the police representatives present to address these problems. Therefore, in these forums, international and domestic organizations could demand accountability from the police in a mostly friendly environment. Staff members of women's NGOs also explained that they sometimes accompanied women to the

police station and followed up on cases (Medie 2012). When they were dissatisfied with the police response, they elevated their concerns to the central headquarters (Medie 2013).

However, UNPOL had a more systematic approach to monitoring. UNPOL officers visited police stations daily to review log books and to follow up on cases. Police officers interviewed reported that UNPOL officers generally focused on major cases such as rape and aggravated assault (domestic violence). They advised police officers on how to proceed with individual cases and monitored the progress of cases to ensure that the prescribed procedure was followed. A police officer summarized their interaction with the United Nations thus: “So then they (UNPOL) look at those cases they recommend what we should do, they help us in the process . . . let’s say by helping us with their vehicles to do some follow up on cases.”⁸ This close working relationship with the United Nations encouraged and compelled officers to practice prescribed actions, such as referring cases to court and avoiding practices that revictimized women.

Street-Level Performance

Statistics provided by the WACPS showed that although most simple assault cases were withdrawn, aggravated assault cases were more likely to be referred to court. In 2009, the section received 994 cases of simple assault and 189 cases of aggravated assault. Of these numbers, 147 simple assault cases were referred to court and 653 were withdrawn, whereas 69 aggravated assault cases were referred to court and 56 withdrawn.⁹ The remainder of the cases were pending. This difference between the responses to simple and aggravated assault have been explained elsewhere (Medie 2015), but the percentage of referrals became markedly higher than before the section’s creation and before the civil war. Although we recognize the limitations of using the rate of referral as a measure of improved performance, the referral and withdrawal of cases is a strong indicator of law enforcement officers’ attitudes toward a crime and of the implementation of international domestic violence norms.

8. Interview, officer #36, male, Monrovia, October 7, 2010.

9. In the WACPS records, “domestic violence” was not limited to intimate partner violence but included all forms of violence within the home. Officers, however, explained that most of these cases involved intimate partner violence.

Interviews with staff members of women's NGOs and UN officials also showed that they had perceived a reduction in revictimizing practices. For example, a staff member of a woman's NGO in Monrovia explained that with training, the practice of asking women questions that discouraged them from coming to the police had decreased.¹⁰ A staff member of an international NGO stated that with training and coordination, the police had begun sending survivors who needed psychosocial support to them.¹¹

Overall, the United Nations led implementation and was supported by domestic women's organizations. However, the activities of both of these actors were facilitated by the political environment in Liberia. The section was created approximately two years after the end of Liberia's civil war and during a period in which the United Nations was leading the mandated reform of the police force. The 14-year civil war had so devastated Liberia that the police force was practically nonexistent, and the transitional government was heavily reliant on the international community. Thus, the United Nations gained access to the police force and its officers. Furthermore, due in part to pressure from international actors such as the United Nations and from the women's movement, the government recognized that it was important to strengthen police response to sexual violence and declared its commitment to addressing this problem. Despite these improvements, however, the WACPS has been plagued by several problems.

Women's rights activists criticized the section for being ineffective and slow and for perpetrating some unethical practices, such as colluding with the perpetrators of violence (Medie 2012). In 2015, the commissioner of police warned officers against "compromising" rape cases (allAfrica, 2015). Furthermore, the section has been greatly underresourced, such that officers with good intentions struggle to perform their duties (Medie 2012). Informal institutions, such as gender norms that discourage women and punish them for reporting domestic violence, have also affected police performance, and women often seek to withdraw cases after filing a complaint (Medie 2015). At the same time, activists have acknowledged that police performance has improved in comparison to the prewar period (Medie 2012). The case study exemplifies an internationally driven but domestically supported implementation process.

10. Interview A, women's organization 1, Monrovia, February 2, 2011.

11. Interview B, international NGO 1, Monrovia, August 12, 2010.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua exemplifies a transnational implementation process that was a domestically led and externally supported during the creation and operation of the WPSs. The subsequent closure of the WPSs and weakening of implementation was preceded by the loss of domestic support within the state (a state that increasingly excluded domestic women's organizations and international organizations from involvement in policy making and implementation) and by the decline of external support by international donors.

Women's police stations in Nicaragua were initially established as a direct result of advocacy networks at the local and international levels trying to improve police performance after systemic police failures to respond appropriately to cases of domestic violence. Within the police, female officers allied with local women's movement activists, and their collaborative approach attracted the attention of international donors, which provided funding and other support. For example, international cooperation agencies provided airline tickets for local women's advocates to visit and observe police stations in South America, which later became institutional models for the first WPSs in Nicaragua. Actors external to the state were also crucial for advancing the implementation of VAW laws through their involvement in training, shaping the institutional structure and policies within the police, and monitoring police performance. These efforts were led more domestically in Nicaragua than in Liberia.

As in Liberia, international and domestic organizations were also key to the 1993 establishment and subsequent expansion of the WPSs. However, local women's movement advocates working with women police officers and female state functionaries spearheaded these efforts, which were supported by international cooperation agencies. A Nicaraguan police officer notes, "We had the opportunity to create the women's police stations because there were women in the Supreme Court, in Congress, working as forensic specialists, and in the army. Many of them came from the women's movement."¹²

The Dutch Embassy initially provided funding to make the WPSs possible, despite initial resistance, especially from male state functionaries within and outside the police (Jubb 2010; Walsh 2016a). Later, international cooperation

12. Anonymous interview by Walsh in Managua, Nicaragua, on March 6, 2008.

agencies from Spain, Denmark, and the Netherlands, among others, provided a broad range of resources essential to maintaining and improving the performance of women's policing units. Resources from international sources have included funding for training, antiviolence campaigns, community meetings, and police vehicles.¹³

The nature of international and domestic actors' involvement in policing has changed over time in Nicaragua. The first stages of their involvement in Nicaragua were transnational — local grassroots efforts leveraged international donor support. Shortly after the creation of the first WPSs in 1993, local women's organizations and the National Institute of Women worked on large-scale projects with international cooperation agencies that provided technical assistance for the development of WPSs. These projects ran through the 1990s until the end of their funding cycle in 2004. In general, the drive behind many international donor projects in Latin America has been to provide seed funding and technical assistance for incipient state institutions so the state can later adopt responsibility for operations and institutional continuity.

After 2004, international cooperation agencies remained involved in ad hoc projects with the police, but not on the comprehensive scale that took place before 2004. By 2013, as the Latin American economy began to improve, international cooperation agencies scaled back operations or stopped working in Central American countries altogether. Many agencies shifted their focus to projects in less developed countries, especially within Africa.¹⁴ Due to the withdrawal of international cooperation agencies, actors and organizations at the international and domestic level now have less influence on policing than in the past.

Waning international involvement left Nicaraguan women's movement advocates vulnerable to the political vagaries of the state. In 2014, the Ortega administration reformed and weakened the 2012 VAW law, and the WPSs closed by 2017 (Córdoba 2018; Neumann 2018). Although these closures were not officially decreed, domestic abuse cases are now routed to the Judicial Assistance Directorate of the National Police, a unit that lacks gender training (Córdoba 2018). In addition, the Nicaraguan government began violently repressing protests against social security system reforms in April 2018. These actions have escalated into a national crisis, with a reported 322 people killed (including 22 police

13. Anonymous interviews by Walsh with a police officer on March 12, 2008, and a worker with an international cooperation agency on March 31, 2008, in Managua, Nicaragua.

14. Anonymous interview by Walsh with an individual working for an international donor agency by telephone on November 10, 2013, in Managua, Nicaragua.

officers, mostly at the hands of state agents) and 2,000 injured as of September 18, 2018 (Amnesty International 2018).

Thus, the impact of international and domestic actors on training, shaping institutional rules, and monitoring is differentiated below into two periods. The first period was one of strong involvement by international and domestic organizations and actors that created the WPSs and improved implementation. Then, the second, more recent period that has been characterized by their intermittent involvement, WPS closures, and implementation setbacks in the midst of national crisis.

Training

In the early period of the WPSs, international cooperation agencies provided most of the funding for training, which was conducted by local women's movement organizations and consultants who sometimes had a relationship with the women's movement. The involvement of women's civil society organizations in settings such as Nicaragua and Liberia can help build trust between the community and the police, in addition to bringing expertise to training (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007). In the 1990s, the police academy began to teach about gender values and VAW, followed by courses on gender and citizen security in the late 1990s (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007).

The WPSs also hired women's organizations to conduct courses on gender and VAW. During the first period, formal coordination between the women's movement and the police ended with the completion of the comprehensive donor-led training in 2004. Since 2004, international donors have remained involved in training, but on a more ad hoc basis. Training on gender and VAW has been provided not only for WPS officers but also as a part of general police academy training. Police and international donors also conduct campaigns to raise consciousness of gender violence among citizens. This training has promoted gender consciousness among police officers, and these campaigns have reportedly increased reporting by victims, as discussed by one police officer:

The police force in general is being trained to provide greater gender consciousness. . . . When women come to the women's police stations it is because she has experienced a lot of violence. We are here so that she can break the silence, as the campaign says, and so that women can report it. After the "break the silence" campaign, there were many more reports than before.¹⁵

15. Anonymous interview by Walsh in Managua, Nicaragua, on March 11, 2008.

Since the closing of the WPSs, individuals without proper training working in the Judicial Assistance Directorate of the National Police have been addressing cases, in addition to Family Cabinet members outside the police.

Institutional and Policy Restructuring

When WPSs were established in 1993, Nicaraguan policing protocols were modified in tandem with the change to the institutional structure. The WPSs aimed to protect women in particular, and there were no embedded officers (like the UN officers in Liberia) conducting internal training and/or monitoring. However, non-state actors were embedded in the WPS by design, including civilians such as social workers, psychologists, and sometimes lawyers who helped provide a comprehensive set of services within the WPS for victims. The WPS worked in partnership with civil society organizations to provide women with services (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007), including psychological and forensic services. These institutional reforms included the creation of an integrated model of attention for women, and they resulted in improved treatment of women victims. An individual working in the WPS describes the procedures in place for officers and other workers in the stations:

We work on all of this from a gender-based perspective with the backing of [international and domestic] legal frameworks. We work in coordination with different sectors in an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional manner. We work through a model of integral attention, where you have medical staff, forensic staff, legal assistance, psychological attention, social work, forensic attention, and police investigation.¹⁶

Although the intervention of a transnational advocacy network focusing on the issue of VAW has been necessary to compensate for a lack of state services, the networking itself made it possible to improve police performance for women.

With the post-2008 weakening and then closure of the WPSs, this model of integral attention — a significant advancement in the provision of services for victims — was dismantled and replaced with a more circuitous route for victims seeking assistance. In 2014, the Ortega administration issued a regulation that modified the 2012 VAW law (Law 779) so that female victims with less severe cases are obligated to report

16. Anonymous interview by Walsh in Managua, Nicaragua, on July 26, 2006.

to the Sandinista political party-affiliated Family Councils before reporting to the police.¹⁷ If they do advance to the police, victims are routed to the Judicial Assistance Directorate of the National Police — a nonspecialized policing unit that lacks gender training. Marelyn Somarriba, a women's advocate, notes that these new authorities tell women reporting violence that “family is important. ‘Who is going to take care of your children?’ they ask” and thus discourage victims from pursuing cases (Córdoba 2018).

Monitoring

In Nicaragua, monitoring does not take place directly from international and domestic organizations. Rather, its signing of regional and international human rights conventions obligates the state to periodically report its justice system progress toward compliance with these women's rights standards. For example, Nicaragua is required to report to the United Nations on its compliance with the Convention on the Elimination on all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It also reports to the Organization of American States on its compliance with the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará). Although official reports are submitted by the state, women's organizations often submit “shadow reports” highlighting implementation gaps that may otherwise go unreported and the United Nations, and the Organization of American States produce country-specific recommendations for improvements. In addition, the police have used internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms; for example, officers from the central office may resolve any issues reported in field offices.

The recent and stark shift in the political environment has reduced the influence of international donors in Nicaragua and, consequently, has undermined the potentially positive impacts of monitoring on women's policing. Since 2007, many international donors have withdrawn from Nicaragua, and the Ortega government has become increasingly consolidated. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government was invested in Nicaragua's international image as a women-friendly country, and its adoption of policies on VAW was a means of demonstrating this commitment. However, the more recent Ortega government has become increasingly immune to external influence through increasing centralization.

17. Anonymous interview by Walsh in Managua, Nicaragua, on August 12, 2014.

Internationally based monitoring has limited utility if the government does not value accountability to the international community. In this scenario, countries are left with accountability to citizens, which depends on a well-functioning democracy, and to local NGOs, which depends on relationships of accountability with NGOs. Both of these types of accountability have been increasingly strained with the Ortega government. Thus, the government has been increasingly unresponsive to external recommendations at the same time that international donor support and involvement has declined.

Street-Level Performance

Although police have been limited in terms of local capacity (e.g., sometimes not having a car or gasoline available for patrols), the WPSs made police much more responsive to women's need for protection and intervention. Prior to the WPSs, the regular police often dissuaded women from pressing charges, either ignoring their complaints or even making them feel guilty about the violence perpetrated against them (Jubb et al. 2008, 30). Police officers were also known to turn victims away or to instruct them to change their behavior to avoid violence (Walsh 2016a). The women's policing units, created in reaction to this situation, were a vast improvement over the status quo, even though they are problematic in many ways. A survey in the year 2000 revealed that most women police officers were "respectful and attentive to the public, and they dealt well with people and were well prepared to resolve problems" (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007, 151). Official statistics on referral rates are not available for Nicaragua. However, a sharp increase in reporting indicates an increase in trust in the state among victims as well as more widespread availability of police services after the creation of the WPSs (Ellsberg et al. 1997).

International actors, particularly international cooperation agencies based in Europe, have had an impact on street-level responses to domestic violence in Nicaragua. However, these international actors could not have done so (or been successful in their efforts) without coordinating with local women's organizations on the ground. For example, the women's movement, with the financial support of several international donors, constructed several women's clinics, including the IXCHEN Women's Center, ANFAM, and SIMujer. These centers have performed auxiliary and essential services for victims, such as providing

psychological services or posttrape examinations and health care. Prior to the creation of WPSs, the problems in police responsiveness were similar to the ones in Liberia: victims were not taken seriously and/or were sent home to “make up” with their aggressors – further disempowering women within abusive situations. These changes in Nicaragua made significant improvements for more gender-sensitive street-level police performance.

However, the new political environment, in which domestic organizations have been excluded and international organizations have increasingly withdrawn, has already initiated setbacks in street-level police performance for women. The closing of WPSs means increasing reliance on male officers who have not had the more extensive specialized training of officers in women’s policing units. Marellyn Somarriba, Nicaraguan women’s advocate, reported that staff of the Directorate of Judicial Assistance of the National Police now seeing cases “do not have gender violence training, the victim is blamed, and the investigative processes are extended.” (quoted in Córdoba 2018). Somarriba notes that police are now returning to methods that discourage women from following through on cases. She has observed that authorities ask women if they are *sure* they want to go through with the reporting process involving a psychological evaluation, which many women hesitate to undergo. Instead of women getting support from integral services that were formerly provided by the police, Somarriba reports that abusers “can have a network of support and part of this support is in the Family Cabinets” (Córdoba 2018). Thus, it appears that the very institution that should be the first line of defense for women facing abuse is being used to support their abusers. These stark examples of failures to protect female victims demonstrate that implementation is not linear. Implementation advances are vulnerable to setbacks and even reversals when the domestic political environment erodes and/or international support wanes.

CONCLUSIONS

This comparative study of Liberia and Nicaragua has examined two pathways through which international and domestic actors impact street-level implementation and the strategies they use. The case study of Liberia is an example of an internationally led and domestically supported transnational implementation process. Conversely, the case study of Nicaragua

exemplifies a transnational implementation process that has been domestically led and internationally supported. In Liberia, the United Nations has collaborated with the government to create the WACPS, funded the construction of units across the country, which led to the training of the section's officers. It also contributed to shaping the institution's structure and policies and to monitoring police performance. These features suggest an internationally driven reform process. However, a deeper analysis of the political context shows that there was also a strong women's movement pressuring the government to act. Organizations within the movement also participated in training and monitoring police officers and in structuring WACPS policies.

The political environment in Liberia also facilitated the involvement of these actors (Medie 2013). Fourteen years of civil war had destroyed formal institutions, including the police force, and had caused most personnel to flee. In the case of the police, its officers had been implicated in perpetrating atrocities against the civilian population. Thus, the police lacked the capacity to perform basic functions during the initial postwar period. Therefore, the transitional government as well as the government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had to work closely with the United Nations and women's organizations in implementing the country's domestic violence policies. These internationally led and domestically supported initiatives resulted in improved street-level performance.

In Nicaragua, the women's movement was in a strong position to take the lead with advocating for reforming police performance vis-à-vis women but lacked the resources to do so. Although pockets of support within the government engaged in gender-sensitive police reform, this support was not uniform. Local actors, external to the state, initiated reforms in close coordination with (almost exclusively) women allies within the state who cared about the issue. Domestic women advocates worked with international cooperation agencies, which made funding available for specialized WPSs. International donors continued their support through involvement with further implementation efforts to advance training, changing institutional rules, and monitoring, which resulted in reduced revictimization of victims seeking police services. Preceding the closure of the WPSs, the opposite conditions held: disappearance of state support, exclusion of domestic civil society from the policy making and implementation process, and the departure of international donors. Following the closures, initial reports indicate deteriorating street-level policing performance. Nicaragua demonstrates how international organizations and domestic women's organizations and actors are crucial

not only for implementing policies on violence against women, but that these gains are fragile and women's organizations are necessary for sustaining these implementation efforts.

This article makes an important contribution to the gender and politics and international relations literatures by showing that external actors and domestic non-state actors can be crucial for policy implementation. It advances the literature on international norms, international organizations, and social movements by identifying the influence that international organizations and women's movement organizations have on the implementation of international human rights norms at the street level. In both countries, we have demonstrated that women's organizations in collaboration with the government and international organizations influence street-level implementation. However, due to its role in creating the WACPS and in postwar reconstruction, the United Nations has played a more prominent role in shaping street-level implementation in Liberia. This comparison demonstrates that the levels of both international and domestic involvement can vary within the implementation process and thus builds on the literature by identifying contrasting patterns of transnational implementation. It also illustrates that states are not always actors who resist international pressure or are reluctant to implement international norms. Although states block implementation in some settings, they support implementation in others. Our case studies show that the political context and external and domestic pressures and support were important in this regard.

Implementation is a challenge in many countries in Africa and Latin America; states are often unable or unwilling to implement policies. This unwillingness is particularly acute in the implementation of women's rights laws and policies because this area is not a priority in most countries. Gender norms have shaped this perception as well as formal and informal institutions. Indeed, in most African countries, women's ministries are underfunded, underscoring the need for international organizations and women's organizations to intervene in this area. This article has shown how external and domestic actors have intervened in and affected implementation. Although holding perpetrators of domestic violence accountable is important, it is only one of many measures needed. Furthermore, many women do not want their partners to be prosecuted. However, by showing how external and domestic non-state actors influence implementation in this area, we have identified strategies and pathways that could have relevance for understanding and improving the implementation of other components of domestic violence policies, and of other women's rights policies.

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