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The Effect of Conditional Cash Transfers on Reporting Violence against Women to the Police in Mexico

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New national statistics, gathered by the Mexican Women's Institute, point to a hostile environment for women living in Mexico. As of 2006, one in every four Mexican women has, at some point in her marital life, experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV), the terminology used in the criminology literature to refer to violence against women at the household level (ENDIREH, 2006).¹ Compared with other countries, Mexico usually lags behind or at best ranks in the middle part of the world on issues related to IPV (UN, 2010).

Worse yet, Mexican women rarely report IPV to the police, even though IPV is a crime in Mexico. Only two in ten physically or sexually abused women ever seek help from the Mexican justice system (ENDIREH, 2006).² To place this under-reporting situation in perspective, Mexico performs far behind the United States, where “[a]pproximately 60% of family violence victimizations were reported to the police between 1998 and 2002” (Durose, 2005; p.6).

This could be a mere reflection of poor institutional quality in the Mexican judicial police departments (e.g. *Ministerios Públicos*). However, roughly seven in ten women who do report IPV to the police claim having received “good attention and orientation” from them (ENDIREH, 2006). Far from being perfect, the quality of institutional services can hardly be the main reason for under-utilization of the justice system by abused women in Mexico.

Furthermore, reporting IPV to the police seems to work well in terms of reducing subsequent IPV. Over 65% of women who do report IPV to the police claim that, after having used the justice system, IPV stopped or diminished (ENDIREH, 2006). Hence, reporting IPV to the police is a good strategy for abused women on average.

¹The victimization rate increases to 50% of the total married or separated women population when including all types of IPV.

²Empirical evidence shows that women who only experience emotional and economic IPV do not report IPV to the police (ENDIREH, 2006). See Table 1 below.

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