Columns
Arts and Media



Sisters from different countries in Latin America stop to take a picture at the GSR booth during the IV Latin American and Caribbean Congress of Religious Life, held Nov. 24-26 in Bogotá, Colombia. (Courtesy of Molly Brockwell)



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A year into GSR en español, Global Sisters Report's reach into new parts of the world continues to draw more sisters and readers from Latin America and Spain into the fold. While we're thrilled with the growth we've established in just the first year, we're more excited when thinking about all that can still be done to expand our international readership — all with the power of language.

Since May 1, 2023, the Spanish-language edition of GSR has allowed us to cover the region in a way that's more authentic to Latin America, as now our correspondents, freelancers and sister columnists can report and write in their native tongue. Thanks to this freedom, our stable of writers in the Americas and Spain has grown exponentially, meaning that there's no shortage of pitches and ideas about sisters that emerge from this region.

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GSR's Latin American regional correspondent Rhina Guidos takes the lead on this coverage, and her keen eye for stories and sensitivity to the history of conflicts, as well as political and religious complexity in the region, have been a gift to our team's reporting.

If you've noticed more stories from Latin America on the original Global Sisters Report, that's no accident, as GSR has benefitted from this bilingual endeavor, as well: with a team of professional translators — led by GSR's columns editor and chief translator, Benedictine Sr. Helga Leija — GSR en español feeds translated versions of our stories and columns to GSR's English-speaking readers all over the world, just as the best of GSR is translated into Spanish, too.

A year ago, it felt like we were building the plane as we were flying it, hoping that the improvised process remained blissfully hidden from our readers. As we tinkered with the new website — I'll spare you the mind-numbing conversations around technical glitches — behind the scenes we were also trying to figure out the copy flow as a staff, as one story written in two languages, to be published at the same time, turned out to be trickier than it sounds.

Having found our footing, we eventually graduated from running three stories in Spanish a week to five, plus a weekly newsletter. And as we continue to establish cross-publication partnerships and agreements, we are optimistic that in the coming months we will be able to publish new items with greater frequency.

Thanks to Leija's tireless recruitment, sisters from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, Cuba and Spain, along with Spanish speakers in the U.S., contribute to our publication and represent the diversity of religious life in the American continent and Spain. We have sisters from monastic orders, religious and secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, and new and emergent forms of religious life. Together, these sisters have formed a community of writers and representatives of GSR en español, often encouraging each other through a WhatsApp group chat.

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> This month, we eagerly anticipate the launch of a Spanish-language version of The Life, our rotating global panel of Catholic sisters drawn who write short essays in response to questions on spirituality, ministry and religious life.
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But all of that is just the beginning, the infancy of GSR en español considering our vision and (so far) untapped ideas.

Our next frontier is WhatsApp, with the idea of broadening our regional audience by reaching them where they are: on their phones. A WhatsApp news blast with each story or column, a discussion group for readers, a group chat for our sister columnists (which is well underway and already growing) — this next step is just as

imperative as it is promising for introducing GSR en español to Latin American readers.

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We also hope for an increase in sister writers from all over Latin America and Spain, as well as grow our roster of Spanish Horizons writers (sisters younger than 50) and introduce GSR in the Classroom in Spanish. Readers can also look forward to more translated or subtitled versions of our Wisdom Wednesday video series.

Just as National Catholic Reporter approached sisters directly more than 10 years ago to ask what they wanted from Catholic journalism — and thus came the birth of GSR — so, too, did GSR go to Spanish-speaking sisters around the world to discover what they would like from a publication catered to them.

As we look at our first year with GSR en español, we feel immense pride in our small team's ability to launch, maintain and grow such an ambitious project. This wouldn't be possible without our members behind the scenes: Alirio Rodriguez, digital editor who is Venezuelan and recently moved to Spain; Jesus Leyva, bilingual content editor based in Mexico; Stephanie Yeagle, the company's managing editor involved in website development; and Gail DeGeorge, GSR's editor who dreamt of a Spanish-language edition since her first days on the job.

We also thank the sisters who have written for GSR en español and have helped spread the word, as well as for their work in ministry. We appreciate the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and private donors, including some sisters, for their financial support for the initial phase of this project.

Having witnessed the growth of GSR over the course of 10 years, I'm confident that the years ahead of GSR en español have the same potential for prestigious journalism and a sense of community.

May news about sisters continue to transcend borders with GSR en español at the helm.

¡Adelante!