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Eleventh Meeting of the Presiding Officers
of the Regional Conference on the Integration
of Women into the Economic and Social Development
of Latin America and the Caribbean

Varadero, Cuba, 19-20 November 1990

ACTIVITIES OF THE ECLAC SECRETARIAT IN THE AREA OF THE
INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
1 MAY-15 NOVEMBER 1990

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Introduction

The present report covers the activities of the ECLAC Secretariat from 1 May to 15 November 1990. These activities, which were carried out through the Women and Development Unit of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, are in fulfilment of the mandates of the governments of the region contained in the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, and in line with the recommendations of the regional conferences on the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. In the fulfilment of its international mandates, the activities of ECLAC must conform to the recommendations set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (General Assembly resolution 40/108) and resolutions 42/178 of the General Assembly and 483(XXI) of ECLAC.

During the period covered by this report, the work of the Unit has been oriented mainly towards technical assistance activities, the preparation of substantive studies on urgent issues, and activities related to the elaboration of regional projects. In view of the forthcoming regional conference, in-depth studies have been begun on the most important aspects of the integration of women into development, as well as on the progress achieved and the obstacles that still remain to be overcome.

I. RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES

The Tenth Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean was held at the headquarters of ECLAC, in Santiago, from 28-29 May 1990. This meeting was attended by all the members of the Conference (Dutch Antilles, Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala and Venezuela), as well as the representatives of Chile and of the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), an agency of the OAS, as observers. Also attending the meeting were delegates from other divisions and bodies of the ECLAC system, as well as representatives of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, headquartered in Santiago.

The meeting of the Presiding Officers examined the substantive and operational activities undertaken during this period, and stressed both the need to link the ECLAC work programme on women with the proposal for changing production patterns with social equity, and to continue to carry out in-depth studies on questions related to education, culture, relations with other women, information and statistics and the situation of women in specific groups, such as young women, migrant women, women in the informal sectors, and others. It also stressed the need to structure comprehensive regional projects that would permit fresh resources to be generated for improving the living conditions of women in the region in the context of collaboration between the countries and the Secretariat of ECLAC.

The Presiding Officers determined that their next meeting would take place from 19-20 November 1990 in Cuba. They also thanked the Government of the Netherlands Antilles for its offer to host the Fifth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held from 10-13 September 1991 in Curaçao.

As part of the activities to strengthen relations with member countries, technical assistance was provided to Cuba, at the request of its Government. This activity, of which the Federation of Cuban Women were beneficiaries, covered the areas of information, documentation and communications as they relate to the situation of women in that country. As part of the programme of technical assistance, a mission was undertaken to Cuba during the period 24 September-13 October 1990; a diagnostic study of the current situation was later undertaken and activities initiated

aimed at implementing some of the mechanisms of the national information system on women. In the second phase of this technical assistance project, which was carried out in Santiago, Chile, a report was prepared containing the main lines and the programme of activities of the information system.

Advisory services are also currently being provided to the Department of Women's Affairs (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM), in Chile at the latter's request, in different activities related to the nature of its functions and its establishment. Co-ordination meetings have been held with other specialized agencies of the United Nations system to permit ECLAC to co-operate in the preparation of a diagnostic study on the situation of women in Chile, and technical assistance has been provided for improving the system of compiling information, specifically with regard to female-headed households and to the participation of women in economic activities.

In collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women, an organ of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which is headquartered at Vienna, advisory assistance is being provided to the National Commission for Solidarity and Social Development of the Office of the President of the Republic of Bolivia, in the area of the activities of the Commission that are directed towards women.

At the request of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in collaboration with an expert from that country, pre-feasibility studies were also conducted with a view to elaborating economic support projects for women in the informal sector in Mexico and Venezuela within the framework of project PN 89.7852.0-06.100, of ECLAC and GTZ of Germany. Within the framework of this project, a review will be undertaken of the activities of the governmental and non-governmental institutions engaged in support activities for women working in the informal sector of the economy, and possible national counterparts were identified for the preparation of future projects of co-operation.

Within the framework of the Technical Services Agreement between PAHO and ECLAC, a proposal was elaborated to create an Information System on Women in Health and Development (SIMUS). This proposal was elaborated specifically to serve as training material in Central America, Belize and Panama aimed at senior government officials responsible for the elaboration of policies concerning women and health, non-governmental organizations involved in the issue of women, and the technical staff that will participate in the implementation of the system.

The proposal was discussed in the Seminar-Workshop on the System of Information on Women in Health and Development, which was held in Guatemala City from 18-20 July 1990. The participants in the Seminar included representatives of government and

non-governmental institutions from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Observers included delegations from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, as well as representatives of agencies of the United Nations system, financing organizations and other international organizations.

The preliminary version of the report of the Seminar-Workshop on the System of Information on Women in Health and Development (SIMUS) is being published and distributed.

At the request of the National University of Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina, support was provided for the Advanced Post-Graduate Programme of the Political and Social Sciences Faculty through courses on women and society.

II. RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

As stated in the previous chapter, many of the activities are regularly being carried out in collaboration with the other specialized agencies of the United Nations. Technical assistance to Bolivia, for example, is being provided in co-operation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, an agency of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA), at Vienna. Close contact in substantive activities has been maintained with this same division through participation in technical meetings and the preparation of regional studies.

In addition, a part of the assistance in the area of information provided to the countries of Central America was made available under the above-mentioned Technical Services Agreement between PAHO and ECLAC through a seminar/workshop in which various aspects of training and diagnostic studies were examined and project proposals formulated.

Advisory services to Chile are provided within a broad framework of co-operation with FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and PREALC.

Continuous contact and co-operation has been maintained with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), with which co-operation activities for 1991 relating to women in the informal sector have already been programmed.

III. STUDIES */

During this period a document was prepared on women and new technologies, which constitutes a preliminary survey of the impact of the introduction of new technologies into the productive and reproductive life of women. The objective of this study was to determine the characteristics of the phenomenon, to propose subjects for discussion and to develop suitable methodological approaches for researching the problems that arise. In this regard, it argues that the introduction of new technologies is manifested in a major change, not only of an economic, but also of a social nature, and examines the manner in which these changes are expressed in the situation of women. Thus, from the perspective of the world of production, the study analyses the ways in which technological change can modify the traditional division of labour by sex, and seeks to ascertain whether female labour offers "comparative advantages" in working with the new technologies. From the perspective of reproduction, it indicates some of the effects of the new technologies in that area, in which women play an essential social role.

A study was also undertaken on women refugees in the region, which represents the first attempt to deal with this subject within the framework of the activities of the United Nations in this area. On this subject, which is closely linked with the question of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean, the document seeks to show --despite the scarcity of statistical data-- the specific situation usually faced by refugee women, and makes a number of proposals for their incorporation into the process of development.

During this period also a document was prepared entitled The Vulnerability of Woman-Headed Households: Policy Questions and Options for Latin America and the Caribbean which will be discussed at the Expert Group Meeting on Vulnerable Women, organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, an agency of CDSHA, which will take place in Vienna from 26-30 November 1990.

The above-mentioned document examines, firstly, the usefulness of the term "woman-headed household" and the social significance of households headed by women. The final section concludes that despite its ambiguities, the term captures a significant social reality and represents a useful approach for identifying households in situations of poverty and social marginality. Later on, the document summarizes recent empirical data on the subject, which reveal a systemic relationship between female-headed households, poverty and a deterioration in the well-being of children. The latter factor has been measured having regard to the nutritional

*/ The annex contains a complete list of the documents prepared during this period.

state of children in households headed by women. The final section examines both the benefits and risks of targeting specific policies towards women who head poor households, and highlights the problems of single adolescent mothers as a priority group for policies and programmes in the areas of education and employment.

Pursuing the activities begun in 1989 in the area of women and culture, a framework document was prepared on this subject of fundamental importance for the participation of women, with a special effort being made to link it with the ECLAC proposal on changing production patterns with social equity. In this regard, the underlying premise has been that any effort to expand the participation of women in new models of development must take account of the peculiarities and cultural heterogeneity of Latin America, both of which factors have a decisive influence on their conduct in the society and in their families.

The training of qualified human resources constitutes one of the main approaches in this decade towards tackling the issue of the incorporation of women into development. In this respect activities are being initiated aimed at elaborating a diagnostic study of the situation of women in the region in terms of their training. The document entitled Formación de recursos humanos y diferencias de género (LC/L.598(MDM.11/4)) represents the first attempt to deal with the subject, not only in terms of analysis but also from the perspective of the compilation and systemization of regional and national experiences. This line of activity is expected to be continued during 1991.

IV. RELATIONS WITH THE ECLAC SYSTEM

During this period, the Women and Development Unit, a department of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, has been receiving support from the ECLAC system in all its activities. Among other contributions, CELADE has provided co-operation in the area of demographic information related to women.

In the elaboration of project proposals, the Unit has worked in close co-operation with the Division of Operations of ECLAC in formulating proposals on women and the next census round, on strengthening information mechanisms for the management of national offices for women, and on women and culture.

Contacts have been established with the Joint ECLAC/CTC Unit on Transnational Corporations and a project designed to analyse the impact of these enterprises on the employment of women.

Several staff of the Women and Development Unit taught at the XXXI International Course on Development, Planning and Social

Policies of ILPES, in the subject area of Social Policies and Projects, on topics related to the participation of women.

Thanks to the co-operation of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico, the functionary responsible for the subject of women in that Office underwent a three-month training course in areas related to her job activities, at ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago. The training programme covered administrative and substantive questions. With respect to the first category, a review was conducted of the preparation of the work programmes and the programme of activities, as well as the administration of budgets for the regular and extra-budgetary programmes. As regards the substantive issues, the programme was linked to the subject of women and other support activities, such as the analysis of the substantive activities of the Women and Development Unit in relation to mandates, the linking of the activities of the Unit with other organizations of the United Nations system, the incorporation of the dimension of gender into global development projects, the formulation of projects, knowledge of the information systems currently existing in ECLAC, the Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL), the ECLAC library, the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES), and a limited participation in the course on Social Policies and Projects in the XXXI International Course of ILPES referred to above.

In carrying out this programme, co-operation was received from staff of the Programme Planning and Co-ordination Office, the Division of Administration, the Division of Operations, the Social Development Division, ILPES, DOCPAL, and the ECLAC and CLADES libraries, whose technical and substantive contributions facilitated the elaboration of a comprehensive training programme with a high academic level.

V. SUBSTANTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SEMINARS

- The Unit participated in and presented a paper at the Latin American Regional Conference of the Society for International Development (SID), held in Rio de Janeiro, in May 1990.
- It presented the proposal of ECLAC and participated in an interregional Meeting on Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN/MUDAR), held in Niteroi, Brazil, in May 1990.
- It participated in and presented comments on the proposal of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) for the project on the publication on Latin American Women in Figures, Santiago, Chile, May 1990.

- It participated in the meeting of the regional group on women and social policies at the local level, organized by the Economic Research Corporation for Latin America (CIEPLAN), in July 1990.
- It participated in an Expert Group Meeting on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children, organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA), held from 2-6 July 1990 at the Headquarters of the Centre at Vienna.
- It participated in the Seminar-Workshop on the Information System on Women in Health and Development (SIMUS), from 18-20 July 1990.
- It participated in a seminar on communication and information: strategies for the creation of networks and changes, organized by ISIS International and the Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS/WICCE). This event was held in Santiago, Chile, from 13-31 August 1990.
- It participated with a paper on employment and education for Latin American youth in the meeting of students of catholic universities of Latin America, held in Santiago, Chile in September 1990.
- It will participate and present a document at the Expert Meeting on Vulnerable Women, organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA), which will be held from 26-30 November 1990 at the Headquarters of the Centre at Vienna.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The substantive activities of the next period must be centred on the preparation of inputs for the evaluation which will be undertaken in September 1991 at the Fifth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The main document should deal with the question of the insertion of the subject of women in the new ECLAC proposal and examine more closely some of the essential aspects related to women and culture, new technologies, the informal sector, and others.

As far as resources allow, technical assistance will continue to be provided to those countries that request it in areas in which the Unit has expertise. Moreover, project proposals will continue to be elaborated in order to secure greater resources for carrying out regional activities.

Annex

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