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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON POVERTY AND GENDER

Santiago, Chile, 12-13 August 2003



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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The Meeting of Experts on Poverty and Gender was held on 12 and 13 August 2003 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile.

Attendance

2. Experts from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay attended the meeting. Also attending were representatives from the following bodies within the United Nations system and other international organizations: the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and ECLAC.¹

Background

3. The meeting was organized jointly by ILO and ECLAC. The aim of the meeting was to analyse from a gender perspective three cross-cutting subject areas: theoretical and methodological progress made with respect to poverty, proposals for measuring poverty and the identification of best practices in public policies aimed at overcoming poverty among women. The meeting received the support of the ECLAC/UNIFEM project "Use of gender indicators in public policy-making".

4. The event was held as part of the follow-up process carried out by the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC and the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean to monitor fulfilment of the commitments made by the governments in the region at the Fourth World Conference on Women (held in Beijing) and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly those that make reference to overcoming poverty, building gender indicators and supporting governments in identifying policies that are more appropriate for combating poverty, generating quality employment and promoting gender equity.

5. The meeting was preceded by eight working sessions convened by the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC, which were attended by experts in the field and professionals from substantive divisions of ECLAC. The participants considered and debated the convergence of two fields of knowledge: poverty studies and gender studies. The dialogue was organized around three interrelated aspects: conceptual advances and difficulties in linking poverty and gender, contributions to the measurement of poverty afforded by the gender perspective and the challenges that arise in the formulation of public policies.

¹ See List of participants attached as annex 1.

Organization of work

6. The presentations were structured in the following manner:

- Module 1 Conceptual challenges of poverty from a gender perspective
- Module 2 Methodological challenges: measuring poverty using a gender approach
- Module 3 Experiences of policies aimed at overcoming poverty among women

Documentation

7. Documents related to the areas of study² were distributed at the meeting and may also be found on the web site of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC: <http://www.eclac.cl/mujer>. Also available on the same web site are several presentations in electronic format that were given by experts during technical panel discussions.

B. PROCEEDINGS

Opening session

8. The Commission's Executive Secretary José Antonio Ocampo, the ILO Regional Expert on gender issues, Lais Abramo, and the Chief of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC, Sonia Montañó, took the floor during the opening session.

9. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC pointed out that the meeting had been preceded by debate sessions convened by the Women and Development Unit and underlined the participation of ILO representatives in the organization of the meeting. He said that such efforts responded to the call made by the governments in the region that have asked ECLAC to assign priority to gender statistics, especially with respect to poverty and gender equity. In that regard, he indicated that the outputs of the meeting would serve to refine the proposal to be presented by ECLAC at the second technical meeting on gender statistics at the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, scheduled to be held in La Paz, Bolivia from 23 to 25 September 2003.

10. He said that ECLAC had defined poverty as a multidimensional problem, an aspect that had also been underscored by the gender approach. A major contribution of gender studies to poverty analysis was the revelation of the importance of the unpaid domestic work done primarily by women, and of the gender-based division of labour -assigning the home to women- which was the root of the unequal distribution of opportunities to access material, social and cultural resources, as well as to participate in the decision-making process in political, economic and social arenas.

11. Another aspect of gender studies highlighted was the criticism levelled at the measurement of poverty, namely the methodology based on per capita household income, which obscures the situation of poor women and is limited in its ability to reflect gender inequalities, as it does not assign any value to

² See Documentation attached as annex 2.

unpaid domestic work. Furthermore, he mentioned the need to refine the measurement of indicators such as the gender of the head of household, as they allow poverty among men and women to be better characterized by reflecting gender inequalities and women's increased vulnerability to poverty. Last, he brought up the debate on measuring individual poverty, which would highlight poverty levels for persons who do not have individual income even though they live in non-poor households.

12. The ILO Regional Expert on gender issues lauded the collaboration between ECLAC and ILO, and affirmed that poverty among women was directly related to labour market access and the poor quality of paid jobs for women. Her organization advocated overcoming poverty through employment, or more specifically, through well-paid "decent employment" that would meet safety standards, provide social protection and offer a discrimination-free environment. Gender was a determining factor in access to employment and in the quality of such employment in terms of wages, social security and possibilities for representation.

13. The speaker stressed that poverty was strongly linked to employment patterns and was reinforced by mechanisms of discrimination, thus reflecting the close relationship between gender, employment and poverty. She also underlined the strong relationship in the region between inequality, gender and ethnicity, and listed a number of open topics that needed further attention, some of which would be addressed at the meeting: the conceptual relationship between poverty and gender, measurement indicators and gender equity gaps in the labour market and other gaps related to race and ethnicity. Last, she made reference to the ILO programme on institution-building for labour access and poverty eradication, which comprised technical cooperation activities among eight countries in the region and collaboration with national employment and poverty elimination programmes.

14. The Chief of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC made reference to the work that had been carried out for years with the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Statistical Conference of the Americas. She also mentioned that such efforts resurrected an old discussion that dated back to the third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985) and that initiated the network Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era/Women for Alternative Development (DAWN/MUDAR) aimed at identifying links between gender and poverty. In that regard, she commended the call to combine the women's movement and the pursuit of a solution not only for the specific situation of women but also to deepen the conceptual and methodological debate.

15. She also mentioned the agreement of the countries on the importance of linking the issues of poverty and gender, and the fact that the phenomenon of poverty involved a number of other topics, such as State institutions, data collection, measurements and the weakness of mechanisms designed for the advancement of women. As such, the meeting represented a challenge that was not only intellectual but political as well to decide how to proceed within a context in which market logic prevailed and to position oneself in the debate with the proper tools. With respect to the debate regarding poverty and gender, she pointed out the advances in and limitations of measuring poverty in terms of income, ways of assigning value to domestic work and the difficulties that arose, the impact of programmes aimed at fighting poverty, the importance of analysing and evaluating women's education, the emphasis on a human rights approach in matters such as sexual and reproductive health and the importance of promoting the linkage between micro- and macroeconomic levels in gender studies.

Poverty analysis from a gender perspective

16. The Women and Development Unit presented the main conceptual advances in poverty analysis afforded by a gender perspective. It was recognized that gender is a variable of poverty, that is, that certain groups of individuals, based on their sex, are more vulnerable to poverty or more severely affected by it.

17. The gender perspective allowed for a more refined analysis, conceptualisation and measurement of poverty, insofar as it stressed material and non-material aspects of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the gender-based division of labour and power relationships that were structured around it restricted the access of women to material, social and cultural resources. The concept of economic autonomy, for example, made it possible to reflect the impoverished status of several groups of individuals that usually went unnoticed, revealing cases of poverty in non-poor households. Such was the situation of a large number of women with a spouse or partner who lived in either poor or non-poor households, whose high domestic activity rates made them dependent on the head of household. Also mentioned was gender-based violence, which made it impossible for individuals to enjoy autonomy. It also made women's access to the labour market difficult and kept them from exercising their citizenship, thereby eroding social capital due to the isolation to which they are subjected.

18. It was explained that the gender perspective contributed to the formulation of policies, as it identified the poorest and most vulnerable individuals.

19. In terms of methodology, criticism was levelled at the method that measured poverty by household income and alternatives that would reflect gender inequalities were considered. One such alternative measured individual income, which would allow the "black box" of the household to be opened, thereby revealing the poverty level of individuals who did not have individual income, even in non-poor households. The individual income of the population aged 15 and over, the relationship of the total individual monetary income of female and male heads of household by poverty status and the prevalence of women spouses without individual income living in poor or non-poor households alike were considered individual poverty indicators.

20. It was also proposed that value should be assigned to domestic work, labour that, despite not following monetary logic, satisfied needs, allowed for social reproduction and was closely linked to the processes of impoverishment among women. In doing so, it would be possible to quantify the fundamental contribution of women in unpaid domestic work (household chores and care), which is primarily done by women as demonstrated by the domestic activity rate. A significant difference in household income would also be registered among those that have someone who does such chores (households headed by men) and those who must assume the private costs incurred (households headed by women). By assigning value to domestic work, the poverty threshold would rise but differences between households with respect to the threshold and varying poverty levels would be obvious (see table 1 in annex 3).

21. Also considered was the measurement of the femininity index across various age groups, a measurement that demonstrates a high degree of vulnerability to poverty among women between 20 and 59 years of age. Such outputs would allow the femininity index to be considered an indicator of the feminization of poverty.

Presentations and debate

(a) A joint diagnostic assessment

22. The experts in attendance at the meeting congratulated ECLAC for the working paper presented and expressed their agreement with various aspects related to linking poverty studies and gender studies.

23. Irrespective of the method used to measure poverty, considering the various approaches (monetary, capacity, social exclusion, participatory), the participants agreed to confirm that a discriminatory model existed that was not based on economic rationale but rather on the system of gender relations, which determined unequal access to resources among women.

24. The experts stated that women's greater exposure to poverty was related to the social division of labour by sex. The processes of impoverishment among women were closely tied to their relationship to paid and unpaid work, since the higher prevalence of the latter among women prohibited them from entering the work force under equal conditions. Women's greater exposure to poverty was also linked to the unequal economic and social value of the work they carried out, unequal access to productive resources and unequal opportunities to participate in decision-making activities.

25. The experts indicated that one of the outcomes of the contributions made by studies on the feminization of poverty and of the conceptual and political debate initiated at the third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985) by DAWN/MUDAR to identify ties between poverty and gender was the widening of the narrow conceptual framework that had existed since the 1970s to study and measure poverty. That widening had led to the conceptualisation of poverty as a multidimensional, heterogeneous, dynamic phenomenon that comprised both material and non-material aspects of a symbolic and cultural nature. It showed how inadequate the more conventional methods of measuring poverty were in reflecting gender inequalities and had led to the proposal of other gender-sensitive measurements.

26. The limitations noted with the gender approach in conceptualising and measuring poverty made it increasingly clear that without that approach, poverty was understood and measured insufficiently, which served to underscore the close relationship between the definition of poverty and its measurement.

27. Another contribution afforded by the gender approach to poverty analysis noted by the experts was that it linked micro- and macroeconomic perspectives, that is, by relating economic and social development to the daily lives of individuals, thereby highlighting the connection between the two levels in order to reflect the complexity of the phenomenon of poverty.

28. In describing poverty as a dynamic phenomenon, participants were referring to the importance of understanding it as a process and not as a symptom, thereby avoiding static analyses of the phenomenon. Poverty, as a static image hardly reflected the relationships of gender and generation and did not shed any light on earlier processes, capabilities and historical dimensions in and outside the home. In that connection, the importance of taking historical periods and the lifecycles of individuals and households into account when analysing poverty was indicated.

29. In that regard, reference was made to the volatility of poverty and to the importance of considering the movements of households into and out of poverty and the factors that explained such movements.

30. With respect to the heterogeneity of poverty, the experts pointed to the need to consider variables such as ethnicity and age in order to demonstrate the various forms in which the phenomenon could manifest itself.

31. As regards non-material dimensions of poverty, particular emphasis was placed on the realization of sexual and reproductive rights, and on violence as a factor that limited access to resources.

32. A particularly significant contribution afforded by the gender approach to understanding poverty was its ability to increase the understanding of how households work by bringing visibility to power asymmetries among household members, inequalities in decision-making activities and resource distribution. In that regard, the gender approach helped open the "black box" of the household and understand households more as a web of relations in which conflicts and solidarity coexisted, and not as a unit in which all household members shared the same needs and enjoyed equal access to resources.

33. The conceptualisation of activities carried out in the home (household chores and care) as a job that was socially needed for the economy was also praised. Although it did not follow monetary logic, it satisfied needs and allowed for social reproduction. The need to value such work, by assigning it an economic value or measuring it in terms of time use for example, was considered.

34. The experts recognized a number of advantages associated with the most widely used methodology for measuring poverty: per capita household income. Such advantages included the fact that it was a synthetic measure, easily visualized, for which a considerable amount of information was available and which allowed poverty to be quantified using monetary logic and comparisons between countries and regions. Nevertheless, they also noted that that methodology had serious limitations in demonstrating gender inequalities, as it assigned all household members the same income level, thereby homogenizing their needs, and assumed that all were equally poor or non-poor. It also presupposed that resources were equally distributed, that is, it did not factor in the internal dynamics of the household, spending and time-use patterns by sex and power asymmetries according to age and sex.

35. Despite contributions made by gender studies in the past few decades with respect to poverty, the experts also agreed to point out that the countries had still not adopted an analytical framework that linked inequalities of gender and of poverty. As such, representative values used in statistical work, empirical descriptions and certain regularities are typically treated as explanatory. Empirical regularities had been turned into analytical lines, statistical links had become explanatory and correlations causal.

36. Along those same lines, reference was made to the limitations of studies on the feminisation of poverty. Such studies raised the profile of two issues (female heads of household and early motherhood), led to the disaggregation of statistical information by sex and created a climate in which victims' "voices" could be heard, stakeholders identified and qualitative research methods to discover them used. However, it was affirmed that a long-lasting conceptual revolution had not been achieved.

(b) Theoretical and methodological aspects

37. Poverty analysis from a gender perspective had prompted significant conceptual cleavage that had allowed the concept to be expanded and new measurements of poverty proposed. However, participants reiterated the need to continue reviewing the matter, holding that different concepts of poverty could give rise to different measurements and policies as well.

38. In that connection, one expert considered analysing poverty from the viewpoint of key concepts of gender theory and research such as choice, care, time and experience. The analysis provided a dynamic view of the processes involved in poverty, which differed significantly from previous ideas of poverty and gender studies were conducted, which were based essentially on men's perceptions of poverty as experienced by men. Those perceptions tended to emphasize the view of poverty as a symptom, that is, using a static view of the phenomenon (poverty as a chronic condition). Contrarily, gender studies introduced a dynamic view that offered more possibilities to identify the processes involved in poverty (poverty as a temporary state). Poverty analysis from a gender perspective could reposition poverty studies within the renowned theory of social hierarchisation, differentiation and inequality.

39. Regarding the analysis of poverty among women, one of the participants explained the dimensions that must be taken into account to reflect gender inequalities: the gender-based division of labour, training and specialization for certain jobs, unequal pay for equal work and varying levels of access to and use of institutional resources.

Unpaid work

40. The debate surrounding the concept of unpaid work was geared towards conceptualising it as a socially necessary job, understanding its relation to the processes of impoverishment among women and assigning a value to it as a way of measuring the contribution of women in this area.

41. With respect to its theorization, one expert stated that the exclusion of unpaid work from the economic domain did not derive from the nature of production itself since the labour used to produce such goods outside of the home was paid, however, such labour was free if carried out within the home. She proposed that unpaid work should be more accurately defined, identifying four modalities: subsistence, domestic, family care and volunteer or community service.

42. Despite concerted efforts made to conceptualise and measure such work, the experts agreed that difficulties —of a more political than methodological nature— in incorporating unpaid work in poverty measurements persisted and that they were related to cultural resistance to classifying such activities as work.

Households

43. Although gender studies had made a significant contribution to the understanding of the internal dynamics of the home, the experts indicated the need to continue considering inequalities in resource access and distribution in households; spending patterns; gender differences in time use; power relationships; internal dynamics with respect to stages in the family cycle; the role changes of household members in certain situations; the growing complexity of its structure, which is reflected in the increased number of single-parent, sibling-headed and three-generation households; and the existence of multi-family homes.

Gender of the head of household

44. The use of female-headed households as one of the most important indicators of the feminization of poverty sparked a heated methodological and conceptual debate that had consolidated the gender of

the head of household as an analytical concept but also underscored some of its limitations and generated proposals to refine its measurement.

45. Concerning its limitations, it was suggested that survey responses given by heads of household could be biased and reflect power relationships that normally obscured the economic contribution of women in the household. Culturally, the productive role in the family was attributed to men. As such, men were considered to head the household, irrespective of the size of their economic contribution to the household. Therefore, the designation of the head of household did not necessarily reflect who provided the household's primary source of income, but rather what was dictated by society at the time. In terms of methodology, the indicator allowed relationships between those residing in the unit of analysis, which was the household, to be established and a typology of households created.

46. It was also pointed out that a female-headed household was a concept that encompassed a wide array of situations, therefore, special care must be taken when drawing conclusions from its measurement. The participants did not consider ruling out the use of female-headed households as a poverty indicator but rather suggested that its definition be clarified. To that end, they mentioned the need to take into account the relationship between various types of families and poverty levels, considering new categories such as joint heads of household.

Other dimensions of poverty

47. Although the gender approach had broadened the conceptual limits of poverty, the experts expressed the need to continue working on defining and measuring several dimensions, one of which was gender-based violence. If the poverty line was considered as the minimum level of subsistence, then the introduction of violence worsened that minimum, since being a victim of violence was an attack on life itself. Hence the importance of establishing more clearly the conceptual relationship between poverty and violence, which would help design measurements and policies that allowed both phenomena to be comprehensively addressed.

48. Emphasis was also placed on sexual and reproductive rights, which, when not fully respected, affected female mortality and had negative economic effects that limited the economic autonomy of women. One of the experts mentioned the problems faced by women who participated in micro-financing programs in Venezuela in repaying loans contracted in connection with unwanted pregnancies.

49. Discrimination was another concept linked to poverty. One of the experts noted that that concept had not been systematically considered in the analysis of the phenomenon, unlike the case for other concepts, such as inequality and vulnerability.

Refinement of conventional measurements of poverty and new proposals

50. Following the conceptual debate, participants discussed the need to define ways of measuring poverty that could, through successive approaches, reflect the complexity of the phenomenon. During the dialogue on methodological aspects of poverty, they advocated considering various proposals for refining conventional measurements and the formulation of new measurements, rather than creating a single indicator that incorporated every dimension of the phenomenon.

51. It was agreed that the methodology was limited in terms of its ability to reflect gender inequalities, particularly the way in which the household category was treated, even though its advantages were also recognized. It was thus proposed that the methodology should be complemented by measurements that demonstrated other non-monetary dimensions of poverty. Additional proposals for measuring poverty by income were also debated.

Proposals for measuring poverty by income from a gender perspective

52. The following indicators for measuring individual poverty were considered: individual population income; the ratio of total per-capita monetary income of male and female heads of household by poverty status; and measurement of women spouses or partners without individual income living in poor and non-poor households.

53. One of the participants presented an exercise for measuring the individual income of men and women in the context of the household of residence. The exercise was aimed at reflecting a situation of poverty among women obscured by traditional household income measurements: that of women who resided in non-poor households but who did not have individual income. When measuring income by household, such women were categorized as non-poor when in fact they were at the individual level and were not autonomous from an economic standpoint. The exercise was based on census data, which implied changes to, and potential broadening of, traditional sources of information for measuring poverty by income.

54. Another proposal presented entailed the formulation of a synthetic indicator of gender-based economic poverty among women. The indicator was built by calculating total income by sex—the sum of income received by women/men from wages, investments, funds for retirement, pension and dependents' pensions and transfer payments—and by dividing it by the total population of women/men. Using that figure, total per-capita income by sex could be measured and the gender gap in total income could subsequently be obtained, which was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Gender gap in total income} \\ [100 - (\text{total income per woman} / \text{total income per man}) * 100]$$

The calculation of the gender gap in total income for different countries in the region showed that women had lower incomes than men.

Measuring unpaid work

55. During the debate, unpaid work was highlighted as a core concept in gender-sensitive poverty analysis. There was much discussion concerning the social category to which household chores and care would be assigned and consideration given to the concept of a care economy to refer to such activities.

56. Such efforts aimed at conceptualising unpaid work led to the consideration of various measurement proposals that would allow unpaid work to be incorporated in the measurement of poverty. However, it was noted that the difficulties in doing so were not only methodological but political and cultural as well.

57. ECLAC proposed that domestic work should be measured by assigning a monetary value that reflected the contribution of women to such work, noted differences between households (those that had someone to do such chores and those that did not) and revealed varying poverty levels among households.

58. One participant proposed using time as a measure of unpaid work. In that case, unpaid work was conceptualised as the sum of subsistence work, domestic work, family care and volunteer or community service work. By considering the time invested to carry out each activity, the expert demonstrated the possibility of raising their profile in such a way that society would value them and notice gender inequalities within the family and society. That would also allow the total burden of work, which encompassed both paid and unpaid work, to be calculated.

Gender of the head of household as a poverty indicator

59. The concept of the gender of the head of household, although highly useful, had limitations as an indicator of poverty among women. Several modifications to its measurement were suggested. To reflect the heterogeneity of situations that could comprise the category, disaggregating heads of household by type of household, considering its structure and make-up, and by age groups was proposed. The introduction of new concepts such as joint heads of household was also considered.

60. It was also suggested that the term head of household suggested authoritarian power relationships and should therefore be replaced by "reference member" in household surveys. It should be noted that a woman was recognized as the head of household only in absence of a man, irrespective of her economic contribution.

Measurement of non-monetary dimensions of poverty

61. Various studies had shown that men and women had very different time-use patterns. In general, such studies concluded that women allocated more time to unpaid activities, which was expressed in longer workdays that limited their chances of accessing paid work (employment) and that were harmful to their health. Thus, time-use measurement was increasingly important as a conceptual and methodological concern, as it would reveal non-monetary dimensions of poverty.

62. In that connection, one proposal was to measure time use by conducting surveys, either by inserting specific modules into household surveys or through separate periodic surveys, and by preparing panel-type surveys. It was important to link such surveys with other types of more aggregated socio-economic measurements. One expert proposed measuring the physical units of time allocated to performing the total burden of work, that is, the sum of paid and unpaid work.

63. Reference was made to the probability survey used to gather information from 1,200 households in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 2003 on paid and unpaid work and time use. Total activity (paid and unpaid) was measured in the physical units of time allocated to performing such activities and gender and generational differences in time use and the gender-based division of labour were analysed, considering the structure and make-up of households and the stage of the family life cycle (the unit of analysis was the household). The survey served to quantify the total burden of work (paid and unpaid), its relegation to certain household members and the distribution of household chores and care, to estimate the time allocated to each household chore and to analyse the impact of those factors on paid work.

64. Knowledge was sketchy as far as the breadth of the gender gap in the ownership of resources, and of land in particular, was concerned. One expert held that agricultural censuses were quite inadequate in that regard, since they implicitly assumed that a private farm owner must be the principal farmer or head of household. The number of women who were principal farmers on privately owned farms could only be deduced (as in agricultural censuses) from the living conditions surveys conducted under the auspices of the World Bank in various countries in the region during the 1990s.

65. Because of the limitations posed by the sources of information, the expert posed, as an estimate of land distribution by gender using census data, the assumption that, given prevailing gender norms, women who filed as principal farmers of a privately owned farm were in fact the owners. Based on that assumption, the census data obtained in various countries in the region for different years, showed a decrease in the number of female principal farmers, which constituted the first estimate for the gender gap in land ownership in Latin America. It was also suggested that marriage systems should be taken into account when measuring access to land, as such systems determined ownership norms.

66. The study of land ownership by gender indicated not only the level of access to material resources but also the empowerment and bargaining capacity of women. Owning property could secure women a "fall-back position". In urban areas, women could be provided with the fall-back position through ownership of real estate (housing appeared to be a fall-back in poor sectors and also as an investment as it could generate income by charging rent) and durable consumption goods.

Qualitative analyses

67. The experts stated that the gender perspective helped bring visibility to non-material aspects involved in the phenomenon of poverty. Concepts such as experience (from a feminist approach) allowed feelings of being undervalued and stigmatised, the risk of losing dignity and the idea of decency and respect to be incorporated into the experience of poverty and in several of its symbolic dimensions such as the way in which poor persons perceive poverty.

68. In terms of methodology, such efforts revealed the importance of using qualitative analyses in the measurement of poverty, which when combined with other quantitative methods, reflected factors related to the way in which poor persons viewed themselves, the perception of poverty among poor men and women and the way in which they identified and expressed their needs. One example was the "Observatory of the experiences and perceptions of poverty based on the gender approach", in Mexico, which compiled in its database quantitative and qualitative information from household studies, personal interviews, focus groups and word association tests. Such experiences had shown important gender differences in the perception of poverty and the persistence of stereotypes regarding male and female roles that helped explain women's greater exposure to poverty. Thus, the importance of considering the analysis of socio-symbolic aspects of poverty as a guide in formulating policies aimed at fighting poverty was reiterated, with particular emphasis on gender inequalities.

69. The linkage between poverty and location was also addressed. Geographical areas affect the perception of poverty of a population and determine to some extent its needs (rural or urban settlements, distance from centres of development, availability of physical resources). In that regard, taking into account the heterogeneity of the land, in cultural, economic, physical and political terms, was suggested in an attempt to better characterize poor populations and more accurately define their needs. Location was another analytical variable that could be used as a guideline in policy-making.

Sources

70. New theoretical developments regarding poverty brought about with the gender perspective required new sources of information, data processing methods and ways of optimizing existing sources in order to identify gender inequalities.

71. With respect to the improvement of available sources, it was important to employ more analytical than descriptive perspectives when processing information obtained from socio-economic household or characterization surveys.

72. As regards other sources, the use of population censuses to measure poverty by income was considered and some of their advantages mentioned, namely, universality, which eliminated the problem of representativeness and sampling errors, and the very low levels of disaggregation (small areas or ethnic groups).

73. During the debate over restructuring information to bring visibility to gender inequalities, the preparation of case studies in which new conceptual and methodological proposals were employed was proposed. It was also suggested that efforts should be made to eliminate biases in household survey and census questions and in the use of such instruments. In that connection, it was proposed that categories associated with categorical questions (such as the head of household) should be replaced and a gender-sensitization component added to the training of survey conductors.

74. Regarding the process to request and generate new types of information, the experts pointed out the role that could be assumed by United Nations bodies in providing technical cooperation to the countries.

(c) Political aspects

Trajectory of policies geared towards women

75. A historical trajectory of public policies aimed at overcoming poverty among women was presented and current trends were described. One expert noted various stages in the trajectory. In the 1950s and 1960s, policies geared towards poor women surfaced owing to a notion of citizenship that failed to recognize the analytical and explicative value of gender differences, that is, the population was considered "neutral" and homogeneous. It was the era of the welfare State and centralized planning.

76. The crisis of the State and the appearance of authoritarian regimes altered policies geared towards women. New perspectives surfaced, such as *Women in Development* (WID) and later, during the mid-1980s, the approach known as *Gender in Development* (GID), which considered distinctions more in the analytical realm than in the domain of policy implementation, absent a theoretical basis to design various political practices.

77. The third era surrounded the consideration of mainstreaming the gender perspective, an approach put forward primarily by women in the third world (DAWN/MUDAR) at the third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, who pointed out the need to link gender and poverty, gender inequalities and poverty among women.

78. Each such perspective had generated different policies. The welfare State promoted socially oriented policies and the realization of rights, such as that to education, and universal suffrage; during the second era, policies geared toward mothers gained currency, which limited the interventions to a role (mother) and an age (reproductive). In turn, the approach of mainstreaming the gender perspective led to the creation of institutions in charge of implementing policies for women (national machineries for women) that considered autonomous development and the advancement of women, from the viewpoint of a citizenry that was neither neutral nor second-class but rather autonomous.

79. The trend seen in policies geared towards women had not been linear or staggered. On the contrary, it had been one of concurrent developments, which meant that it was possible to find a space for welfare projects alongside initiatives that sought to mainstream the gender perspective in the countries of the region.

The context of public policies from a gender perspective

80. During the debate it was pointed out that the incorporation of the approach in public policies was very recent, which was closely linked to the inclusion of the poverty debate on the feminist agenda itself.

81. The context in which such policies appeared was characterized by the strong impact of market liberalization, which weakened policies aimed at protecting labour rights and stimulating employment and reduced the regulatory role of the State. Visibility was brought to the gender perspective precisely when States were weak and women's rights achieved when sovereignty, that is, the ability of States to defend such rights, was weak.

82. It was also noted that a culture of equality was under constant threat in Latin America. Although the region was quite heterogeneous, one common feature was that equality was not a rooted, naturalized idea. On the contrary, inequality and disparity were taken completely for granted. Another element that characterized the cultural atmosphere was what one expert described as a high tolerance for poverty, a phenomenon that had always existed.

83. The experts declared that such cultural aspects, together with economic and political changes, posed formidable obstacles in implementing and institutionalising gender-sensitive policies in the region.

Policies for overcoming poverty from a gender perspective

84. The experts agreed that the policies aimed at combating poverty failed to analyse equity, which impeded taking full advantage of social investment and tended to perpetuate poverty. Thus, during the debate, they reaffirmed the need to mainstream the gender perspective in all institutional areas and to consider the topic of gender a high-priority issue, which would bridge policies for overcoming poverty with gender equity policies.

85. Reconciling productive and reproductive roles, empowering women and promoting their economic, physical (sexual and reproductive rights) and social (participation) autonomy were indicated by the experts as strategic areas towards which such gender policies must be geared.

86. With respect to reconciling the professional and personal lives of women, it was proposed, among other measures, that access to and the quality of employment (wages, social protection) should be improved, the responsibility of public entities regarding child care should be increased, cultural changes

that allowed domestic work to be valued and its profile raised and that eased the division of paid and unpaid work by gender should be promoted and that domestic violence should be prevented and its victims treated.

87. Regarding the empowerment of women, reference was made to the need to design policies that supported both personal development (self-esteem, social skills) and the promotion of skills of a political nature relating to the creation of links with institutions, the demand for rights (citizens' voice), the participation in community forums and the enhancement of organizational skills (social capital).

88. As regards the economic autonomy of women, the experts emphasized the importance of linking gender equity policies, those against poverty and those aimed at employment. That linkage must translate into measures that strengthened the productive role of women by promoting their integration into the labour force with well-paid jobs, social protection and discrimination-free environments. Concerning physical autonomy, the need to design initiatives that protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women was pointed out. Using that perspective, one of the experts stressed the importance of ensuring women's access to health care services.

89. Such policies must be comprehensive, that is, they must be able to address the multiple dimensions of poverty. For that same reason, gender policies must combine various types of actions (compensatory, structural) and terms (short, medium and long). That consideration resulted from the cross-disciplinarity of policies, or the linking of and coordination between various public sectors in an attempt to streamline public action. It meant that attention should be given to both material shortages among poor women and the more subjective aspects of poverty. In addition to promoting women's access to employment, land, housing and loans, their individual and collective skills had to be developed to ensure that their rights were recognized.

90. In that connection, several experiences were mentioned such as that of the defunct programme for female heads of household implemented by the National Women's Service (SERNAM) in Chile, which was geared towards integrating women into the labour force and offered activities in areas such as professional training, health, child care, legal assistance and housing. Another experience presented at the meeting was Mexico's Estrategia Contigo, which was aimed at women in towns where the programme Oportunidades (formally known as Progresas) was active, and which linked objectives aimed at creating productive employment and developing the organizational potential of women, combining training for carrying out productive projects with the empowerment of women.

91. The importance was underlined of having quality compensatory policies that dovetailed with policies of a more structural nature, that is, those that would address the immediate needs of poor populations (short term) and concurrently propose changes in structural conditions that lead to unequal access to resources depending on gender (medium and long-term).

Principal difficulties

92. The experts stated that in mainstreaming the gender perspective and designing and implementing policies aimed at overcoming poverty that addressed gender inequalities they had encountered a series of difficulties, one of which was that gender studies were unable to contribute much to policy design in the way of proposals. It seemed that such studies were more apt to challenge than to lead to policy proposals that allowed gender inequalities in poor populations to be addressed.

93. Reference was also made to the fact that national machineries for women were weak at the institutional level, which made it difficult to consolidate and sustain policies. In that regard, mention was also made of the small budgets with which such institutions tended to work and the deficiencies seen in technical and professional teams that implemented policy—many of which had been trained in gender studies programmes—in mainstreaming the gender approach in policy.

94. Such weaknesses seen among institutions and teams, compounded by the sectoral manner in which governments functioned, had made it difficult to mainstream the gender perspective, integrate gender sensitisation and transfer such methodology to the State and administration.

95. Participants also underlined the difficulties in incorporating the more emancipating aspects of the gender domain into the institutional arena, which had led to a more technical than feminist approach to gender policy. Areas geared towards the autonomy and empowerment of women and towards modifying value systems that made the transformation of gender roles difficult had been put aside.

96. Nevertheless, such difficulties in establishing gender as a core governmental priority were not only due to a lack of persuasive and policymaking skills but also to the less intense political and media power of women. Such difficulties were not only attributable to ignorance of how to act within the State apparatus but also to the fact that there was a correlation of forces that made the entertainment of gender issues and policies at the highest levels of government difficult and explained their volatility (disappearance and reappearance) with respect to the public agenda.

Challenges

97. The principal challenges identified by the experts were the following:

- Linking economic growth policies with employment and gender equity policies. A clear relationship exists between employment and poverty, indeed lack of the former (unemployment, underemployment, insecure employment) is a determining factor and principal cause of the latter which explains the importance of increasing employment opportunities for women that allow access to monetary resources and promote economic autonomy.
- Assessing the impact of programmes aimed at fighting poverty on the empowerment of women. Although women are over-represented in many programmes, very little is known about the effect of such programmes on the realization of women's rights. The fact that such effects are unknown makes it difficult to identify good practices and problematic areas.
- Linking policies aimed at overcoming poverty among women with those geared towards preventing violence. Although the linkage between violence and poverty has been recognized in conceptual terms, actions aimed at prevention and treatment for victims of violence still need to be further integrated into programmes designed to fight poverty among women. A similar case applies to sexual and reproductive rights since, while their relationship with poverty is recognized, actions must be combined more effectively in order to overcome poverty and promote the realization of such rights.

- Integrating the more emancipating aspects of policies designed to overcome poverty that are geared towards the family. This would prevent actions based on attitudes such that treat certain types of families as examples of social dysfunctions rather than as expressions of heterogeneity.
- Placing unpaid domestic work on the public agenda and recognizing it as work in its own right and recognizing also its close linkage to the processes of impoverishment among women and the fundamental contribution that women make in that area.
- Improving the political capacity of women in the political and institutional arena to enable them to exert influence on high-priority issues addressed by the government and to strengthen the technical and professional teams that work to implement gender policies. The particular institutional contexts in which gender policies are implemented must be reflected on, which is why it is necessary to consider aspects such as the symbolic dimension of policies and difficulties in expressing the desired meaning; the standards and practices that promote or facilitate policies; political forces —both inside and outside of the State— that uphold gender institutions; the process of establishing political spheres of action; establishing mechanisms for social coordination between the State and stakeholders; and the current type of institutional network for gender issues (national bureaus, offices, committees, inter alia).

(d) Closing session

98. During the closing session, the Chief of the Women and Development Unit highlighted the contribution of the feminist theory when considering the epistemological ruptures in redesigning the concept of poverty. The process had prompted the reconsideration of several concepts, such as equality, difference, autonomy, capacity for action and a dynamic understanding of poverty that allows its causes, not only its symptoms, to be identified.

99. The analysis involved a conceptual framework considered alternative to the monetarist neoclassical view of poverty. The view was born out of the careful linking of poverty and gender, which included the re-examination of attendant topics and concepts, such as the category of the gender of the head of household, by salvaging its historicity and contributions and indicating the need to refine the category, all of which had helped to consolidate it as an analytical concept. In that regard, dated concepts were reconsidered and refined, not discarded.

100. She noted the self-criticism expressed by feminists with respect to the conceptual and methodological difficulties posed by linking poverty and gender. With respect to policy, she affirmed that it was necessary to design studies and assessments using gender perspectives and readings from various social programmes implemented in the region, with a view to understanding their impact on women (empowerment), identifying areas of intervention policy and further mainstreaming the gender perspective at the institutional level. There remained the challenge of translating such theoretical work into effective actions. That would require not only political capacity but also political, instrumental and operational power in order to effectively impact public policies, which, as tools for cultural development, were not absolute but rather subject to change.

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Annex 3

EXERCISE ON ASSIGNING VALUE TO UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK

WITHOUT ASSIGNING VALUE TO UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK			
Single-parent household	Income	Household with both parents present	Income
Headed by employed female	75	Headed by employed male	100
	0	Spouse or partner (unpaid household chores)	0
First son/daughter	0	First son/daughter	0
Second son/daughter	75/3	Second son/daughter	100/4
	25		25
I. Per capita household income	25	I. Per capita household income	25
Poverty line		Poverty line	
ASSIGNING VALUE TO UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK			
<i>(10 per capita)</i>			
No value assigned	0	Value assigned	40
Household income +	75	Household income + value assigned	140
value assigned	25		
II. Per capita household income	35	II. Per capita household income	35
Poverty line		Poverty line	35

Source: Vivian Milosavljevic (2003), "El enfoque de género y la medición de la pobreza", document presented at the Meeting of Experts on Poverty and Gender, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization (ECLAC/ILO) (Santiago, Chile, 12-13 August).

