



Regional review and appraisal of implementation of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** and the outcome of the **twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000)** in Latin American and Caribbean countries



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



# **Regional review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in Latin American and Caribbean countries**



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Special thanks are extended to Coral Calderón, María Ángeles Durán (who conducted a specific study on the review period), Pablo Tapia and Iliana Vaca-Trigo for their contributions. Jimena Arias, Cristina Benavente, Néstor Bercovich, Macarena Bolados, Cristina Carrasco, Marina Casas, Inés Reca, Lucía Scuro, Alejandra Valdés and Pamela Villalobos are also thanked for their contributions, as are Irma Arriagada and Virginia Guzmán for reading this report.

## Contents

Introduction.....	7
I. A context in transformation.....	11
A. Twenty years of change .....	11
B. The decade of the 1990s .....	15
C. Democracy .....	17
D. The women's and feminist movement.....	18
II. Main advances in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Latin America and the Caribbean .....	23
A. Advances in decision-making autonomy.....	24
1. Legal and institutional framework .....	24
2. Policies and budget.....	26
B. Advances in economic autonomy .....	31
1. Income and time: two commodities in short supply .....	31
2. Public policies: neutrality, positive action and short term .....	45
C. Advances in physical autonomy.....	50
1. Adolescent pregnancy .....	51
2. Maternal mortality.....	52
3. Violence against women .....	54
III. New priorities and challenges for the post-2015 development agenda.....	61
A. Strategic challenges in the region .....	62
B. Challenges related to decision-making autonomy .....	66
C. Challenges related to physical autonomy .....	66
D. Challenges related to economic autonomy .....	67
IV. Data and statistics .....	71
Conclusions .....	75
Bibliography.....	79

## Tables

Table II.1	Latin America (selected countries): definition of femicide/feminicide in penal codes .....	56
Table II.2	Latin America and the Caribbean: sources of information for recording deaths of women at the hands of an intimate partner or former partner .....	58
Table IV.1	Latin America: collection of indicators to monitor progress in the area of gender equality .....	72
Table IV.2	Latin America and the Caribbean: countries that have administered surveys or included regular questions or modules in them on time use and unpaid work .....	73

## Figures

Figure II.1	Latin America: level within governmental hierarchy of national machineries for the advancement of women, 1990s and 2013 .....	25
Figure II.2	Latin America and the Caribbean: poverty, femininity index of poverty and GDP .....	32
Figure II.3	Latin America (18 countries): femininity index of poverty, around 1994 and 2012 .....	33
Figure II.4	Latin America (17 countries): population aged 15 and over without own income, by sex .....	34
Figure II.5	Latin America (17 countries): population without own income, by sex and gender gap, 1994-2012 .....	35
Figure II.6	Latin America (simple average for 18 countries): economic participation rate of the urban population, by sex, 1990-2012 .....	36
Figure II.7	Latin America (8 countries): time spent on total work, paid and unpaid, by the economically active population aged 15 and over, by sex, latest available year .....	37
Figure II.8	Latin America (18 countries): employed population by occupational category and sex, urban areas, around 2012 .....	38
Figure II.9	Latin America (weighted average): urban population employed in low productivity sectors (informal sector), by sex, around 1994 (16 countries) and 2012 (18 countries) .....	39
Figure II.10	Latin America (weighted average for 18 countries): employed population, by sector of activity and sex, around 2012 .....	41
Figure II.11	Latin America (simple average for 18 countries): average wage of female urban wage earners aged 20 to 49 years, working 35 hours or more per week, as a proportion of the wages of men in the same situation, by years of education, 1994 and 2012 .....	42
Figure II.12	Latin America (17 countries): employment and pay gaps between men and women, around 2012 .....	43
Figure II.13	Latin America (18 countries): average years of schooling completed by the economically active population over 15 years of age, by sex .....	45
Figure II.14	Latin America (11 countries): women between the ages of 15 and 19 who are mothers, baseline and most recent figure available .....	52
Figure II.15	Latin America (20 countries): maternal mortality ratios, 1990 and 2013 .....	53
Figure II.16	Latin America: legislation on abortion and elective termination of pregnancy .....	55

Figure II.17	Latin America (7 countries): femicide or homicide of women for reasons of gender and women killed by a current or former intimate partner, latest data available .....	57
Figure II.18	Latin America (12 countries), Spain and Portugal: women killed by a current or former intimate partner, 2013.....	57
Figure II.19	The Caribbean (8 countries): women killed by a current or former intimate partner, latest data available .....	58
 Boxes		
Box II.1	Informal employment .....	40
Box II.2	Support for women in rural areas.....	42
Box III.1	Colombia and Guyana: rights-based culture and law .....	64



## Introduction

One of the most intense and challenging debates of the Fourth World Conference on Women revolved around the concept of equality. The women's and feminist movement mobilized politically to set the right to equality and the right to difference side by side on the international agenda, obtaining a conceptual victory over those who, from various positions, were rejecting the principal of equality by conflating it with the denial of freedom, as an expression negating feminine identity or simply as incompatible with the needs of women, who were seen at the time as being separate but not equally deserving of dignity and rights.

The Platform for Action placed an agenda in the hands of women that drew on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to advance constitutional, legislative, political and cultural changes that have modified old, openly discriminatory institutional structures.

Preliminarily, the review of the national reports concludes that the agenda from the 1990s, especially the Beijing agenda, the regional consensus adopted after sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the array of international commitments in the development and human rights arenas are increasingly linked and interconnected.

Particularly important are the relevance and complementarity of the advances made in relation to the commitments assumed under the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994),<sup>1</sup> which are reflected in the final document approved at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled *The future we want*,<sup>2</sup> and in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.<sup>3</sup>

The legal and institutional changes that have led to greater gender equality represent the most important and widespread achievement that has taken place in the region. At the same time, many important advances in the fight against gender-based violence as well as in political participation, female leadership in the various spheres of public life and the shrinking gender gap in the labour market point up the challenges and unfinished business recognized by the governments in the reports analysed in this review. These advances also entail major cultural shifts, which reveal the transformative aspect of gender equality.

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<sup>1</sup> See [online] <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD%20PoA%20English.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See General Assembly resolution 66/288.

<sup>3</sup> See Montevideo Consensus [online] <http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/2/51922/MontevideoConsensus.pdf>.



Twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, progress has been multifaceted but generally lacking on balance. From the perspective of the global challenges, progress towards gender equality has not kept pace with the environmental, economic and social changes that have occurred, which have weakened the global outlook, adding new and important challenges to the Beijing agenda to build fairer and more egalitarian societies.

This report also indicates the main advances of the past 20 years based on the information provided by the region's countries on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in response to the recommendations made in the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) for the regional and global reviews that would take place in 2015, on the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference (Beijing+20).<sup>4</sup> The subregional report on the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2014c) has also been taken into account, which includes data from the country gender assessments prepared by the Caribbean Development Bank, the country poverty assessments and information provided by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

In general, the national reports reflect strong informational and analytical work and contain relevant supporting documentation that is summarized in the annex Summary of the national reports on Beijing+20, which is available online.<sup>5</sup> In the preparation of this report, special emphasis was placed on maintaining the formulations used in the country reports, which also coincide with those used by the intergovernmental entities such as the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. As stated in the guidance note that accompanied the questionnaire sent to the governments, by virtue of resolution 2013/18, the United Nations Economic and Social Council decided that at its fifty-ninth session, in 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women would undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.<sup>6</sup>

In these 20 years of changes, the countries have advanced at different paces in each of the 12 critical areas of concern set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the global process has been accompanied by sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the various corresponding consensus documents, which have also been guiding the countries on their path towards equality.<sup>7</sup>

In their reports, the countries present their activities, advances, achievements and tasks in the 12 critical areas of concern. In addition, the region has established the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, as requested by the governments during the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which uses multiple indicators to measure advances in equality in terms of physical autonomy, decision-making autonomy and economic autonomy. The indicators are generated from official information provided by the countries, which generally comes from statistics institutes and other public agencies.

<sup>4</sup> The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was responsible for the regional report, whereas the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) prepared the global report.

<sup>5</sup> See [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

<sup>6</sup> The questionnaire sent to the region's governments and the reports prepared by them are available on the website of the Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

<sup>7</sup> See information on the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/1/28701/P28701.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xslt>.

Autonomy is analysed in three dimensions: physical autonomy, understood as control over one's own body; economic autonomy, which refers to the ability to generate one's own income and resources; and decision-making autonomy, which is the full participation of women in the decisions that affect their lives individually and collectively.<sup>8</sup> This report presents advances in these areas by conducting a crossanalysis of the reports presented by the countries and the data and indicators prepared by the Gender Equality Observatory.

The country reports are available on the website of the Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the website of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).<sup>9</sup> A total of 31 countries, including 11 in the Caribbean, presented reports. A detailed account of the many laws, policies, programmes and strategies described in those reports, which are themselves indicative of the importance that the Platform for Action has had for gender equality policies, is available online in the annex to this document, Summary of the national reports on Beijing+20.<sup>10</sup>

In this analysis, the emphasis is on the important processes and most significant outcomes that illustrate the social, political, institutional and cultural transformations. These transformations are the result of the Platform for Action as a public agenda, which in turn is the cumulative result of the previous processes led by the women's and feminist social movement. The analysis also draws attention to the challenges related not only to weaknesses in the policies applied but also to the accelerated rate of change taking place on the planet. This report underscores the need to link the 12 critical areas of concern with the larger body of public policy to advance women's autonomy, specifically their economic, decision-making and physical autonomy.

This report is divided into four chapters and conclusions. The first chapter presents a context in transformation, the 20 years of changes that the region has experienced. It discusses the economic, political and environmental changes that have transpired and describes the decade of the Beijing Conference and the role of the women's and feminist movement. The second chapter covers the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action over the past two decades in terms of women's autonomy. It discusses advances in the decision-making autonomy, physical autonomy and economic autonomy of women. The third chapter describes the new priorities and challenges associated with implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Latin America and the Caribbean. The final chapter presents the data and statistics prepared by the countries in relation to progress in women's autonomy in the region. The final section contains the conclusions of the report.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information, see [online] <http://www.cepal.org/oig/>.

<sup>9</sup> See [online] <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en>.

<sup>10</sup> See the annex to this report [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>. See a detailed description of the approved laws, equality plans and sector programmes on violence, employment and other issues at the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/oig/>.



## I. A context in transformation

### A. Twenty years of change

Girls who saw their mothers participate in the process leading up to the Fourth World Conference on Women are now women themselves, citizens who have inherited a set of rights imagined and dreamed by their grandmothers, as well as owners of a diverse chorus of voices that are questioning, challenging and shedding new light on the challenges at hand. They are witnesses to the changes wrought by the collective action and leadership of a generation of women (and men) who put the issue of diversity on the international policy agenda. The changes produced during the past 20 years are expressed in various dimensions. Without a doubt—as all countries would agree—a new legal framework of rights is now in place that is necessary for the advancement of women. More than a few changes—though still not enough—have taken place for women and girls to fully exercise their rights. Public policies have also taken some important turns especially with respect to violence, political participation and mainstreaming of the gender perspective. Sweeping changes and long-standing entrenched structures make up the new economic, demographic, technology and climate change order in which rights are being fought for.

This progress has taken place against a backdrop of expansive economic, social, demographic and environmental change that must be taken into account in order to comprehend its magnitude and the need for structural transformations to create the right conditions for achieving substantive equality.

As Beijing+20 draws near, the region is in a very different situation from that of the 1990s. Back then, it was emerging from a “lost decade” of low growth, high inflation and balance-of-payment constraints related to foreign borrowing.

Not inconsequentially, China, which was the host country for the World Conference, currently has an economy equivalent to half the combined GDP of the four BRIC countries (Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China). At over US\$5 trillion, its economy has already surpassed the combined size of all the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean (Rosales and Kuwayama, 2012).

Productivity gaps have not changed structurally over the past 20 years and constitute a hard nucleus from which inequality expands, exacerbating skills and opportunity gaps that affect women in particular.

Over the past two decades, the structure of the population has changed, life expectancy has risen and fertility rates have declined, though significant differences between countries persist.

Over the course of implementation of the Platform for Action, the region has undergone the demographic transition and its population has started to age, albeit at very different rates from one area to another. In addition, it has experienced an inexorable process of urbanization and concentration of new forms of poverty in the cities, citizen insecurity, climate change and an awareness of vulnerability to natural disasters, loss of external aid in some countries of the region due to their reclassification as middle-income countries and the imminent fallout from climate change, such as water shortages, which will affect health and food security.

Demographic changes are having effects on the age structure of the population, the incorporation of the middle-aged population into labour market activities that require large amounts of time, and the caretaking time that the population in each country or specific region needs or is able to spend. This aspect, which has an enormous impact on women's rights, has acquired global dimensions and is clearly evident in Latin America and the Caribbean (Durán, 2015).

Climate change is reflected in the Platform for Action in the emphasis placed on the essential role of women in creating sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management. Based on the available evidence, it can now be said that the causes of global warming lie in consumption and production patterns, as well as in the notion of progress and the economic system.<sup>11</sup> Of the 12 critical areas of concern agreed upon, this is the area that has seen the fewest results, as documented by the reports.

The development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) through digital systems is leading to new forms of social organization and production and gradually giving rise to a meta-paradigm known as the "information society" (Katz and Hilbert, 2003), a phenomenon that was not on the Beijing global agenda.

Regarding technology, the Platform for Action proposes greater access for women to all types of technology, which would facilitate their access to employment and more training, and it also calls for the promotion of technologies that facilitate activities mostly performed by women, especially in the home (paragraph 179(e)). In light of the changes in recent decades, this area of concern has been targeted by new approaches (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014) and more evidence and is among the emerging challenges identified in the Santo Domingo Consensus.

Despite progress, structural characteristics such as productive disparities and a host of inequalities are being perpetuated by development models that have favoured the exploitation of natural resources and consumption. Evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its fifth evaluation report demonstrates that production and consumption patterns, the notion of progress, laws and the economic system, all the result of individual actions of people, are at the heart of the global warming threat.<sup>12</sup>

It is increasingly evident that environmental degradation (local and global) disproportionately affects disadvantaged groups, who are more vulnerable to diseases related to this phenomenon (caused by air and water pollution, changes in the patterns of vector-borne diseases and other causes), to disasters related to extreme climate events and to loss of livelihood due to the degradation of ecosystems and natural resources, among other factors. The challenges facing the region to develop with equality and make real progress towards eradicating poverty will be exacerbated by climate change, which imposes new problems and makes existing ones worse, requiring a stronger policy and budget effort by governments, as well as more engagement from civil society and the private sector. In addition, climate change makes it even more important to eliminate vulnerability factors, such as poverty and lack of access to basic services.

<sup>11</sup> See [online] <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>.

<sup>12</sup> See [online] <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>.

While impinging on progress towards greater equality between men and women, the 2008 crisis, considered the worst since the Great Depression in the 1930s (Ocampo, 2009), has fuelled a debate on the breakdown of the prevailing development model in the global economy. A fresh critique of the analytical framework of orthodox economics, which sees the market as the best allocator of resources and disregards the role of the State as regulator and guarantor of rights, argues that it is impossible to build egalitarian societies unless the State assumes a renewed role as a central actor in development. The crisis has also sparked debate on the relationship between paid work, non-paid work and economic policies (Montaño, 2011).

In the Beijing Platform for Action, the economy is understood as a social process in which economics is simultaneously cause and consequence: the degree of access that women and men have to economic structures in their societies and their respective opportunities to exercise power within those structures are considerably different. In most of the world, the presence of women is scarce to nonexistent at economic decisionmaking levels, including in financial, monetary, commercial and other policymaking and in taxation and wage regimes. Given that such policies often influence the decisions made by men and women about, among other things, how they will divide their time between paid and unpaid work in the framework of these policies, the real evolution of these economic policies and structures has a direct impact on their access to economic resources, their economic power, and thus their reciprocal situation at the individual and family levels, as well as in society as a whole (Durán, 2015).

In keeping with the spirit of Beijing, studies and analysis on the analytical framework of policies carried out over the past 20 years<sup>13</sup> have stressed that gender equality must be analysed from a broader macroeconomic perspective. This means pushing what are typically considered the frontiers of the economy beyond the market. The various economic approaches—whether more Keynesian or more neoliberal and despite the differences between them—focus exclusively on production, consumption and the distribution of goods and services, without considering labour and the many activities that fall outside the scope of the market. As a result, those analyses are not only partial but could also be erroneous. If only one part of the reality is taken into account and analysed but under the assumption that it forms the totality, there can be no assurance that the results—whether statistics or policies to be implemented—will be proper (ECLAC, 2010a).

Despite now receiving greater recognition, unpaid and caretaking work are invisible in the countries' economies. Caretaking is understood as the activity of caring for others in the household throughout the life cycle, which requires an enormous amount of time and energy. It consists of indirect caretaking—production of goods and services—but also direct personal care. Whether for reasons of age (either end of the life cycle) or health, a disability or emotional and affective needs, all individuals require care, including people who are healthy.

Caretaking spaces and spaces for production and market transactions are not independent, but rather strongly linked. Work in the market economy allows people to earn the money (basically, wages) needed to purchase goods and services in the market, and caretaking work—together with the money earned in the market economy—ensures not only the existence of people, but also their socialization, attachment and emotional development processes, all of which are needed subsequently to relate to the world and participate in the labour market. In purely economic terms, caretaking work plays an important role in reproducing the labour force, without which such reproduction would be impossible. A calculation of how much everybody would have to earn for the population to be able to subsist and reproduce on income alone, without any type of caretaking, says it all. Accordingly, the market economy depends on developing the caretaking economy, without which the market could not exist (ECLAC, 2010a; Rodríguez and Giosa, 2010; Durán, 2015).

When total working time—paid and unpaid—is tallied in the countries with available information, women are observed to spend more time working than men. Women work a double workday: in addition to their responsibilities in paid employment (which have increased in recent

<sup>13</sup> At ECLAC alone, over 40 publications have been prepared in recent times.

decades), they shoulder the burden of caring for others (children, older persons, the sick and persons with disabilities), keeping house, and performing the social reproduction activities associated with the daily sustenance of the household. The time that women spend on household work accounts, on average, for 40% of total work, which belies the notion that that this is marginal or unimportant work. In addition, women perform between 70% and 82% of all unpaid work in the home, including caretaking. Lastly, if total work is considered, which is to say the amount of time spent on both types of work, women work at least one hour more per day than men in the countries with available data, with the exception of Costa Rica, where the total time worked by men and women is quite similar.

Viewed through a broader macroeconomic lens, the path to equality requires deep structural change and a transformation of the relationships of power between women and men. It is not about incidentally adding caretaking work to the market space, but rather assuming the existence of a complex structure that encompasses both types of work, with both viewed as absolutely necessary for the sustenance of human life, an activity mainly carried out by women. Structural change therefore entails changing the overall structure, modifying production and consumption patterns, redistributing the time, work, and income of everybody —men and women alike— and placing special importance on caretaking work, an impossibility as long as this work continues to go unrecognized and unvalued in society. Likewise, reciprocal recognition between men and women will be impossible until all socially necessary activities for subsistence and quality of life are also recognized.

The Platform for Action did not anticipate that economic growth and declining birth rates would lead to a loss of productivity in caretaking, considering that in households with many children, one person can simultaneously take care of several of them, and older children tend to share babysitting duties with their parents, whereas in nuclear households, caring for an only child is not an activity that can be easily shared or performed simultaneously with other caretaking activities. The same thing is true with older persons: in the case of small or single-person households, the productivity gains that accrue from providing diverse services at the same time (e.g. cleaning, passive caretaking, food preparation, shopping for several people) disappear (Durán, 2015).

Moving into the realm of implementation, during the review period, new management models were developed to reduce poverty and promote employment, education and health for each one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action.<sup>14</sup> The election of women as presidents or heads of State and a significant increase in the participation of women in legislatures have brought about changes in decision-making spheres, including the Armed Forces in some countries, which have opened their doors to women in recent years. In general, this has contributed to policymaking and better implementation.

During the review period, new institutions and myriad national and subnational mechanisms were created. The assumptions of the economic orthodoxy were questioned and gender statistics were developed, illuminating critical dimensions of inequality, particularly through surveys on time use and violence. Media content and languages were revised, expanding freedoms for women, but above all imbuing the notion of equality with a truly universal meaning. Alliances —not exempt from differences of opinion and tensions— between feminist activists, female politicians, and women in the technical elite paved the way for other social actors to join this change process and work alongside the women's movement to tackle the challenges of an increasingly complex world. This transition from the margins to the mainstream has helped improve the response to women's demands and has inspired other social movements.

The consolidation of democracies over the past two decades has formed part of the backdrop for the changes. On the economic front, despite the recent global economic crisis and its serious impact, especially on the Caribbean countries, which should not go unrecognized, the region has enjoyed nearly a decade of relatively strong growth, inflation is under control in nearly all the countries, and in general macroeconomic conditions are stable. Moreover, the region has logged a significant reduction in poverty and a moderate reduction in inequality.

<sup>14</sup> See the annex to this report, Summary of the national reports on Beijing+20 [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

In much of the region, there is still an opportunity to take advantage of the demographic dividend and make the changes needed to lay the foundation for equality and sustainability. Population and economic growth will drive a rapid expansion in demand for energy, water, minerals and food in the decades ahead. Demographic changes will alter the economic strength of countries and the global balance of power and will shape demand for goods and services and migratory flows. The principal consequences of climate change will be related to water shortages, which will affect health and food security.

In addition to macroeconomic challenges and others relating to social protection, education, access to basic services, labour policies, productive development and territorial development policies, there is an urgent need to tackle the dual, cross-cutting challenge of ensuring that development is environmentally sustainable and building physical and economic resilience to the effects of environmental degradation, especially climate change. Steps must be taken to prevent heritage and livelihood losses and ensure that the advances made are not undermined by environmental threats.

Three processes and the interplay between them should be taken into account in analysing implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: first, the international processes sponsored by the United Nations in the 1990s; second, the political and institutional changes that took place at the end of the dictatorships, peace processes, and the rise of democracy; and third, the ongoing involvement of the women's movement in society and within the State.<sup>15</sup>

In that context, the fact that both middle-income countries and relatively less developed countries are facing similar challenges derived not only from the availability of economic or technical resources but also from the dominance of conservative culture, institutional inertia, the weight of religious beliefs in legislative processes and the action of justice and education, which as reported by some countries is expressed in a refusal to approve laws<sup>16</sup> and programmes.<sup>17</sup> To judge by the results, without prejudice to the importance of the achievements, discrimination persists, understood as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women ... of [their] human rights.”<sup>18</sup>

## B. The decade of the 1990s

It bears reminder that the development agenda of the 1990s grew out of the demands of the social movements, especially the feminist movement, and their ability to take their demands for equality and non-discrimination to the international stage. During that decade in Latin America and the Caribbean, feminists had already organized four meetings that made significant contributions to the global agenda.<sup>19</sup> In 1992, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), feminism became visible both on the approved agenda and in the form of the women's portfolio, which proclaimed that “Earth is woman,” opening the door to an collective imagination that also included indigenous peoples and other social actors who agreed on the need to rethink the direction of development.

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<sup>15</sup> The majority of the reports refer to the importance of women's organizations. Ten countries and territories indicate that their Beijing+20 report was prepared in consultation with civil society organizations: Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Mexico, Panama and Suriname.

<sup>16</sup> Paraguay indicates that it has had a difficult time introducing sex education in its schools; the Dominican Republic reports that laws to decriminalize abortion have been blocked; and Chile identifies the decriminalization of abortion as a top priority. It notes, “this prohibitive legal regime denies women many of their human rights and contravenes the recommendations made in this regard by numerous international human rights organizations” (p. 17).

<sup>17</sup> The report presented by the government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia points up the need to create a comprehensive plan for the prevention of teen pregnancy and notes that “one obstacle to these policies are the beliefs of the Catholic Church, which restrict sexual and reproductive rights, though the Plurinational State of Bolivia is a secular nation” (p. 13).

<sup>18</sup> See Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see [online] <http://www.rednacionaldemujeres.org/index.php/84-articulos-principales/163-manifiesto-politico-encuentro-feminista-de-america-latina-y-el-caribe>.



The declarations and programmes of action of the women's movement in the region expressed the willingness of these activists to integrate the fight against all forms of discrimination into their agendas, and their active political participation set them apart from other women's movements in the world.

Although one of the basic agreements had already been established by that time, namely, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of equal importance was the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), which put an end to a male-centric vision of this issue.<sup>20</sup> The recognition that most violations of women's rights occur in the private sphere, that it is the State's obligation to protect their rights and that violence against women is a violation of human rights undoubtedly constitutes another one of the achievements that were integrated into the Platform for Action. It was the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 that consolidated the change in paradigm at the international level.<sup>21</sup> Moving from a demographic approach to a human rights approach to population-related issues was a giant step forward in recognizing the right of women to control over their reproductive and sexual lives. The Cairo conference enabled the international community to legitimize the reproductive rights of women, as a human right and a development issue.

The decade of the 1990s was characterized by the recognition of long-standing demands by the women's movement that meant economic, social, environmental and cultural changes and the corresponding modifications of the institutional and legal framework that governed life in the various countries. This report documents —as did the report five years ago (Beijing+15)— an important transformation in the national legal frameworks, the emergence of new public policy institutions and a slow and uneven evolution in the social and economic indicators.

Twenty years after the Beijing conference, the need persists to “modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” (Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving true equality for women.

Accordingly, the fact that the majority of the reports document achievements and challenges related to the democratization of family relationships, reproductive and sexual rights and the eradication of cultural stereotypes is especially important. Furthermore, five countries identify the legalization of marriage equality and same-sex civil unions as a major achievement in their reports.

Several countries report advances and challenges related to the amendment of marriage laws and to reproductive and sexual rights. Legislation upholding reproductive rights is expressed in part in expanded access to health services, increased availability of contraceptive methods and legislation on elective termination of pregnancy, although five countries in the region (Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua) still prohibit abortion in all circumstances. Considering that 20 years ago, some countries expressed reservations about the concept of family and family rights, these changes point to a major cultural shift away from ideas that give rise to discrimination, as stated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The integration of the gender perspective into public policies is reflected in equality legislation and in the important contributions to the very concept of equality that have been inspired by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. States founded on a clear separation of public and private spheres and on a gender-based hierarchy have proven capable of change.

At the regional level, the regional conferences on women in Latin America and the Caribbean (held since 1977)<sup>22</sup> challenged the unequal gender system, demanding the incorporation of women into

<sup>20</sup> See [online] <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/humanrights.shtml>.

<sup>21</sup> See [online] <http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/offeng/poa.html>.

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/8/28478/P28478.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

political, economic and social life, critiquing gender biases and stereotypes in the culture and media and demanding recognition and respect for reproductive rights, as well as equal access for women to health services, justice, education, resources, the labour market and decent work. At the conferences, the countries have also affirmed their commitment to migrant or refugee women, the preservation of peace and the elimination of violence and discrimination. In terms of economic autonomy, the conferences have called for the eradication of poverty, which mostly affects women, an end to unpaid or poorly paid work for women and efforts to reduce the gender-based income gap and wage discrimination in all areas of work. With respect to physical autonomy, they have recognized the right to sexual freedom, among others rights.<sup>23</sup>

By 2000, results were mixed.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, clear progress had been made in enshrining equality in constitutional terms, eliminating direct forms of discrimination, adapting legal frameworks and creating innovative legislation on issues such as electoral quotas, domestic violence and, to a lesser extent, reproductive rights. There was evidence of greater participation in the labour force, educational achievements and the creation of institutional mechanisms for enhancing gender equality at the national, provincial and local sectoral levels. The widespread adoption of national equality plans was hailed as a positive step. However, on the other hand, it was apparent that “progress is being limited by the symptoms of retrenchment and stagnation being seen in the region” (ECLAC, 2004).

A review of the past 20 years reveals considerable changes. The gender equality agenda and rights-based approach have been integrated into landmark documents including *The future we want*, adopted at the Rio+20 Conference, *Compacts for Equality: Towards a Sustainable Future* (ECLAC, 2014a) and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2013). In addition, the growing participation of young women, indigenous women, Afro-descendent women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals, for example, in official delegations and civil society forums is another positive development. The importance of civil society can be seen, too, in the national reports, with several identifying the implementation of programmes for rural women, indigenous women, home workers, and young women as advances or challenges.

## C. Democracy

The end of dictatorships and the evolution of peace processes in the region, as well as the stability and continuity of democratic processes, have created favourable conditions for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Political changes have generally represented critical moments that come with both opportunities and risks. In several reports, the repercussions of democracy, peace processes, constituent assemblies and reforms of the economic model were opportunities to advance women’s rights.

As inferred from some reports, economic and democratic development, political stability, the creation of jobs and the enactment of laws are conditions for equality provided such processes integrate the gender perspective. Though true that in contexts of conflict, poverty and scarce resources, it is women who suffer the most, based on the data presented in the second part of this report, there is no evidence that prosperity is distributed equitably unless the countries adopt clear policies to eliminate gender biases.

Democracy has been conducive to the adoption of new regulatory frameworks and public policies, especially to put an end to violence against women. Underlying this progress is the international framework of commitments to human rights and the Convention of Belém do Pará in the Americas.

<sup>23</sup> See the consensus documents produced by the regional conferences on women in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/1/28701/P28701.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xslt> and the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/0/4710/index.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> See the Report of the Eighth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lima, 8-10 February 2000) [online] [http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/16730/S0050465\\_en.pdf?sequence=1](http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/16730/S0050465_en.pdf?sequence=1).

The enactment of laws criminalizing gender-based violence and violence against women weakens the public-private dichotomy and leads to legislative, legal and cultural reforms of sufficient magnitude to have long-term repercussions. The creation of new regulatory frameworks has not led to a decline in violence against women, and the evidence suggests that once new legislation is adopted, the main challenge is to provide access to justice, formulate public policy and create institutions capable of effective enforcement. Violence against women occurs against a backdrop of vulnerability and the absence of the social policies that would allow women to escape violent situations. As a priority strategy, recourse to criminal law and the criminalization of behaviours that constitute violence against women is no substitute for the comprehensive social policies needed to tackle this problem. Violence cannot be analysed or addressed without acknowledging its connection to the economic, social and cultural inequalities that characterize relationships of power between men and women and are the result of the unequal distribution of work, especially unpaid domestic work (ECLAC, 2014b).

In the context of democracy, over these 20 years, the election of women as presidents and heads of State in six countries—four in Latin America and two in the Caribbean—points to positive changes in the electoral behaviour of the people. However, women have been less present in other decision-making spaces and only when legally mandated quotas have been successfully applied and rigorously enforced.

As stated in the regional inter-agency report on the Millennium Development Goals (ECLAC, 2010b), “[a]ttaining gender equality means not just enforcing the rights enshrined in numerous international treaties, but developing public policies as well.” Institutional weakness in policy implementation is an obstacle mentioned in the reports and sheds some light on the outcomes.

The existence of parallel processes driven by different rationales and ideals speaks to the complexity of the changes taking place in gender relations: for example, the dominance of market logic, institutional inertia, the spread of the rights-based approach, targeting as a social policy strategy and the new role attributed to the State in the development of society. These changes are the result not only of the will and actions of the actors (feminist movement or institutional machineries for the advancement of women) but also the opportunities and constraints offered and imposed by institutions and the rules governing them in certain contexts. At the same time, the subjects and social actors are those who through their actions reproduce and steer the institutions. Thus, while assistance programmes have contributed to the autonomy of women under certain circumstances, laws against violence have also resulted in agreements and compromises that are disadvantageous to women. This happens because rules are not only protocols, procedures, conventions and roles around which political activity is constructed but also beliefs, paradigms, cultural codes and knowledge mobilized by the actors to uphold, develop or contradict these rules (Muller and Surel, 1998; cited by Guzmán and Montaña, 2012).

## **D. The women’s and feminist movement**

The changes that have taken place cannot be understood without considering the women’s and feminist movement and the indelible role it has played in the region’s progress in the area of equality. As suggested by the 30 feminist meetings that have been held in the region, the women’s movement has been involved since the beginning in the Platform for Action, inspiring, tracking and critiquing, across the board and from within and outside the State alike, national policy advances in this area. Feminism has facilitated the development and implementation of a shared agenda between society and the State, a process that has not been without conflict and tension with political parties and the State, as well as within the movement itself. Despite areas of discord, alliances have been forged that have led to the adoption of public policies and the creation of institutional machineries for the advancement of women.

Feminism has raised challenges to democracy and the political parties. For the latter, democracy is a system governing public life, whereas for feminism, democracy must extend into the family, with policies that guarantee rights for all its members, including the right to sexual freedom. Women won their freedoms not on the backs of others but rather by fighting on their own turf, beginning with their

bodies, seen as a battleground between the State and family, laws, customs and traditions and individual and collective rights. It was the systematic rejection of changes in the family sphere (laws on violence, reproductive health, distribution of time) that inspired militant feminists to seek broad nonpartisan alliances within the parties, through various networks (Montaño, 2007).

With the return to democracy and the peace processes in Central America, feminism re-emerged as a political project in various countries in the region. The achievements in that era were few but important. The National Women's Council was formed in Brazil under the 1988 Constitution; the National Women's Service was created in Chile following the struggle with the dictatorship; and electoral laws were enacted in Argentina establishing quotas for women candidates on ballots. These achievements transcended borders and became models for other countries (Montaño and Sanz, 2009).

Throughout the period covered by this appraisal, the women's and feminist movement and the very machineries for the advancement of women have, to a certain extent, been running against the main current of the prevailing economic, political and institutional models and have cleared a path, laying groundwork and erecting new institutional structures within the States (Guzmán and Montaño, 2012, and ECLAC, 2011). Progress can be seen in the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the abolishment of openly discriminatory legislation against women,<sup>25</sup> the constitutionalization of international human rights conventions and the adoption of laws on equality, laws against violence and an array of rules and regulations inspired not only by the Platform for Action but also the recommendations made in the aforesaid convention.

The consolidation of peace requires the participation of women. The year 2015 marks the fifteenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. This resolution recognized the differentiated effect of armed conflicts and post-conflict situations and insecurity on men and women and established the need to involve women in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding processes. As long as women suffer violence and insecurity, there is no true peace, and this in turn constitutes a premise for development. In order to foster a commitment to gender, peace and security at the national level, the United Nations Secretary-General has invited the countries to develop national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), so that enforceable commitments would be on record, with objectives establishing specific actions, allocation of resources and appointment of responsible parties by a certain deadline. In Latin America and the Caribbean, two countries have prepared plans —Chile (2009) and Paraguay (2013)— and El Salvador is in the design process. In Argentina, there is a sector plan for the Ministry of Defence. These plans represent a multisectoral effort that is consistent with processes to mainstream the gender perspective into public policies, especially in the area of defence.

The feminist movement has acted through nongovernmental organizations and its own networks and forums, helping create a new type of public institutional framework and circulate new ideas and democratic discourse, with institutionally transformative effects driven by alliances with political and social forces but above all by the movement's success in altering the routines of the patriarchal culture and exerting pressure to change relationships of power, so that gender equality becomes a public policy objective (Guzmán and Montaño, 2012). Despite criticism and dissension, alliances were forged that led to the adoption of public policies and the creation of institutional mechanisms. In some countries, there has been a strongly evolving tradition of alliances between the government and women's organizations, as is the case in Brazil, where the Secretariat on Policies for Women institutionalized women's meetings as part of the policymaking process.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See the compilation of final observations by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which urge States to comply with legislation in effect (ECLAC/ACNUDH, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Mexico, Suriname and Uruguay report different types of alliances with varying degrees of institutionalization, ranging from the participation of civil society organizations in mass consultations (Brazil and Cuba) and consultative or advisory councils (Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay) to consultations convened around specific issues such as laws for violence prevention, political participation and issues involving other branches of the government.

Linking gender equality with social policies has enabled the majority of the machineries for the advancement of women to find windows of opportunity to shape those policies. In most cases, prior advocacy made that possible, which points up the importance of collaboration between feminists working within and outside the State.

The universal, historically restricted to powerful groups predominantly comprised of men and members of the ruling and colonial elite, has changed and expanded with the presence of women, who, hailing from all cultures, have found ways to make their voices heard and represent themselves. Indigenous women are the most recent example of emancipation from male authority and one of the main challenges in today's world. In recent years, anti-machismo currents have emerged within the indigenous movements in Ecuador, Guatemala and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Indigenous women, like their Afro-descendent counterparts, have spearheaded the fight for equality with their demands for collective rights.

Acting in various arenas, women have put together equality agendas in indigenous and Afro-descendent communities and also among women from different backgrounds and identities. Afro-descendent feminist leaders have emerged in several countries, including Brazil, where a democratic dialogue has been taking place around recognition and solidarity with the specific demands of black women, whose exclusion has been extensively documented. Indigenous women have also voiced their demand for representation (United Nations, 2004). As a result of this debate, Brazil is advocating the need to coordinate the demands of Afro-descendent women with those of other women in their common struggle for equality. Latin American feminism has led the way in denouncing racial and ethnic discrimination, in order to build horizontal relationships between women.

The sociopolitical changes of the past decades, in which indigenous women and communities have succeeded in positioning themselves as legal persons by redefining their relationship with the State, have led to the creation of new institutional mechanisms for promoting and developing specific policies and programmes to guarantee enforcement of their rights. In the case of both agendas—that is, the community agenda and the women's agenda—there have been advances and setbacks, successes, contradictions and ambiguities, depending on the sociopolitical context, the constitutional framework and the level of commitment by the countries to international agreements. The degree to which gender and indigenous issues have been mainstreamed has varied, since the way in which these considerations are incorporated and appropriated depends on specific conditions in the countries and the region (ECLAC, 2007; Guzmán and Montaña, 2012). Indigenous communities are replete with new social actors, who have risen from the rights campaigns launched on the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conquest of the Americas, which sparked demonstrations and debates in many countries in the region.

Incorporating gender and indigenous concerns into public policies has placed new issues and approaches on the public agenda. In the case of indigenous communities, aspects such as collective and territorial rights, self-determination, full participation and full, free and informed consensus, conservation of nature and biodiversity, as well as multiculturalism, multiethnicity and interculturalism, have been incorporated into public agendas. Meanwhile, issues such as discrimination, racism and intolerance are concerns common to both areas. Recently, both agendas have incorporated new concepts of citizenship: in the case of gender, the concept of emerging citizenship, and in the case of indigenous communities, the notion of diverse and inclusive citizenship, which also encompasses Afro-descendent communities and other ethnic groups (ECLAC, 2013c).

Although only two mechanisms (specific mechanisms and intersectoral coordination mechanisms) can be identified in the institutionalization of gender and ethnicity issues in the region in the area of rights, the actions are designed to promote the citizenship and participation of indigenous women in local and national decision-making spaces, in order to transform the conditions of oppression, exclusion and discrimination that affect them. However, in the majority of the region's countries, there are still sizeable gaps in data on the living conditions of indigenous women, a situation that must be remedied in light of the new obligations of States. Indigenous women, who are subject to both structural

racism and patriarchy, have established channels of communication with other social movements, sharing their struggle and certain demands.

The new millennium has seen a resurgent mobilization among feminist groups in connection with globalization, climate change and the information society, areas in which the ascendant logic seems to be one of subordination and loss of citizenship, as well as recognition. As a result, legitimacy with subordination or empowerment and autonomy would appear to be the dilemma thrust upon the feminist movement, which only governs when it enters the mainstream of democracy through political parties and public policies, and otherwise remains on the outside, making demands and agitating from a declared position of organizational autonomy.

Parallel to the feminist movement, the environmental movement has raised consciousness about environmental issues. Over the course of recent years, environmental laws and institutions have been fine-tuned, and sustainable development has been established as a concept in the context of public policies, defined from three policy pillars: social policy, economic policy and environmental policy. At present, environmental rights and responsibilities are enshrined in the constitutions of most of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, every country in the region has issued general or framework laws in this area, some of which have already gone through reform processes, and these basic laws have been supplemented by legislation incorporating the instruments and principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Every country in the region also has a ministry, secretariat or equivalent institution dedicated to the environment.

The achievements made by the feminist movement in Latin America include parity in political representation (thanks to quotas in many cases); the integration of a cost accounting of unpaid domestic work into public policies; the fight to end violence against women, which has dismantled the wall between public and private in several countries, putting an end to impunity; in the public policy realm, the mainstreaming of the gender perspective; the enrichment of the concept of human rights; the adoption of a notion of discrimination, citizenship and democracy that transcends gender biases; and the right to representation and a public voice to counter those who in private would make women recognized actors but without autonomy. Lastly, in terms of the recognition of reproductive rights and the decriminalization of abortion, important steps have been taken, making way for reflection on the separation between Church and State.

Despite this progress, there are major challenges ahead that will involve confrontations between political and social factions with different ideas about the desired order of society. As multilateralism weakens, the human rights agenda is threatened by the security agenda, which questions the concept of international law and erodes the principle of presumption of innocence as a hallmark of civilization. As inequality is tolerated and security becomes the highest value of the States, laws and regulations come to adopt a punitive approach, a “punish first, try later” mentality. The clock has turned back in the region, and a strain of conservative discourse has emerged that opposes the morning-after pill, rejects abortion and exalts the family alone as a space of protection, threatening to dismantle rights won several decades ago, such as divorce and therapeutic abortion. The ideology of the family as a value, an institution, as unique and immutable form and content has become a rallying cause for conservative sectors. As a result, the weak traces of secularism and religious tolerance are being erased, and there is a strong resurgence in opposition to abortion, the leading cause of maternal death. Against a backdrop of environmental and political insecurity, the equality agenda is losing momentum, with governments focusing on poverty reduction and putting off equality. The challenge for this century is to lock in the progress made thus far and take back, rebuild and prioritize the feminist agenda, coordinating it with the protection of human rights and the sustainability of the planet.



## II. Main advances in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Latin America and the Caribbean

Generally speaking, the situation of women in Latin America and the Caribbean has improved slowly but surely over the past 20 years. However, progress has been uneven and not always in the same areas, making for a very mixed picture. There are significant differences between and within countries, and rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendent women are at a particular disadvantage, experiencing multiple types of discrimination that exacerbate the structural inequalities that characterize the region.<sup>27</sup> Most of the changes that have taken place have made it easier for women to exercise autonomy, but the challenge is to secure this progress against the very real risk of setbacks, whether due to economic, political or cultural causes, which are very clearly noted in the reports presented by the governments.<sup>28</sup>

Women's autonomy —both in their private lives and in the public sphere— is essential for guaranteeing respect for and the exercise and enjoyment of their human rights, as well as for achieving equality. The empowerment and autonomy of women should be understood as separate individual and political processes. Empowerment refers to the process of emancipation and alludes to the individual and collective subjectivity of women endeavouring to act as social actors in public life. Autonomy refers to the ability of individuals to act according to their own wishes, as opposed to the wishes of others. It is a result of empowerment, while also reinforcing it. Autonomy is relative to the context and degree of development of a society. Empowerment amplifies women's voices and is expressed in their ability to engage politically, while autonomy is the result of societal changes to expand women's spaces of freedom and reduce inequality gaps. For purposes of analysis, there are three pillars: economic autonomy (ability to generate one's own income and control assets and resources); physical autonomy (control over one's own body); and decision-making autonomy (strengthening women's voices and the full participation of women in the decisions that affect their lives individually and collectively).

The reports provide evidence of important advances in the legal and institutional framework: the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into policies and political participation, dimensions that carry different weight in each country and therefore produce different results with respect to women's

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<sup>27</sup> See ECLAC (2010d) and the consensuses issued at Quito (2007), Brasilia (2010) and Santo Domingo (2013), as well as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2013).

<sup>28</sup> See the section on data and statistics.



political autonomy. There has been good headway made with policies and programmes to counter violence against women, but the figures on violence are very troubling. There is much work yet to be done in the area of sexual and reproductive rights, and in the meantime the physical autonomy of women is severely constrained. The figures on poverty reduction, increased workforce participation, education and social protection for women are encouraging but marked by striking gender biases and economic policies that do not consider their differentiated effects on the outcomes obtained, as will be described in the respective sections. In general, when the situation of women is compared with that of men in the same socioeconomic, demographic and cultural category, women always appear at a disadvantage, and women living in poverty experience a concentration of the negative effects of all forms of discrimination. A separate point is the development of gender statistics, which are indispensable for conducting gender-differentiated analyses (see the section on data and statistics).

## A. Advances in decision-making autonomy

### 1. Legal and institutional framework

Openly discriminatory laws have all but been eliminated in the region's countries, regardless of income level, one of the most sweeping advances of the period. In some cases, explicit recognition of equality between men and women is a recent development.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, in others, changes inconceivable just 20 years ago have been made, such as adoption of the concept of gender in the institutional regulatory framework, recognition of the diversity of families and marriage reform,<sup>30</sup> which aside from their legal significance, reflect profound cultural change. Argentina's gender identity law (No. 26,742, enacted in 2012), which recognizes the right of all individuals to their self-perceived gender identity, and the marriage equality law,<sup>31</sup> which gives heterosexual and homosexual couples full and equal rights in marriage,<sup>32</sup> are examples of this. Uruguay's marriage equality law,<sup>33</sup> which authorizes marriage between two people of the same sex, and the recently enacted Law 18,987 legalizing elective termination of pregnancy are two further examples. Brazil also recognizes homoaffective families, which involves marriage between two people of the same sex.<sup>34</sup>

Virtually all the reports indicate that the new laws and regulations have facilitated the adoption of policies, while also noting that there is often resistance to these policies owing to entrenched stereotypes, social tolerance for discrimination and the lack of antidiscrimination laws for enforcing them. Indeed, in several countries in the region, the escalating debate fuelled by conservative groups can be regarded as a setback, particularly in the case of laws intended to advance the electoral, education and health rights of women.

Several countries point out the importance that changes have when they are part of constitutional reforms, constituent assemblies, political and economic reforms or peace processes. Otherwise, the lack of synchronization between gender policies and the general direction of political processes is a factor that adversely affects the countries' undeniable efforts and goes a long way towards explaining delays in meeting targets, the constant reappearance of threats to continuity and the difficulty in consolidating changes, whether in the realm of national mechanisms or at the municipal, judicial or legislative level.

<sup>29</sup> For the first time in the Dominican Republic's 166 years of history and after 37 constitutions, the country's 2010 constitution incorporated the principle of equality between men and women and condemned all forms of discrimination.

<sup>30</sup> Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia and Brazil all have some type of marriage equality legislation.

<sup>31</sup> Law 26,618 of 2010.

<sup>32</sup> During the Fourth World Conference on Women, some countries in the region, including Argentina, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Honduras, expressed reservations about the concepts of gender, family and marriage. See the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (United Nations, 1995).

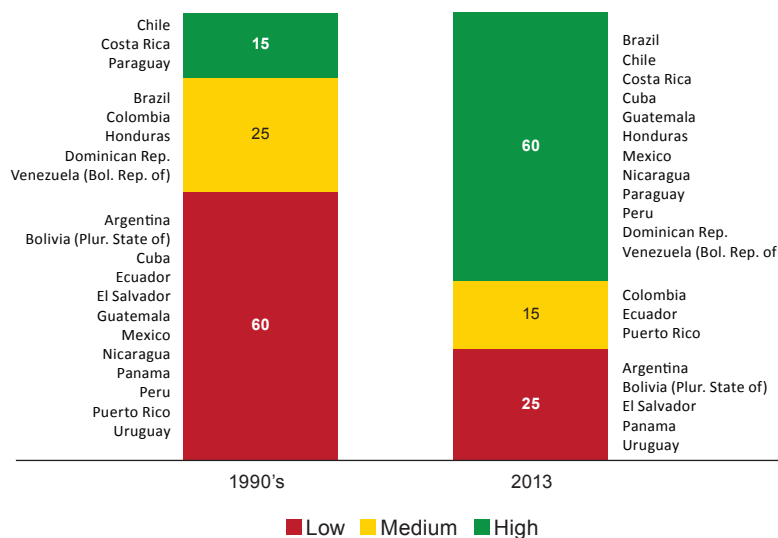
<sup>33</sup> Law 19,075 of 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Resolution 175 of 14 May 2013 in Brazil.

The advances made in the area of decision-making autonomy have come about as a result of institutional reforms in the executive branch, legislative branch, electoral system and justice system. These reforms have allowed for greater representation and participation and, above all, the implementation of explicit gender agendas through plans, policies and budgets.<sup>35</sup> These policies have been possible, in most cases, when the women's movement, political parties and governments have aligned forces to bring them to fruition. On the institutional front, nearly all the countries report the creation of ministries, councils and other entities as an important achievement, and some note progress in efforts to mainstream the gender perspective into development plans, planning processes, decentralization and budgets (CARICOM, 2014).

Despite some setbacks, machineries for the advancement of women have tended to rise in the hierarchy of the executive branch and are increasingly taking on governing, regulatory and policymaking functions, which can be seen as an indicator of the fulfilment of one of the commitments assumed in Beijing (see figure II.1). The legislative establishment of machineries for the advancement of women in several countries reveals the desire within the public-political sector for continuity —often elusive— in this area across changes in government and cabinet restructurings.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure II.1**  
**Latin America: level within governmental hierarchy of national machineries**  
**for the advancement of women, 1990s and 2013**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Legislative recognition of machineries for the advancement of women increases the likelihood of access to resources and a dedicated budget line, but even more importantly, it provides the framework needed to protect the machineries from the customary practice of giving them the role of political operator, project executor or family policy stand-in. Accordingly, in recent years, the adoption of new legal frameworks is helping to dismantle entrenched practices, such as the notion that women's

<sup>35</sup> See the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at [http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/oig/agrupadores\\_xml/aes854.xml&xsl=/oig/agrupadores\\_xml/agrupa\\_listado.xsl&base=/oig/tpl/top-bottom.xsl](http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/oig/agrupadores_xml/aes854.xml&xsl=/oig/agrupadores_xml/agrupa_listado.xsl&base=/oig/tpl/top-bottom.xsl).

<sup>36</sup> Chile, for example, is discussing legislation to convert the National Women's Service into the Ministry for Women and Gender Equity.

programmes should naturally be part of the portfolios of first ladies or welfare agencies.<sup>37</sup> In the Caribbean, machineries for the advancement of women were established following the First World Conference on Women, but most, as indicated by CARICOM, do not have a clear mandate, are thinly staffed and by individuals with little training or qualifications in this area, have scarce access to other government institutions and lack information disaggregated by sex that could be used to formulate public policies and programmes.

Gender policies in Latin America and the Caribbean are defined, first, by legitimacy of origin. Most are the product of mobilized action by women's and feminist organizations, an alliance that endures in several countries and has weakened in others but in all cases is considered desirable and necessary. Second, they are disruptive policies from a cultural and political viewpoint, which frequently necessitates negotiations and advocacy and social engineering to create a more accommodating environment. These policies are evidence of something no less important for being obvious: lack of resources combined with the cultural resistance of decision makers and programme operators often produces threats to institutional stability and thus slows the forward march of women's rights. On more than 10 occasions over the span of 20 years, attempts have been made to eliminate or limit the scope of machineries for the advancement of women by merging them with family policies, limiting them to vulnerable groups or treating them as welfare policies. In most cases, it has been the active mobilization of women's organizations and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean that has forestalled institutional setbacks. This is the context that should inform understanding of the importance placed on institutional hierarchy and on recognition of the specificity of gender policies.

## 2. Policies and budget

With the realization in the 1990s that tracking equal opportunity policies and programmes would require analysing the differential impact of fiscal policies on men and women, as well as observing the behaviour of public budgets in the various stages of the budget cycle, the countries of Latin America have had some success in making gender equality policies more visible in public budgets. This notwithstanding, only a few of the region's countries have allocated significant funding in their budgets for policies to improve or guarantee women's rights.

As a matter of general observation, all 28 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that responded to the questionnaire on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided information on their respective gender-related public spending, in response to the corresponding item on the questionnaire. However, their answers varied, and not all included complete information.

As reported by the countries of Latin America, the public budget resources that are invested in gender equality policies primarily go towards the institutionalization of mechanisms for gender equality, policies to prevent violence and the implementation of gender policies at the sectoral level, which in the latter case has less visibility. This is consistent with the analysis of the budget laws of the countries of Latin America conducted by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, which found that in the case of countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, it is possible to identify discrete lines in the central government budgets for spending on gender equality, specifically for machineries for the advancement of women, violence prevention policies and programmes implemented by the machineries. Furthermore, these countries' budget laws can be analysed to look at

<sup>37</sup> The commitment to establish entities at the highest levels of government has been the subject of several studies (Fernós, 2010; ECLAC, 2011; Montaña and Sanz, 2009; and Guzmán and Montaña, 2012). In summary, 35% of mechanisms for the advancement of women are entities that report to a ministry, which include viceministries, secretariats, institutes, councils or other similar entities; 20% of mechanisms are attached to the office of the president or are led by a person who is directly accountable to the office of the president, which include secretariats, national institutes and other such entities; and 45% are ministries or ministerial-level entities. For more information on the hierarchical level of mechanisms for the advancement of women, see the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/oig/ws/getRegionalIndicator.asp?page=11&language=spanish>

the evolution of expenditure over the available years. Mexico has a budget earmarked for women and gender equality, an affirmative measure that seeks to correct gender inequalities. The countries have moved forward with gender-differentiated budgets based on the understanding that there is no such thing as a gender-neutral public budget. This means incorporating the gender perspective into public expenditure and working to allocate sufficient budgetary resources, identifying their specific use and tracking the budget in order to ensure that the funds are used for the benefit of women, have an impact on inequality and help reduce gender gaps (ECLAC, 2013f). This strategy consists in identifying and spotlighting the funds set aside to address women's demands in various contexts, in order to ensure that the efforts and resources committed by the governments in support of women, including their scale, are plain to see. This transparency also makes it easier to audit government actions to eradicate inequality. This public policy is clearly a step in the right direction in terms of transparency and commitment to public expenditure on gender-related issues.

Brazil has logged one of the most important achievements in this area. In addition to substantially increasing investment in measures to stop violence against women, the 2016 section of its More Brazil, More Development, More Equality, More Participation Plan calls attention to the need to incorporate the gender perspective into budgetary codes and explicitly identify expenditure to prevent gender-based violence, by implementing an effective method for tracking programme costs and actual amounts invested by tagging all gender-related items of expenditure. Recently, Brazil developed a multiyear plan—the Comprehensive Policy Agenda for Women—incorporating every single action called for in its National Plan for Policies on Women (only part of which is implemented by machineries for the advancement of women), such that now these actions can be monitored using the Integrated Federal Government Monitoring System (SIOP) and expenditure for the prevention of gender-based violence can be identified even at the sectoral level.

Budgets for the machineries for the advancement of women are generally stable, and when they increase, it is because the budget for implementation of the violence prevention law increases. This phenomenon has been observed in Brazil as well as in Chile, where the report and the budgets reflect the priority given to gender-based violence.

Colombia, meanwhile, reports that document 161 of the National Council on Economic and Social Policy (CONPES), prepared under the leadership of the Presidential Advisory Council for Women's Equity (ACPEM), clearly identifies the actions taken by the State and the investments it has made at the national level for gender equity, as well as the amounts allocated for specific plans to end violence (CONPES, 2013). Lastly, in the case of Peru, an analysis of the budget law points up actions similar to those taken in Colombia, with the budget laws of both countries providing detailed information on spending efficiency and comparative quarterly data on the budget execution of programmes to prevent domestic and sexual violence.

Based on the national reports prepared by the Caribbean countries for Beijing+20, budget expenditure on gender equality policies is smaller and less visible than in the rest of Latin America, with fledgling initiatives in place in just a handful of countries, including the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and to a lesser extent, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Cayman Islands. These countries' reports provide a clearer picture of the increase in the budget for gender equality in each country, as well as their willingness to develop strategies and methodologies for reporting gender-related public expenditure in a more transparent, systematic and efficient way, which along with the leveraging of resources, constitutes one of the primary challenges for the countries in this region. The Dominican Republic, in its report, describes the increase that has taken place, in the framework of the National Development Strategy, for gender-related expenditure (including the funds received by all the specialized gender agencies created within the different government institutions) in relation to the national budget from 2008 to 2014. Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica are the countries that offer the most irrefutable evidence of having increased their budgets for gender equality, with assurances that they are considering initiatives to prepare gender-sensitive national budget plans for the next several years. In the specific case of Trinidad and Tobago, an action plan

has been created for the next three years to institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting. Jamaica, meanwhile, intends to establish a mechanism to monitor national planning and budget allocations (National Policy for Gender Equality).

In its report, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines states that an interministerial agreement has been established (between the mechanism for the advancement of women and the Ministry of Finance, together with other government agencies) to develop specific training tools for the preparation of a gender-sensitive national budget. And the Cayman Islands introduced, for the first time, a separate budget for gender-related expenditure for 2013-2014, which indicates the percentage of the total government budget for that period that was allocated to this category, with the caveat that the figure is not very representative since, as also occurs in other countries, some line items appear under other government planning agencies and nongovernmental organizations for the promotion of gender equality that are not necessarily aligned with the objectives sought by the particular mechanism for the advancement of women in question. For the period 2014-2015, there is a proposal to conduct a more in-depth review of the gender-related expenditure component. Even though the resulting figure will likely be smaller, the intention is to formalize the way in which national budget appropriations for the promotion of gender equality are determined and to do so in a more precise and rigorous way.

Regarding violence prevention policies in particular, the budget laws in most of the countries contain a dearth of information on the national percentage allocated each year to planned actions for prevention, treatment, punishment and reparation. Although in some cases, specific plans are reported, it is very hard to ascertain the percentage of the national budget that is allocated to programmes for the prevention of violence against women that are executed by the institutions, since the budget laws—neutral on gender—do not always include information on the line items disaggregated by type of expenditure.

In general, a positive development is that the budgets have become increasingly legible over the past 20 years, and despite the clear resource constraints on gender equality pursuits in the region, there is an opportunity and a willingness in some countries to adopt a specific method to conduct systematic reporting on gender-related public expenditure, as well as to better ensure its efficacy, as indicated in the reports by Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Puerto Rico.

However, despite the encouragingly large number of countries reporting (to a greater or lesser extent) gender-related public expenditure, it is important to note the challenge facing the States in their joint efforts to develop simple, shared, standardized methods. These methods should make it possible for all States to track budget appropriations for gender equality, regardless of the level of reporting and budgetary analysis conducted in the countries, in order to move forward in the same direction.

One of the achievements of the institutional framework created in Latin America is that in most cases, equality plans have a legal basis.<sup>38</sup> This is not the case in the Caribbean, a circumstance that as indicated by the reference study (CARICOM, 2014) has not impeded progress but is nevertheless a significant challenge. The participation of civil society and the women's movement in particular is another distinctive characteristic that is complemented by decentralized participatory processes, which, together, have produced an innovative public policy management modality that can be regarded as a contribution to the new forms of public administration. The ministries, institutes, councils and other entities created over the past 20 years, including at the local and municipal levels, should be conceived not only as entities for regulating and implementing national policies but also in many cases as spaces for representing women's demands in government settings that can be resistant to change. In that context, the social participation of women is very important, as noted by Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Grenada, Guyana, Suriname and Uruguay, which report a range of modalities with varying degrees of institutionalization in which civil society organizations participate in mass consultations (Brazil and Cuba), consultative

<sup>38</sup> See the annex Summary of the national reports on Beijing+20 [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

or advisory councils (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay) and consultations convened around specific issues such as violence prevention, political participation and other laws involving other branches of the government.

The majority of the existing plans recognize that gender equality, as set out in the Platform for Action, is not just a social policy issue but rather cuts across all areas of development, but in practice a strong association between gender equality, vulnerable women and social policies is still observed. In the case of the Caribbean, 10 of the 14 countries that were consulted do not have gender policies (5 of the 10 are in the process of developing such policies). In this subregion, the mandate of the machineries for the advancement of women is not part of a legal framework but rather is integrated into action plans, which has, nonetheless, not stood in the way of action in favour of women.

### **(a) Mainstreaming the gender perspective**

Although the creation of institutions with a regulatory mandate is a step in the right direction, many machineries for the advancement of women continue to execute programmes, especially violence prevention programmes, a function that consumes their resources and capacities and prevents them from effectively coordinating policymaking and monitoring. More than 30% of the countries consulted in the Caribbean were spending over half of their time running ministerial programmes instead of making policies, according to the CARICOM study (2014). The same study found that machineries for the advancement of women in the Caribbean have mandates that range from allocating resources for prowomen activities to implementing policies, mainstreaming the gender perspective, fighting violence and providing support for women living in poverty.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective, as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, “is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” (United Nations, 1997, pp. 27-34).

In the majority of the countries, intersectorality and the corresponding need to mainstream gender policies involve challenges related to the structure and management of institutions. Not only has the process over these 20 years not been linear, it has also been conditioned by external restrictions imposed by economic policies, State reforms, the changes wrought by globalization, the hegemony of assistance-based approaches in gender policies and the inherent weaknesses of public policies (ECLAC, 2004). Yet, in terms of types of coordination, the notion of mainstreaming and the understanding that development requires coordinated policies, gender policies offer an important laboratory of experiences, achievements and challenges that are observed and used by activists and those responsible for carrying out environmental, poverty eradication, indigenous rights and other policies.

As indicated earlier, there have been some important legal-institutional advances in this process, including constitutional reforms in several countries such as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (ECLAC, 2012). Another example is the inclusion of gender equality in the national development plans. The Plurinational State of Bolivia is one of the countries that has integrated equality, as constitutionally established, in its National Plan for Good Living (Suma Qamaña),<sup>39</sup> through a strategy with five areas of action to transform the real conditions of subordination and exploitation of women and dismantle patriarchy, colonialism and neoliberalism. Meanwhile, the 2013-2018 National Development Plan incorporates the gender perspective as a cross-cutting strategy.

<sup>39</sup> The dimensions established in the policies are the body, space, time, memory and movement. See the report presented by the Plurinational State of Bolivia [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

Brazil has made important strides in institutionalization for the implementation of public policies. In addition to a legal and constitutional framework that has been in place since the late 1980s, it has developed an institutional and participatory structure over the past 10 years for ensuring that the demands related to women's issues that are made at national conferences are incorporated into a multiyear development plan, with budgetary resources allocated to each of the planned actions. The country has also made headway in integrating gender equality principles into the workings of the government, the institutional framework and the interplay between public policies and the multiyear plans.<sup>40</sup> Colombia's development plan has six interconnected pillars that reflect the primary areas in which women are subject to different forms of discrimination and which require sustained intervention. This country also has an intersectoral commission and a monitoring system.<sup>41</sup> Chile has the Government Programming System of the Ministry of the General Secretariat of the Presidency (SEGPRES), which reviews the status of the government programme and has contributed to efforts to mainstream the gender perspective, inasmuch as it guides each mayor's and governor's office, each ministry and even each service.<sup>42</sup>

Cuba has sought to mainstream the gender perspective through the 1997 creation of the National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference, which sets out 90 measures to be fulfilled by central government agencies to secure social progress for Cuban women. The plan is evaluated periodically at the request of the State Council.

In Uruguay, a pilot experience was launched in 2013 with five government institutions—the Ministry of the Interior (MI), the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), the Ministry of Public Health (MSP), the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works (MTSS) and the National Public Education Administration (ANEP)—for the purpose of promoting the incorporation of the gender perspective into the identification of strategic objectives and indicators for budget planning. This involved joint work with the State Evaluation and Management Area (AGEV) and the Budget and Planning Office (OPP) with personnel in the budget and planning areas of the selected institutions, as well as in the gender mechanisms.

Mexico's most important achievements include the following: the development of a legal and institutional framework for achieving equality between women and men and preventing and ending violence and discrimination; the creation and strengthening of institutions and mechanisms to protect the human rights of women and girls; the allocation of budget resources earmarked for actions to benefit women; and the design and development of statistical tools to reveal inequality gaps between women and men.

Another group of countries has taken steps towards promoting inter-agency coordination as a way to compensate for the absence of planning systems or lack of integration of the gender perspective into national planning systems or national plans. Several countries cite coordination initiatives and engagement in different areas of public policy through integration of the gender perspective into various inter-agency spaces. An indicator of the degree of institutionalization is the existence of budgetary, financial, technical and institutional resources for the mechanisms, as deduced from an analysis of the

<sup>40</sup> Government agencies for women's policies at the state and municipal levels have produced good results. In 2004, 13 locales had such agencies; in 2006, the number had increased to 125; in 2013, it had risen to 603; and in 2014, it stood at 670, with 25 state-level agencies and 645 municipal-level agencies.

<sup>41</sup> The first pillar focuses on peace-building and cultural transformation; the second pillar seeks to guarantee the economic autonomy of women and improve their work-life balance; the third pillar is related to promoting the participation of women in spheres of power and decision-making; the fourth and fifth pillars are concerned with the differential rights approach in the health and education systems, respectively; and the sixth pillar consists of a comprehensive plan to guarantee a life free from violence for women.

<sup>42</sup> Another example is the gender equity system of Chile's Management Improvement Programme, which sought between 2001 and 2013 to improve levels of equality of opportunity and gender equity in the provision of public goods and services and to promote the systematic integration of the gender perspective into all government systems and structures (policies, programmes, processes, personnel, projects, organization and culture), incorporating equity criteria.

reports, except in some cases where resources are observed to be insufficient, to the extent that several countries identify this problem among their challenges, with some continuing to rely on international cooperation to run the mechanisms (see the annex).<sup>43</sup>

## **(b) Political participation of women**

A very important dimension for policy efficacy is the presence of women in all decision-making spheres. In order to strengthen the voice and participation of women, institutional reforms have had to be made in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and in the electoral system.

Argentina set the standard for positive action policies by enacting the quota law (1991) for elections and achieving an important milestone in legislative representation, which coincides with the advances reported by other countries that have succeeded in increasing the participation of women.<sup>44</sup> Over the past 20 years, six democratically elected women have served as president and four have been re-elected to that office, which suggests another positive cultural change, namely, of an electorate far removed from stereotypes associated with the political participation of women, whether of conservatism or strong-arm leadership. In Cuba, 48% of the representatives in the national assembly are women. After 20 years, the principles of parity and alternation have been established in electoral law in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, as reflected in a sizeable increase in the participation of women in the legislature, the executive branch and other government entities. Costa Rica, Mexico, Ecuador and Peru, meanwhile, have made substantial progress in terms of the political participation of women, specifically, a 40% quota that is regulated and adjusted periodically to prevent bias.

Fourteen countries in the region have laws that set quotas for the registration of candidates running for the national legislatures. However, only six countries stipulate the placement of women candidates in electable positions on the slates and ten specify sanctions, although it is not always clear that the electoral bodies have the power to enforce this.

Although many countries in Latin America have enacted quota laws to promote the participation of women in decision-making (especially in political spaces), the same has not occurred in the Caribbean. Guyana is the only Caribbean country that has a quota law to ensure that at least one third of the candidates on the lists presented to the Guyana Elections Commission are women.

## **B. Advances in economic autonomy**

### **1. Income and time: two commodities in short supply**

Women's economic autonomy, a requisite condition for sustainable development, is the result of the ability of women to earn their own income and make use of their time, which allows women—who, in many countries, are more educated than men—to be able to participate effectively in the necessary tasks of transformation of the productive matrix, innovation, the knowledge society and sustainable development in all dimensions.

The region has logged nearly a decade of economic growth, a significant reduction in poverty and an average increase of 10 percentage points in the economic participation of women, who are still a long way from the full economic participation enjoyed by men. The majority of the countries have

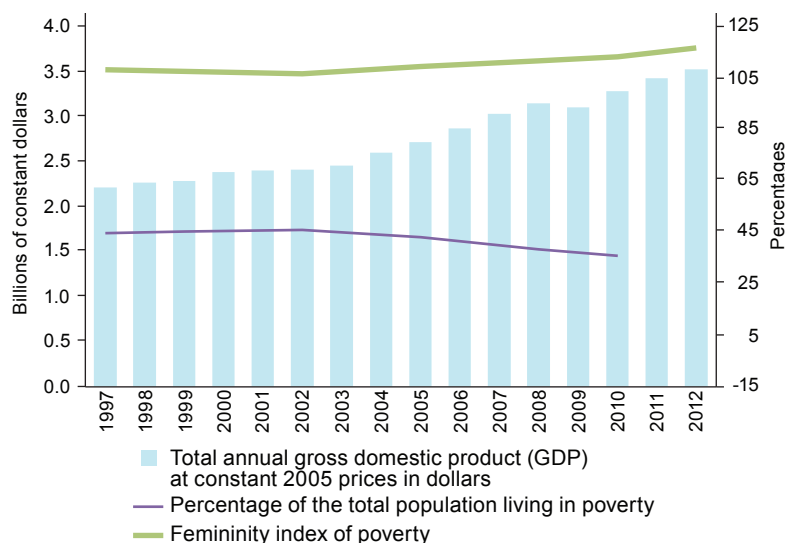
<sup>43</sup> See the annex to this report, Summary of the national reports on Beijing+20 [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

<sup>44</sup> See the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.



taken some initial steps towards less concentration of income. Since 2002, the gap between the highest and lowest income distribution quintiles shrank in 14 of a total of 18 countries, while the Gini index fell by at least 5% in 11 countries. All told, the inequality ratio remains such that the average income of the wealthiest 20% of the population is 20 times higher than that of the poorest 20%, according to ECLAC data (see figure II.2).

**Figure II.2**  
**Latin America and the Caribbean: poverty, femininity index of poverty and GDP**  
*(Billions of dollars at constant prices and percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulation of household surveys conducted in the countries.

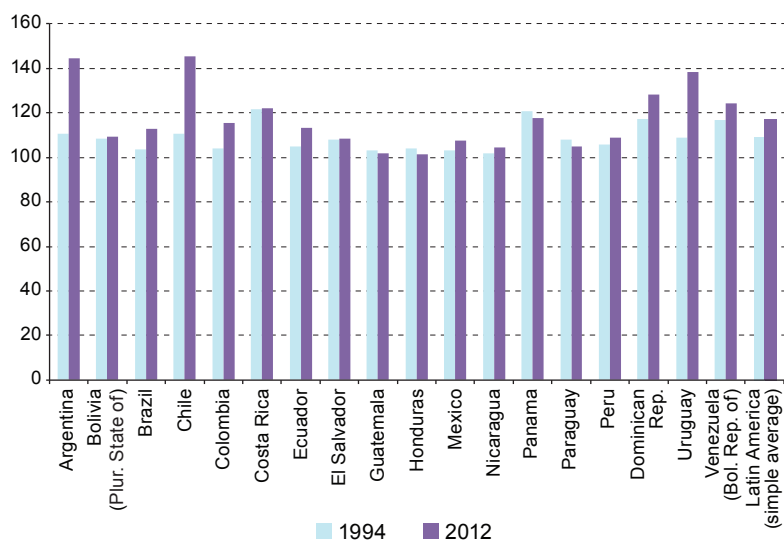
Real headway has been made in reducing poverty and expanding education coverage, but progress has proven elusive in the area of employment policies and institutions, as well as in implementation or strengthening of public employment systems structured and coordinated with economic policies (ILO, 2013a). The biggest challenge, though, lies in redistributing dependent-care responsibilities among the State, the market and adult male household members. Paragraph 155 of the Platform for Action states, “Insufficient attention to gender analysis has meant that women’s contributions and concerns remain too often ignored in economic structures, such as financial markets and institutions, labour markets, economics as an academic discipline, economic and social infrastructure, taxation and social security systems, as well as in families and households. As a result, many policies and programmes may continue to contribute to inequalities between women and men. Where progress has been made in integrating gender perspectives, programme and policy effectiveness has also been enhanced.”

From a knowledge standpoint, in 1995, the year of the Beijing conference, sufficient knowledge was available to improve economic analyses and practices, including the explanatory value of unpaid work (Durán, 2015), which painted a much broader picture of the economy. Along with global agreements, the consensus adopted at the regional conferences on women in Latin America and the Caribbean have added to the body of analysis and helped bring new approaches on labour and development to the fore. The areas in which the policies applied over the past 20 years have fallen short cannot be attributed to lack of knowledge, but rather are more related to a weak social and institutional structure and certainly to the relatively anaemic role of women as protagonists and active participants in decision-making and actors in charge of public policies.

**(a) Women and poverty**<sup>45</sup>

As illustrated in figure II.3, all the region's countries have reduced the proportion of women living in poverty. However, progress has varied across the region. Countries including Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, which had poverty rates well below the regional average in 1995 and have logged major advances in reducing overall poverty over the past 20 years, are also the countries that have seen the steepest rise in the femininity index of poverty and a disproportionate burden of poverty on urban dwellers. Panama, which also had poverty rates below the regional average, has succeeded in lowering the femininity index of poverty despite not having significantly reduced overall levels of poverty. However, the situation of the rural population in Panama stands in stark contrast, with rural poverty rates 218% higher than urban rates, a gap that has growing over the past 20 years.

**Figure II.3**  
**Latin America (18 countries): femininity index of poverty, around 1994 and 2012**  
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulation of household surveys conducted in the countries.

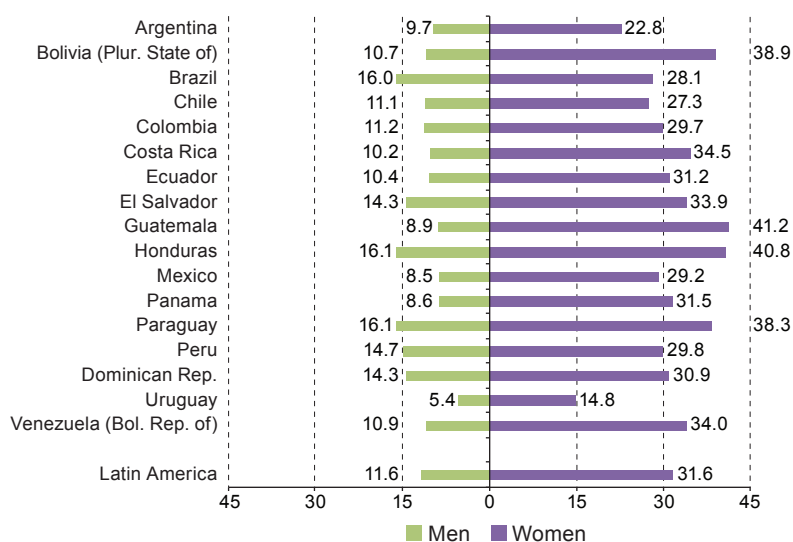
The Plurinational State of Bolivia has succeeded in reducing the proportion of women living in poverty by 40% over the past 20 years, but this progress has not been uniform across the country. Feminine poverty rates in the countryside, which were about 50% higher than in the cities in 1995, have soared to over 100% higher today. Another country in a similar situation is Peru, which despite having lowered the feminine poverty rate from 47% to 24%, has been witnessing a widening urban-rural gap. As of 2012, the feminine poverty rate in urban areas of Peru stood at 15%, whereas the corresponding rate in rural areas of the country was 51.8%, or 248% greater than in the cities (see figure II.3).

At the other extreme are countries such as Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras, where poverty rates have remained consistently higher than the regional average since 1995 and progress has been very slow. The Dominican Republic, too, has a large proportion of people living in poverty and has made little headway in this regard since 1995, a situation that disproportionately affects women (the feminine poverty rate is 28% higher than the masculine rate).

<sup>45</sup> The annex lists the countries whose reports include indicators such as the percentage of women living in poverty and indigence and the percentage of female heads of household. They include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Grenada and Uruguay.

However, despite detecting these gender-based differences, the income poverty measure is not a good indicator of the differential situation of men and women, inasmuch as it is based on the assumption that total household income is equitably distributed among household members. A more illustrative measure is the proportion of women without own income in the region (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). In the majority of the countries of Latin America, women make up a significant portion of low-income groups (see figure II.4). Regionwide, one in three women does not have her own income, compared with one in ten men in this situation. Variables such as age and civil status also have implications for poverty, as indicated in Suriname's report, which describes how older adult women with an employment background in the informal sector are more vulnerable. Suriname also reports on the adverse effects of customs and traditions that restrict access to rights. Antigua and Barbuda identifies household size, migration, education and geographical location as factors that exacerbate poverty.

**Figure II.4**  
**Latin America (17 countries): population aged 15 and over without own income, by sex**  
(Percentages)

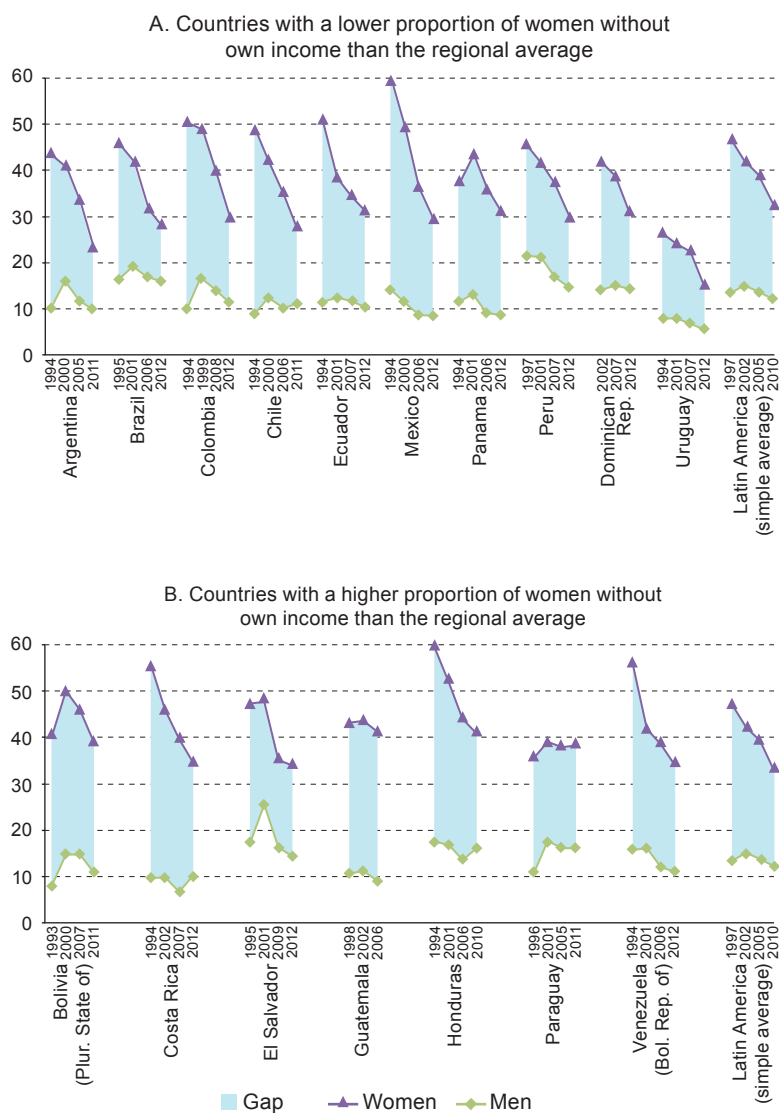


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulation of household surveys conducted in the countries. The data are national, except in the case of Argentina, where the data correspond to urban areas. The data are from 2012, except in the case of Chile (2011), Guatemala (2006), Honduras (2010), Paraguay (2011) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2011).

Matters are worse in the countryside, where the percentages of women without own income are much higher. Countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and the Plurinational State of Bolivia have the largest urban-rural gaps in the proportion of women without own income. Ecuador and Mexico are the only countries in the region where the proportion of women without own income is larger in cities than in the countryside.

Figure II.5 shows the evolution of this indicator since the Beijing conference, providing further evidence that progress has been uneven. Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia significantly reduced both the proportion of women without own income and the gender gap between men and women without own income. In Peru, despite a decrease in the number of women without own income, the gender gap has remained unchanged. At the other extreme, Guatemala, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia have made the least progress in both regards.

**Figure II.5**  
**Latin America (17 countries): population without own income, by sex and gender gap, 1994-2012**  
*(Percentages)*



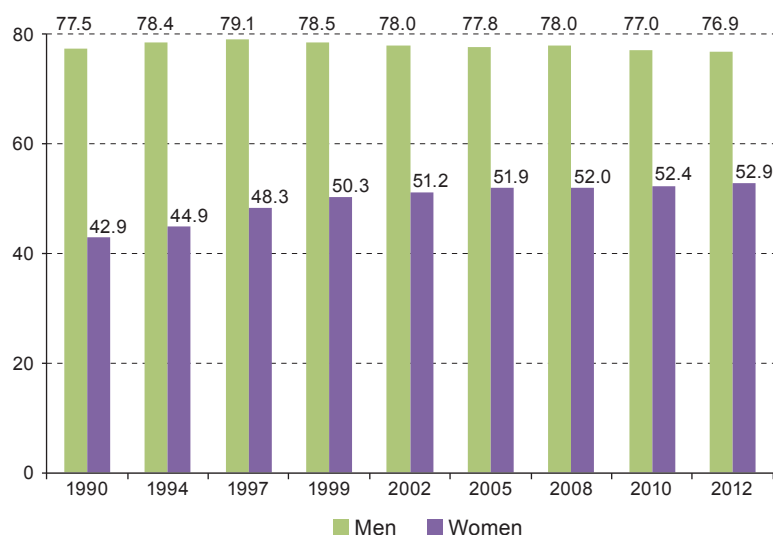
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulation of household surveys conducted in the countries.

## (b) Women and the economy

The incorporation of women into the labour market has proceeded in all the region's countries at different rates and intensities over the past decades. The defining characteristics of female labour participation continue to hold true: women with higher levels of education, fewer family duties and more resources to pay for caretaking services have the highest rates of economic participation (see figure II.6) (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). A comparative analysis of female and male participation shows that over the past 20 years the structure of the labour market has remained unchanged and that based on data on time distribution between women and men, the costs of labour force participation

have been individually borne by women. As described in the corresponding section, public policies have come up short in terms of improving conditions of access and permanence for women in the world of paid work.

**Figure II.6**  
**Latin America (simple average for 18 countries): economic participation**  
**rate of the urban population, by sex, 1990-2012**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures.

A commitment was made in the Platform for Action to expand knowledge of the informal or unstructured sector (paragraph 206 (e)) and all forms of work and employment (paragraphs 206 (f) and (g)) by improving data and methods. Both in this document and in the regional consensus (Durán, 2015), caretaking takes on an explanatory dimension drawn from extensive literature on the subject.

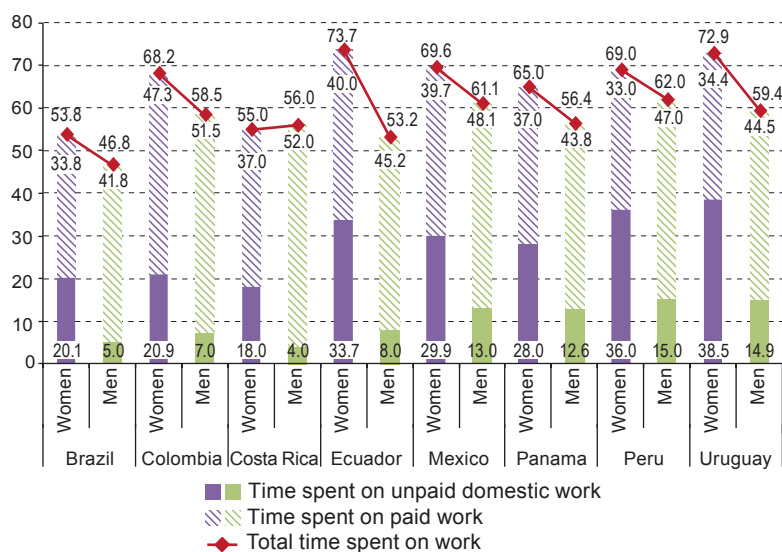
The supply of paid work is regulated by, among other things, the negotiation within households of the distribution of unpaid work for the daily care and sustenance of the household among its members, by sex and age. Specifically, it is regulated by the allocation of time to paid work and unpaid work. The individuals —mainly women— who take on the unpaid work free up potential workers from caretaking duties. By measuring and comparing the amount of time spent on caretaking by women and men, new evidence has been generated on inequalities rooted in the family. Time-use analysis has made it possible to estimate the economic value of caretaking and its contribution to national wealth, while seriously questioning the analytical vacuum that exists in traditional economics on this subject. Although female participation in employment has risen in recent decades, it has stagnated since the early 2000s, and today half of all Latin American and Caribbean women have no ties to the labour market. On average, the feminine labour force participation rate in Latin America stands at 49.8%, which means that one in two women of working age has or is actively seeking paid work (ECLAC, 2013b).

Considering paid work only, women work fewer hours per week than men on average. In 2011, women worked an average of 38.2 hours per week in the labour market and men worked 44.8 hours

(Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). Incorporating the gender perspective into economics has demonstrated, among other things, that work cannot be reduced to paid employment (Durán, 2015). From this perspective, a number of studies have emerged that look at forms of non-employment work, such as unpaid domestic work and volunteer work, and underscore the importance of these types for work for economies and societies. Unpaid work is defined as work done by members of a household to produce goods and services for family consumption, such as caretaking and domestic chores.

In every country in the region with available information, women spend at least twice as much time on unpaid work as men and as much as four times as much time in the case of countries including Brazil, Costa Rica and Ecuador (see figure II.7). This heavy load of unpaid work prevents women from participating in decision-making, advancing their careers and taking advantage of professional opportunities, which in turn reduces their income and prospects for access to social protection.

**Figure II.7**  
**Latin America (8 countries): time spent on total work, paid and unpaid, by the economically active population aged 15 and over, by sex, latest available year**  
*(Hours per week)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of tabulations of time-use surveys.

Among the employed population, the gender gap is expressed in segregation in certain sectors of activity, the distribution of women by occupational categories and wage differences.

An analysis of occupational categories shows that women work in more precarious positions for less pay. Women make up a small proportion of wage earners, and more than one in ten (11.6%) work in domestic services, which continues to be a precarious and poorly regulated sector (ECLAC, 2013a), whereas in the case of men, the proportion is negligible (0.5%) (see figure II.8). In terms of social protection coverage, the *2013 Labour Overview* (ILO, 2013b) pointed out the enormous discrepancy in enrolment in pension and health systems between the wage-earning and non-wage-earning employed population. In the countries with low overall enrolment levels, the individuals most affected are those working in microenterprises and domestic services.

**Figure II.8**  
**Latin America (18 countries): employed population by occupational category**  
**and sex, urban areas, around 2012**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures.

Over the past 20 years, the proportion of women employed in domestic services has fallen from 15% to 11.6%. Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia offer interesting examples as two countries that have reduced this proportion by over 40%, joining the group of Latin American countries with the lowest proportion of women employed in this occupational category. At the other extreme, Costa Rica has the highest rate in the region, with the proportion of women employed as paid domestic workers having climbed 60% over the past 20 years.

One in five women is an own-account worker, most in the business or services sector owing to the low start-up capital requirements. Although the own-account category can include formal businesses, it generally refers to the informal market in the case of this region. For women, particularly those from poor households, own-account work offers an alternative that enables them to generate income and strike a balance between access to economic goods and household tasks, since their businesses are usually an extension of the goods and services produced in the home. The own-account category also includes microenterprises run by women, who encounter few entry barriers in this sector (ECLAC, 2013a). Many have launched microenterprises in response to the lack of opportunity in the labour market and the need to earn their own income. Gender also comes into play in the accumulation of assets and human capital and in the interfamily allocation of resources and childcare responsibilities. Often, these businesses obscure situations that are precarious in terms of income, the productive life of the businesses, workdays, regulation and social security. Women who are poor and less educated are generally the ones employed in own-account activities focused on the internal market, with very little participation in export activity. Despite the large number of women in the services sector, export promotion agencies generally provide support for products, not services, placing women-led businesses at a disadvantage from the start. Microenterprises run by women are regarded as particularly important for the social fabric of developing countries, as women tend to spend their income on the education, health and well-being of their families and communities. However, despite their increasing participation in the economy, women have not yet achieved parity in the world of business, and typically their businesses are smaller and grow more slowly than those run by their male counterparts.

A study conducted in 2010 by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) concluded that women entrepreneurs are economic actors who should be, but are not yet, fully integrated into an economic agenda in the region's countries, arguing that it is a mistake to apply the same types

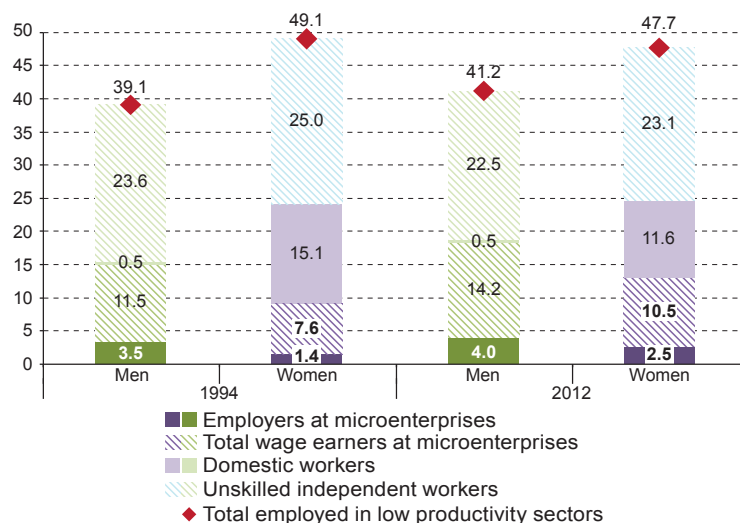
of public policies to promote micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) run by men and women, but it is also a mistake to maintain separate agencies in each country for developing policies on MSMEs and developing policies on women. The SELA report (2010) recommends that the policies adopted by the region's governments to promote gender equity in economic activity generally and in the business and MSME sectors specifically should be rooted in an economic development approach that truly maximizes their potential to create wealth. The study makes a number of salient points: (i) the policies and programmes for women entrepreneurs were developed by institutions or ministries for women, which has not always allowed for links to the productive sector; (ii) the measures that have gained the least traction in the region for addressing the issue of gender equity and MSMEs have been those tied to policies by the ministries of production or economy; (iii) women-owned MSMEs must be part of comprehensive national MSME policies that further their development through differentiated tools and projects; and (iv) in both the public and private sectors, the tools used most in the region to promote gender equity through MSMEs are related to access to microcredit, training for the administration of microenterprises and small businesses, marketing support through participation in fairs and expositions of women entrepreneurs, the creation of networks of women entrepreneurs and the development of projects for low-income women, especially in rural areas; however, these tools are not clearly coordinated and in most cases are isolated projects.

In addition, given that the majority of women-owned businesses are in the services sector, specific policies are needed to develop this type of activity, as well as to promote the incorporation of greater value added into those services. This will only be achieved through education and training.

There is a major gap in access to credit, inasmuch as banking authorities and commercial banks have yet to establish conditions and financial instruments that give female entrepreneurs access to large long-term loans at affordable interest rates. Microcredit is a good start but will not suffice as only financial instrument used to promote development and growth. A strategy based on microfinance alone will limit the development potential of these businesses.

From a business perspective, in which low productivity sectors are defined as those consisting of employers or wage earners at businesses with up to five employees, domestic workers or unskilled independent workers, 47.7% of women in the region are observed to work in jobs that are precarious in terms of wages, duration in time, social security and other factors (see figure II.9).

**Figure II.9**  
**Latin America (weighted average): urban population employed in low productivity sectors**  
**(informal sector), by sex, around 1994 (16 countries) and 2012 (18 countries)**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures.

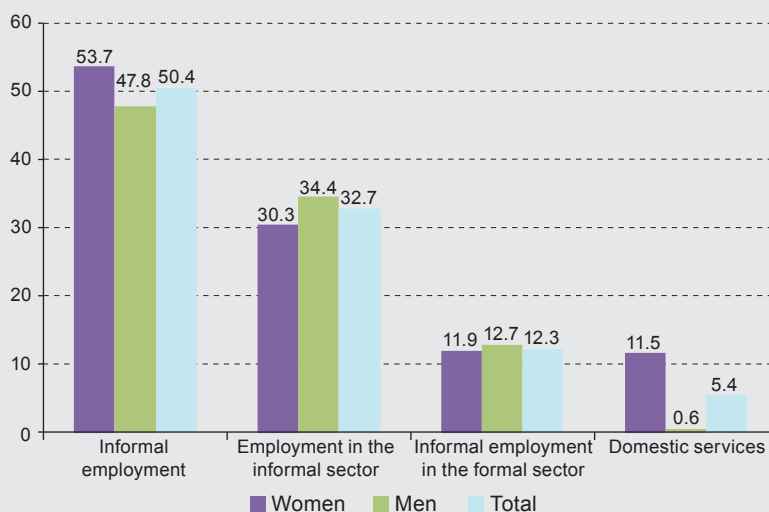


### Box II.1 Informal employment

Informality continues to be a major challenge in the region, affecting many people, regardless of whether they work in the informal sector or the formal sector. Whereas most informal employment among men is concentrated in the informal sector, informality affects women regardless of whether they work in the formal or informal sector. In other words, the majority of men who work under informal conditions are employed in the informal sector, owing in most cases to the fact that the composition of the informal business sector is diverse and in practice consists mainly of microenterprises of ownaccount workers and informal microentrepreneurs who are not registered. The main obstacle is insufficient capital and the small scale of their operations, which makes it hard for them to achieve sufficient levels of productivity to cover the costs of formalizing their businesses. In the case of women, informality in the formal sector stems from regulatory violations (either due to ignorance of the law or inability to cover the cost of a formal position).

In the 16 countries in the region with available information, informal employment is a larger source of jobs for women than for men, except in the case of Argentina and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that a large portion of jobs in domestic services, which are mainly filled by women, are informal jobs. For example, in Brazil, of an estimated 15.9 million women working in informal jobs, nearly 5 million work informally in homes (ILO, 2011). However, with respect to employment in the informal sector, most countries in the region (12 of 16) report a larger percentage of men employed in the sector than women.

**Latin America (16 countries): composition of informal employment, around 2010**  
(Percentages of non-agricultural employment)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of household surveys conducted in the countries.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Labour Organization (ILO), *Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture*, Geneva, 2002.

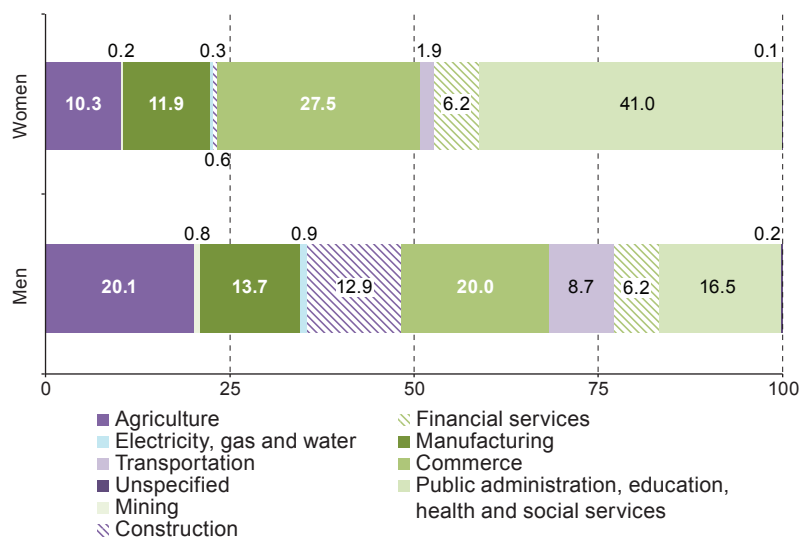
Another area of interest is segregation by sector of activity, which along with the distribution of women by occupational category, shows the gender gap in labour force participation. In terms of sectors of activity, the level of concentration among women is much more pronounced than among men, with nearly 70% of women working in two sectors: public administration, education, health and social services (41%) and commerce (27.5%). Meanwhile, the two largest sectors of activity for men are agriculture and commerce, each with a 20% share of the total (see figure II.10).

As mentioned in ECLAC (2014a), structural labour gaps have proven stubbornly persistent. Structural diversity drives a strong degree of segmentation in the job market, which largely translates into income inequality in households. Using the ECLAC sectoral approach to reveal differences in

female employment across sectors of economic activity, three groups were identified based on average labour productivity (in purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars):

- (i) The low-productivity sector, including agriculture, commerce and personal and social services.
- (ii) The medium-productivity sector, including construction, manufacturing and transportation.
- (iii) The high-productivity sector, including financial services, electricity and mining.

**Figure II.10**  
**Latin America (weighted average for 18 countries): employed population,**  
**by sector of activity and sex, around 2012**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures.

Over the past 20 years, Latin American women have been moving into high-productivity sectors, albeit very slowly, increasing their rate of participation from 2.4% in 1994 to 6.8% in 2012. This increase is largely due to women entering the financial sector in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Uruguay.

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, female participation in medium-productivity sectors is greater with over 15% of women working in manufacturing in these countries.

Among women employed in low-productivity sectors, some work in agriculture, at a rate of one in ten employed women in the region. In countries such as Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru, the rate is one in five women, and in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, one in three women work in this sector. According to the ILO regional report (2013a), a large proportion<sup>46</sup> of women work as unpaid family members, earning no income for their work, which places them at a disadvantage and makes them dependent on men.

<sup>46</sup> According to ECLAC calculations based on special processing of household surveys, an estimated 33% of employed women work in the agriculture sector, with extreme cases in countries such as Guatemala, Panama, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where over half of women employed in the agriculture sector are unpaid family members.

### Box II.2 Support for women in rural areas

Rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean play a very important food production role in the context of family farming, but many work in precarious conditions with no guarantee of their basic labour rights. According to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), approximately 121 million people live in rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, or roughly 20% of the total population. Of these rural dwellers, 48% are women and about 20% are indigenous.

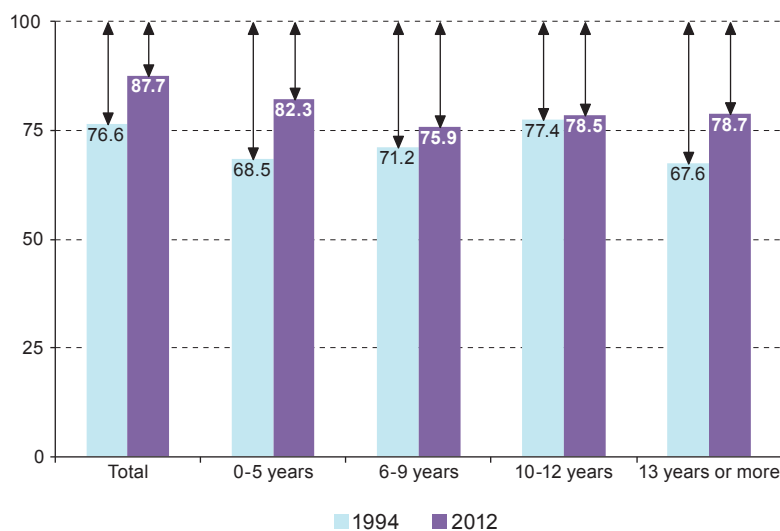
Despite progress, rural women live in conditions of social inequality, which is expressed in economic terms and translates into less access to land. Women hold barely 30% of individual land titles and receive 10% of rural credit and just 5% of technical assistance.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of national reviews on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) for preparation of the regional reviews and appraisals scheduled for 2015 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference (Beijing+20), 2014.

One of the most documented facts in the studies on gender gaps in the labour market is the existence of a wage penalty for women. There may be various contributing factors: the sexual division of domestic work in the home, employer discrimination, educational segregation prior to entry into the labour market and other factors associated with social and cultural norms (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014).

Even though the income of both male and female workers increases proportionate to years of schooling and the income gap between men and women has narrowed as incomes have risen among employed workers with stronger educational credentials (ILO, 2013a), the wage gap between male and female workers with postsecondary schooling (more than 13 years in the formal education system) is among the most pronounced, with women earning just 78.7% of what their male counterparts make on average (see figure II.11).<sup>47</sup>

**Figure II.11**  
**Latin America (simple average for 18 countries): average wage of female urban wage earners aged 20 to 49 years, working 35 hours or more per week, as a proportion of the wages of men in the same situation, by years of education, 1994 and 2012**  
(Percentages)

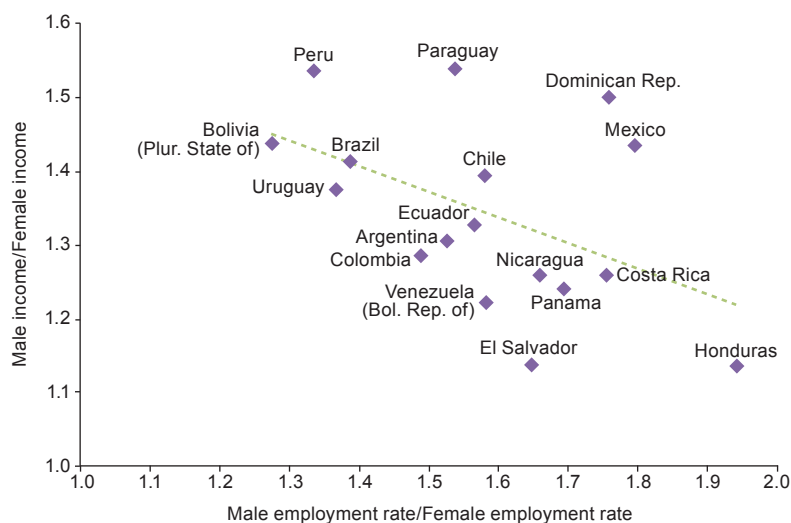


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures.

<sup>47</sup> This is related to gender-based occupational segmentation in the labour market, i.e. women with postsecondary education are heavily concentrated in lower-paying occupations with fewer opportunities for advancement and promotion.

Over the past 20 years, progress towards greater wage equality has varied significantly from one country to the next, with Peru and the Dominican Republic representing extreme cases, where instead of shrinking, the gender gap has expanded. The Dominican Republic, though, has also taken the important step of equalizing wages for men and women in primary and secondary education. At the other extreme, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Costa Rica and Ecuador are countries in which the wage gap between men and women is less than 5% (see figure II.12).

**Figure II.12**  
**Latin America (17 countries): employment and pay gaps between men and women, around 2012**  
(Proportions)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

A look at the negative correlation between the employment gap and the income gap between men and women reinforces the assumption that there is a significant selection process at play with respect to female employment in the region (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). Due to gender stereotypes, the lack of affordable quality caretaking services, hostile business cultures and lack of on-the-job training opportunities, women work in precarious jobs with few labour and union rights and poor prospects for improving their wage situation. Thus, attempting to close gender gaps through a narrow application of econometric and policy efforts is futile; these efforts must also consider the other forms of discrimination that women experience when they attempt to enter and compete in the labour market. It is necessary to look at the complete picture and focus on policies that promote decent work and enable women to fully exercise their economic autonomy, develop and use their capacities and gain access to social protection, credit, investments and new technologies.

As noted in *Compacts for Equality* (ECLAC, 2014a), participation in pension systems has increased over the past decade, and on average the percentage of social security contributors is similar among men and women in Latin America. But there are differences at the country level, with men being significantly more likely to contribute in Argentina, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. By contrast, in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua, the reverse is true: women are more likely to contribute to social security in a context of very low contribution rates.

The countries with the largest differences between men and women in the employment rate show smaller differences in the contribution rate, or even a higher contribution rate among women. This suggests that women who manage to enter a labour market with low rates of female employment are likely to be contributors, which also suggests that more educated women participate more in employment and are therefore better positioned to be contributors.

### **(c) Main achievements in education related to women in Latin America and the Caribbean**

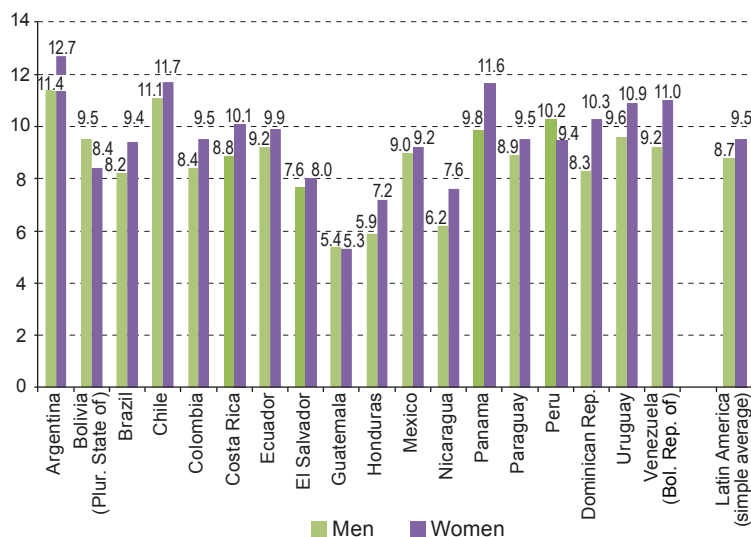
In the national reviews prepared by the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, several countries highlight education for women as a main achievement. Proportionally, more Caribbean countries report this achievement. Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago cite universal education coverage—mainly primary education—as an achievement. In addition, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname mention that the rate of female participation in higher education is much higher than the rate of male participation. Chile, Grenada and Panama refer to protection or assistance programmes for pregnant teenagers to continue their education. Sexual education (Chile) and awareness about relationships and gender perspectives (Cuba) have also been promoted. Implementation of Law 6 of 2000 in Panama has been of special interest, inasmuch as it establishes the obligation to incorporate the gender perspective into the language, content and illustrations of school materials and textbooks as a proactive intervention to eradicate discriminatory practices based on gender and to promote equality between men and women in scholastic materials.

Lack of access and inequalities in education have a negative multiplier effect by reproducing disparities throughout an individual's working life through differences in the rate of return on educational achievements and in the quality of employment, which is largely determined in turn by educational level. These aspects also reproduce differences in the ability to exercise citizenship, which includes disparities in access to social networks and the full exercise of rights (Scuro and Bercovich, 2014). The region has fulfilled the second Millennium Development Goal, in the area of education, a modest achievement that has especially benefited women in rural areas, but there is a long way to go in terms of tapping the full potential of education to help women participate in the labour market and to tackle challenges related to sustainable development. The small number of countries reporting curriculum changes and policies to promote science and technology education for girls is striking, but fewer still report actions within the sector to create a culture of equality. Most educational campaigns are education ministry initiatives for teacher training that do produce reportable results in the education sector.

Illiteracy levels among the population over 15 years of age in the region are quite low, with the exception of a handful of countries, including Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Yet, despite progress, major inequalities persist. Women living in rural areas have limited access to education in every country in the region, and the illiteracy rate among rural women is 66% higher on average than among urban women. These inequalities are starker in countries such as Mexico, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. And when the digital divide between men and women is analysed in the context of the changes that have occurred in the digital age, many education-related challenges are revealed, which, if resolved, would help close the gaps between countries and prevent the emergence within them of yet another obstacle to the participation of women in the economy.

Over the past decades, average years of schooling among economically active women have increased in all the region's countries. However, there are still striking differences from one country to the next: the average years of schooling in this population ranged from 12.7 years in Argentina to 5.3 years in Guatemala (see figure II.13). The countries that have made the swiftest progress are Argentina, where the average for this group rose from 9.6 years to 12.7 years today; Brazil, from 6.3 years to 9.4 years in 2012; and Peru, from just 6.3 years in 1994 to 9.4 years (the same as Brazil) in 2012. More alarming than the differences between countries are the differences within them. For example, in Guatemala, urban women attend an average of 6.8 years of school (i.e. they complete primary education) but their rural counterparts attend for not even 3 years. Similar situations are observed in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru, where urban women attend about 10 years of school on average, compared with not even 5 years for rural women.

**Figure II.13**  
**Latin America (18 countries): average years of schooling completed by the economically active population over 15 years of age, by sex <sup>a</sup>**  
*(Years)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulation of household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

<sup>a</sup> National data, except in the case of Argentina, where the data correspond to urban areas. The data are from 2012, except for Chile, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2011), Honduras (2010), Nicaragua (2009) and Guatemala (2006).

The labour structure has not changed in 20 years, though gaps have in fact been shrinking. The traditional reasons given —lack of education among women or hours worked with pay— fail to explain why it is that 20 years after the Beijing conference, women, having attained higher educational levels, continue to work in the most precarious jobs and for longer hours than men without social or economic recognition. This lends urgency to efforts being made by countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico and Uruguay to raise the profile and quantify the total work done by women and men in order to develop comprehensive caretaking and employment policies. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, measuring the economic value of unpaid work is constitutionally or legally mandated. El Salvador is developing legislation for the valuation of unpaid work.

Most of the countries report advances in the area of education, but women continue to come up against discrimination-based barriers to entry in the formal labour market despite their gains in educational attainment. This dilemma is one of the structural problems facing the region. Pro-women policies have been neutral on economics, focusing instead on social measures for the most vulnerable women and generating positive actions in the electoral arena and, in general, short-term, short-lived solutions.

## 2. Public policies: neutrality, positive action and short term

In 1995, the region was experiencing the aftermath of the financial crisis, a decline in private investment and low economic growth. Inflation indicators were trending downward following the implementation of adjustment measures in several countries, while labour conditions deteriorated, unemployment rose and real wages fell. The Platform for Action noted that the structural adjustment programmes had been poorly designed and executed, to the detriment of social development.

Back then, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) already recognized the important contribution that women were making to family income as they increasingly participated in economic activities: in households where both members of the couple had paid work, the woman contributed 30% of family income. Moreover, it was already calling attention to the problems of occupational segregation, persistent income inequalities between men and women and wage discrimination against women (ECLAC, 1995). However, despite recognizing the value of female employment, the vision put forth in analyses from that era regarded it as secondary household income.

Although a growing body of analysis and studies on women's issues has been developed in the region over the past 20 years, including in relation to macroeconomics, it is not the case that there was no equality agenda or proposals previously. The Platform for Action contains a very clear set of policy proposals, such that any review of achievements over the last 20 years must consider the international context as well as any other national policy dimensions that could help explain the weaknesses and slow pace of implementation of the agreements. Strategic objective F.1. in the Beijing Platform for Action states that governments should adopt measures to guarantee equal pay, enforce laws to prevent gender-based discrimination and eliminate discriminatory practices, launch reforms to give women the same rights to economic resources as men, identify possible biases in taxation policies, expand the knowledge base to measure and better understand the scope and distribution of unpaid work, including the formulation of methods to determine its value, and review and amend laws governing financial institutions to ensure that they provide services to women under the same conditions as men. These are some of the measures agreed upon by the member countries to promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources. Commitments were also made to enforce wage equality laws and eliminate discriminatory practices in employment, especially those penalizing women for childbearing.

In relation to employment, the idea was to modify policies in order to facilitate efforts to restructure labour regimes and ensure that they promoted the possibility of sharing family responsibilities, although at the time, policies were being rolled out to deregulate the labour market (Weller, 2007), contrary to what the Platform for Action proposed.<sup>48</sup>

For the most part, the social security reforms launched in Chile in the 1980s had a negative impact on gender equality. In addition to reproducing disadvantageous conditions for women in the labour market, they contained provisions that were explicitly unfavourable to them (Marco, 2004), inasmuch as women's contributions to private pension systems are characterized by low density, the wage gap and greater longevity, which put women at a particular disadvantage. Major efforts have been made in recent years to restore a rights-based universal approach.

The Platform for Action also contains recommendations aimed at mitigating the effects of trade agreements on economic activities traditionally and more recently performed by women.<sup>49</sup> It was agreed at Beijing to use gender-sensitive analysis in the design of macroeconomic, microeconomic and social policies, in order to track the repercussions in this regard and modify the policies in cases where the effects were found to be damaging, as well as to address the problem of poverty through access to assets and employment policies.

The annex contains a list of the initiatives reported by the countries that have helped reduce poverty among women, create job opportunities and expand social protection. Based on programme descriptions, it can be concluded that there is a prevailing association between the notion of women as a vulnerable group, programmes to end poverty and small business start-ups that are sometimes reported as labour market access policies.

<sup>48</sup> The reforms of the 1990s broadened the array of employment contracts, adding to the "typical" contract a series of fixed-term contracts, expanding use of the probationary period and facilitating subcontracting modalities, making it less expensive to dismiss employees, among other things.

<sup>49</sup> Free trade agreements reached their zenith in the same decades as rollout of the Platform for Action.

Thirteen countries of Latin America describe programmes that address the plight of women based on their status as a vulnerable group and emphasize a need to support specific groups differentiated by age (older women and girls), geographical location (rural women) and race (Afro-descendent, indigenous or gypsy women). The association between poor women and vulnerability is made visible by the absence of policies targeting women as a cohesive group, as established by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international conventions, and it is the prevailing consideration in several countries, with a distinction made between those that pursue targeted, short-term programmes and those that integrate women as the direct beneficiaries or recipients of cash transfers.<sup>50</sup> In fact, women often appear in both the reports and international agreements as part of an umbrella group of “women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, smallholder and subsistence farmers, fisherfolk and those working in small and medium-sized enterprises...” (paragraph 58(k) in the final document from the Rio+20 conference), which suggests that they need special assistance to overcome their vulnerability. Both the text and the speech contribute powerfully to create an image of women as a vulnerable “other” (Durán, 2015).

Of the reports presented, three in four countries in Latin America (12) approach female poverty, to a certain extent, by providing small business loans or microcredit, whether for housing, agriculture or commercial and production activities. The approach taken by the Caribbean countries (8) is not gender-differentiated but is keyed somewhat to the family. In this subregion, there is widespread cooperation and participation among civil society organizations in the development and even the implementation of plans and programmes to tackle poverty.

Employment policies generally do not address—or not in a systematic and quantifiable way—the main issues related to female employment: access to the labour market and jobs; occupational segmentation, which concentrates female workers in the services and care sectors; the pay gap and barriers to professional development and advancement; ethnic and racial discrimination, which compounds gender inequalities; and the absence of social protection and caretaking systems. There is also a set of related problems that conspire to keep opportunities limited for women to exercise economic autonomy, such as access to land, productive inputs, credit and technology, among other productive factors (ILO, 2013a).

Some countries, such as Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Mexico and Portugal, report legislative changes related to the rights of female workers, including sectoral laws, laws recognizing female domestic workers<sup>51</sup> (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba and Ecuador), wage equality laws (Chile), parental leave (Cuba, Mexico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Spain and Uruguay), maternity protection (Mexico and Uruguay) and rules against sexual and labour harassment (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Spain, among others).

The enactment of laws protecting female domestic workers deserves special mention. In Mexico, the Federal Labour Law has incorporated the concept of decent work with a gender perspective and prohibited employers (and their representatives) from discriminating on the basis of gender or civil status; performing, allowing or tolerating acts of sexual harassment or abuse; requiring women to provide medical certification that they are not pregnant as a condition of hire, continued employment or advancement; and dismissing a worker or coercing her directly or indirectly to resign due to pregnancy, a change in civil status or caretaking duties for a minor child.

Another set of achievements described in the reports are related to socioproductive projects, project incubators and support for start-ups, with multiple modalities for facilitating access to markets, credit and technical education.<sup>52</sup> The common thread running through these programmes is their support for women with scarce resources, female heads of household, women in vulnerable situations as victims of violence and pregnant teenagers. In some cases, the countries indicate that the financial

<sup>50</sup> See ECLAC (2011).

<sup>51</sup> See the annex on countries that have legislated the same status for female domestic workers as other workers.

<sup>52</sup> See more information in the annex.



and nonfinancial services they provide are part of a strategy to reduce informality and are coordinated with productive development and labour market access policies. Some countries, including Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru, describe programmes that reduce informality by arranging direct placement in the formal labour market, while in most countries, the emphasis is on projects and programmes to support small business start-ups, which are more closely associated with poverty reduction, small high-interest loans and very difficult access to markets (ILO, 2013a). Undeniably, these programmes and policies are relegated to a secondary plane in national development plans and are mainly recorded as poverty eradication policies, which raises the need to redouble efforts to integrate the gender perspective into economic, social and environmental analysis.

The number of countries reporting microcredit programmes targeting women in particular is striking. Chile is the only country that has gender-disaggregated information on the financial system, and that information points to a new form of segmentation that makes women not only the majority in precarious jobs and small business start-ups but also the primary recipients of microcredit, which by definition charges higher interest rates than the financial system, penalizing poor women for their lack of property to offer as collateral and thereby reinforcing the circle of exclusion (ECLAC, 2013b). This is the case with the following programmes: Semilla (Seed) in the Plurinational State of Bolivia; Mujer Cabeza de Familia Microempresaria (Women Heads of Household and Microentrepreneurs) in Chile; Modelo Integral de Fortalecimiento al Emprendurismo y la Empresariedad para la Autonomía Económica de las Mujeres (Comprehensive Model to Strengthen Entrepreneurship and Business Management for the Economic Autonomy of Women) in Costa Rica; Mujeres Emprendedoras Rurales (Rural Women Entrepreneurs) in Guatemala; Greenville Market Development, Agricultural Feeder Project, Market Access and Rural Enterprise Project in Grenada; Sister-to-Sister Programme in Turks and Caicos Islands; Women in Harmony Programme in Trinidad and Tobago; and Women of Worth (WOW) Project in Guyana.

In relation to poverty reduction, income transfer programmes stand out as important achievements in the reports presented by, for example, Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Uruguay.<sup>53</sup> There has been a rapid expansion of these programmes in the region, and a study conducted in 2012 (ECLAC, 2012) concluded that as a result they were having a major impact on women, especially women living in poverty. The study gave the reasons for this as follows: women are the direct recipients of the allowance; in order to collect the allowance, certain conditions on their behaviour are imposed (e.g. related to consumption, responsibilities concerning care of their children and teenagers and decisions on labour market participation); and the allowances become a key component of household survival strategies, particularly in the households of poor women, may have repercussions on relationships within the household and on decision-making about the use of economic resources, and affect (or may affect) other areas of women's lives related to their physical or political autonomy. In addition, the programmes determine certain types of relationships between women and the State, between women and public policies and between women and social protection systems. Lastly, these programmes influence women's economic autonomy, their rights and the quality of their citizenship.

Conditional transfer programmes have undeniably marked a milestone in Latin American social policy. They are the first extended real experience with monetary assistance for much of the population living in poverty. Women have become essential actors in these programmes, as the primary beneficiaries with shared responsibility for fulfilling the targets proposed in the programmes: to address present deficits and to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty in the medium and long run. In many cases, the programmes have helped women gain better access to institutions, obtain identity documents and enrol and keep their children in school. However, these programmes have two key weaknesses: (i) they are part of segmented social protection systems; and (ii) in the current framework, beneficiaries who fully incorporate into the labour market in formal jobs have access to benefits and in all other cases, beneficiaries collect more modest benefits.

<sup>53</sup> A list of the programmes mentioned in the reports is available in the annex.

With respect to gender, conditional transfer programmes have characteristics that are, in fact, obstacles to eliminating the underlying causes of gender inequality. This weakness can be attributed to a maternalistic vision that consolidates the role of women (especially low-income women) as caretakers and as mediators between the State, family and community of women (Provoste and Valdés, 2000), without promoting mechanisms that would allow them to participate in the economy without assistance.

Information from time-use surveys confirms the hypothesis that participation in conditional transfer programmes increases the amount of time that women spend on unpaid work. Mexico and Ecuador are two cases in point. The total time spent on work by women in conditional transfer programmes differs slightly from the time spent by women not participating in these programmes. In Mexico, nonbeneficiary women spend slightly more time, and in Ecuador, they spend less.

The reports show that although conditional transfer programmes are the most widespread mechanism of support for poor families, in some cases, they are coordinated with complementary initiatives such as lactation support, school enrolment and attendance, training, microcredit and employment programmes. These high-coverage, low-cost programmes have been adjusting their institutional architecture, conducting evaluations and seeking new mechanisms to provide social protection. It can be affirmed that the majority of the programmes are geared more towards reducing the economic vulnerability of women than to increasing their economic autonomy: allowances are one example. The programmes can also be said to be geared mainly towards improving the female labour supply, rather than working with demand (markets, businesses) to hire more women. In effect, few programmes or policies are intended to change the sexual division of labour in the market.

In the area of social protection, Argentina introduced universal per-child or pregnancy allowances for unemployed women or women working in the informal economy or domestic services. This universal allowance is collected by the mother, except when the father demonstrates that he has custody. This is a novel universal policy that has had an important impact in terms of reducing the ranks of women without their own income.<sup>54</sup> Chile, meanwhile, carried out a reform of its social security system in 1999 that resulted in an unfair redistribution, which translates into a smaller accumulation of social security funds for women who have paid work and no old-age protection for women performing unpaid domestic work. Action in these two areas would also serve to remedy the injustice around recognition: by valuing the contribution of women who take care of their households, pension coverage would be expanded (ECLAC, 2013a).

Articles 47 and 48 of the Cuba's Constitution establish the guarantee offered by the State through the social security system for the general population. Likewise, the People's National Assembly enacted Law 105 on social security, which improves and expands the rights set out in the previous Law 24, which provided that in consideration of the constitutional principles, men and women enjoy equal rights, duties and guarantees, as well as the same opportunities and possibilities.

As stated earlier, initiatives to address workplace issues in a comprehensive manner by adopting laws to mitigate the effects of the sexual division of labour, such as for parental leave or longer maternity leave, are no less important for being recent and few in number. However, day-care provision continues to fall short in a demographic scenario in which demand for care services for children, older persons and the sick is outpacing the creation of such services.

It can be concluded that the progress made thus far has been slow and insufficient. This is due, first and foremost, to the fact that the years immediately following the Beijing Conference, were characterized by open deregulation policies that limited the role of the State and focused on strengthening market competitiveness and reducing poverty without tackling structural changes in the production matrix or working on the social equality agenda. Second, the women's movement had very little political sway and State machineries for the advancement of women were weak,

<sup>54</sup> See "Asignación Universal por Hijo" [online] at <http://www.anses.gob.ar/asignacion-universal-68>.

particularly when it came to influencing economic policy. Lastly, there was cultural resistance in the political and judicial system and even from the unions, which has been changing as new female leadership has emerged thanks to the democratic stability that has characterized the region over the past 20 years.

### **C. Advances in physical autonomy**

Over the past 20 years, progress has been made on several fronts. There are two main areas in which the countries report progress and ongoing challenges: women's health and violence against women. With respect to physical autonomy, in their reports, some countries indicate advances in formulating comprehensive policies (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba and Uruguay), and others note efforts to expand coverage and patient-centred care in institutional birth (Brazil, Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia). At the legislative level, laws have been enacted to prevent violence against women and decriminalize abortion and emergency contraception, though with certain restrictions, such as the need to present a medical prescription. Several countries report the approval of laws for safe abortion, such as Uruguay's Law 18,987 of 2012 legalizing elective termination of pregnancy and Decision T-841 by Colombia's Constitutional Court instructing that an abortion can be performed if there is a risk to the mother's mental health. In general, this issue has been the subject of reflection and debate in each country, a process that has led to a recognition of the full human rights of women. In its report, Chile notes that the criminalization of abortion under all circumstances is an especially complex issue in its national context. The legal regime that prohibits it denies women many of their human rights and contravenes the recommendations made in this regard by numerous international human rights organizations (the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, among others).

In its report, Argentina explains that based on its Constitution and human rights agreements, abortions may be performed for any victim of rape, not just victims with a mental disability, in observance of the principles of equality, human dignity and the legality; doctors do not, under any circumstance, need judicial authorization to proceed with this type of abortion, but rather only a sworn statement from the victim or her legal representative; and judges are to refrain from making access to these interventions a judicial matter.

In the case of Brazil, the rate of maternal mortality due to abortion has fallen from 16.6 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 3.1 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011. In the 1990s, abortion was the leading cause of maternal mortality but has since fallen to the fifth position, causing 5% of deaths, after arterial hypertension (20%), haemorrhage (11%), cardiovascular disease —chronic hypertension complicated by pregnancy— (9%) and postpartum infection (6%). In 2013, there were 1,521 legal abortions performed in the country. In 2012, there were 1,613 cases, and in 2011, there were 1,495 cases. These procedures were performed in health facilities with obstetrics services and involved, respectively, 219 facilities in 2013, 210 in 2012 and 223 in 2011.

In addition to the introduction of services, the countries have developed protocols and guidelines for post-abortion care that illustrate how important these practices are becoming in preventing women's deaths. In Argentina, for example, the "Guide to Improve Post-Abortion Care" was prepared by the Ministry of Health in 2005 and approved pursuant to Resolution 989/2005. In 2010, the Ministry of Health's National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation updated the "Technical Guide for Care of Non-Criminal Abortions," originally published in 2007, and disseminated it to provinces throughout the country. And in 2013, the coordination office of that programme identified three strategic lines of intervention as priorities: prevention of unplanned pregnancy; reduction of abortion-related hospital admissions, especially among the adolescent population; and reduction of abortion-related maternal morbidity and mortality. In Paraguay,

patient-centred standards of post-abortion care have been in effect since 2012, pursuant to Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Resolution SG 146. In Chile, Ministry of Health Resolution 264 (2011) established technical guidelines for the integrated care of women who have had an abortion or other reproductive intervention.

Meanwhile, efforts to incorporate the gender perspective into health ministries and programmes have yielded good results in countries such as Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Paraguay.

Progress has also been made in the area of health statistical records and in the creation of inter-institutional committees for the integrated care of victims of violence, as in the case of El Salvador and Guatemala. Advances include instruments to measure health, such as the national survey on sexual and reproductive health in Costa Rica and the national health information system in Mexico, which covers birth, mortality, morbidity (including injuries and domestic violence) and disability statistics disaggregated by sex, as well as related demographic, economic, social and environmental factors, and the physical, human and financial resources available to protect the health of the population, and use thereof. Information and data to measure violence against women is available in a growing number of countries, but gaps remain. In the case of violence against women, it is still difficult to get a regional overview to assess the magnitude of the problem in relation to all dimensions, mainly due to scarce and disparate statistical information and to the fact that administrative records generally provide isolated data on certain services, which does not allow for a complete assessment.

Another advance has to do with the incorporation of intercultural health mechanisms, taking into account the ancient wisdom of non-traditional medicine in countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Countries including the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia report focused efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy, noting the importance of prevention through the delivery of comprehensive sex education and timely and confidential access to quality information, counselling, technologies and services, including overthecounter emergency oral contraception and male and female condoms.

The country reports have identified maternal mortality, limited access to information on sexual health and responsible procreation and cervical cancer as problems requiring priority attention.

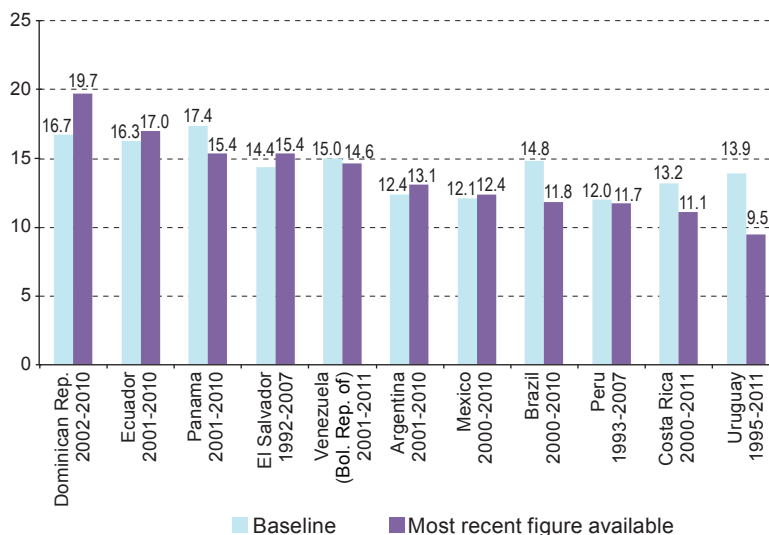
## **1. Adolescent pregnancy**

Women continue to face challenges to their physical autonomy, which in many countries take the form of restrictions on their reproductive rights, e.g. on control over their own fertility, which can affect the population as a whole (as in the case of prohibitions on the distribution of emergency contraception) or certain segments (lack of adequate, relevant and timely policies and actions for teenagers). These challenges can also take the form of lack of education on this topic or an obligation to proceed with an unwanted pregnancy.

A serious consequence of these gaps is teenage pregnancy, an ongoing unresolved problem that helps perpetuate the cycle of poverty given the school drop-out rates among teenage mothers and the ensuing difficulties they face in their working lives. The fertility rate among adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the highest in the world, exceeded only by the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean show that even as fertility rates among women in general are trending downward, adolescent fertility rates not only are not falling but have even climbed in some countries for low-income, less-educated teenagers.

According to indicators prepared by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, maternity rates among adolescent women between the ages of 15 and 19 stand at 19.9% in Nicaragua, 19.7% in the Dominican Republic, 18.3% in Honduras and 17% in Ecuador (see figure II.14).

**Figure II.14**  
**Latin America (11 countries): women between the ages of 15 and 19 who are mothers,**  
**baseline and most recent figure available**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of official figures.

Adolescent pregnancy and maternity, an expression of the deep social, cultural, gender, and ethnic and racial disparities in the region, not only presents a formidable obstacle to efforts to uproot poverty and incorporate young women into the labour market but also puts girls and young women at greater risk of physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partners. This is evident in the prevalence of this type of violence, with rates two to three times higher among women who have their first child before 17 years of age than for women who become first-time mothers after 25 years of age, according to data from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2014).

With respect to adolescent pregnancy, some countries (including Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the Plurinational State of Bolivia) report prevention, care and support programmes, including rules to promote school attendance.

The reports presented by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia indicate the importance of caring for women infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), for which they have implemented a number of measures, including reduction targets<sup>55</sup> in Argentina and novel approaches such as “the difference perspective” in Brazil. Another recurring issue mentioned in most of the reports (e.g. Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia) is cancer prevention and treatment.

## 2. Maternal mortality

Maternal death is a global problem, and despite efforts, nearly 10 years after launching the Millennium Development Goals, which include the maternal mortality ratio as an indicator of advances in reproductive health, measuring maternal mortality continues to be very difficult, because even using

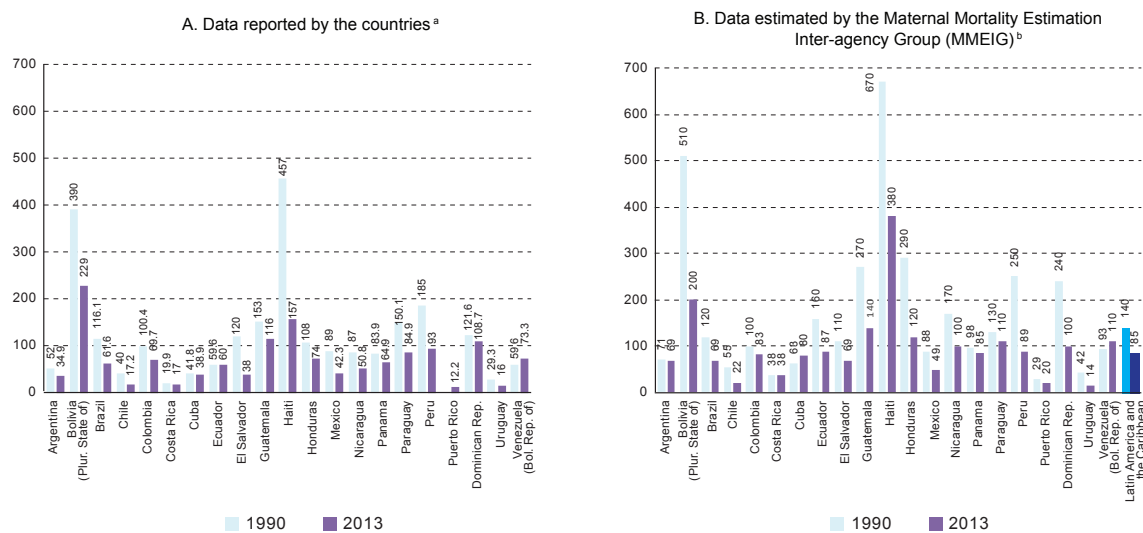
<sup>55</sup> Argentina set itself the target of reducing the HIV infection rate among pregnant women between the ages of 15 and 24 by 10% between 2005 and 2015. The most recent available figure was 0.36% in 2006, near the target of 0.32% set for 2015. Vertical transmission fell from 329 children infected in 1995 to fewer than 100 in 2009.

demographic techniques, random decisions are inevitable, which introduces a significant degree of subjectivity into the estimates.

Gender-based violence is an indirect cause of maternal death during pregnancy, birth and puerperium, resulting from gender inequality rooted in historical, social and cultural factors. Of the 529,000 maternal deaths that occur worldwide every year, 99% happen in poor countries and the repercussions are serious and lasting. Complications of pregnancy and delivery are among the leading causes of death in the developing countries, so improving access to emergency obstetrics care is vital. It should be further noted that both domestic violence and high maternal mortality rates in the developing world are globally recognized as public health and social justice problems.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the most recent information available indicates that the causes of maternal death are associated with complications during pregnancy, birth and puerperium. Maternal mortality in the region is cause for concern (see figure II.15) and is probably one of the truest indicators of gender inequality and discrimination. Not only does it indicate the number of preventable deaths, but it also points up social, territorial and ethnic disparities since women who are poor, rural and indigenous are affected the most by it (ECLAC, 2013c). Unequal access to contraception, abortion and other services and needs related to women's ability to exercise physical autonomy has mortal consequences for those who cannot turn to private care or, worse still, must do so in a context of criminalization.

**Figure II.15**  
**Latin America (21 countries): maternal mortality ratios, around 1990 and 2013**  
(Ratio per 100,000 live births)



Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), "Core Health Indicator Database" [online] <http://www.paho.org>; and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT database, on the basis of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women [online] <http://www.childinfo.org/>.

<sup>a</sup> The data available include deaths registered in national registrars and reported to WHO by the national authorities: Argentina (1990 and 2012), Bolivia (Plur. State of) (1994 and 2003), Brazil (1996 and 2012), Chile (1990 and 2012), Colombia (1998 and 2011), Costa Rica (1995 and 2013), Cuba (1990 and 2013), Dominican Republic (1999 and 2013), Ecuador (1997 and 2012), El Salvador (1994 and 2013), Guatemala (2000 and 2012), Haiti (1991 and 2013), Honduras (1997 and 2010), Mexico (1990 and 2012), Nicaragua (2001 and 2013), Panama (1995 and 2012), Paraguay (1990 and 2012), Peru (1994 and 2011), Puerto Rico (2011), Uruguay (1997 and 2013) and Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of) (1997 and 2011).

<sup>b</sup> The estimate for maternal mortality (as expressed in Millennium Development Goal 5, target 5A, indicator 5.1) is carried out by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG), comprising the World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Population Division and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with a technical advisory group. The estimates may not necessarily be equivalent to official national statistics.

Other countries feel that there has been too little progress. Argentina reports that a newborn child or pregnant women is more likely to die in north-eastern Argentina than in other parts of the country. In other countries, mortality rates have fallen significantly but are still extremely high. This is the case in Haiti, which had a maternal mortality rate of 380 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013 (670 in 1995), and in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which registered 200 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013, half the rate in 1995 when there were 510 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, adopted by the region's governments at the first session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development (2013), declared maternal mortality to be an affront to human rights and recognized that the overwhelming majority of maternal deaths are preventable. The governments assembled at that first session discussed maternal mortality extensively and recognized that the high rates were largely attributable to unsafe abortions and limited access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services.

The Consensus states: "Concerned at the high rates of maternal mortality, due largely to difficulties in obtaining access to proper sexual health and reproductive health services or to unsafe abortions, and aware that some experiences in the region have demonstrated that the penalization of abortion leads to higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity and does not reduce the number of abortions, and that this holds the region back in its efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals." Accordingly, the countries agreed to promote policies that enable persons to exercise their sexual rights, which embrace the right to a safe and full sex life, as well as the right to take free, informed, voluntary and responsible decisions on their sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity, without coercion, discrimination or violence, and that guarantee the right to information and the means necessary for their sexual health and reproductive health. They also agreed to "[e]liminate preventable cases of maternal morbidity and mortality, including, within the set of integrated benefits of sexual health and reproductive health services, measures for preventing and avoiding unsafe abortion, including sexual health and reproductive health education, access to modern and effective contraceptive methods, counselling and comprehensive care in cases of unwanted and unaccepted pregnancy, as well as comprehensive post-abortion care, where necessary, on the basis of a risk- and harm-reduction strategy."

The available statistics on maternal mortality do not always reveal the real magnitude of the problem, but these deficiencies notwithstanding, the gaps between and within countries illustrate the inequality of access to adequate health care in this area. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), maternal mortality continues to be the biggest thorn in the region's development and one that is very difficult to dislodge due to the fact that there are no reliable methods for measuring the problem (health surveys or issue-specific surveys, with the apparent problems of lack of proper coverage). Some countries have expressed an interest in incorporating maternal mortality into population censuses but because it is complicated to measure, only a handful of countries have done so and with results that are still less than desirable. Thus, despite efforts, 20 years on from the Beijing Platform for Action and 15 years into the Millennium Development Goals, both of which include maternal mortality as an indicator for evaluating advances in reproductive health, measuring this dimension remains a serious challenge.

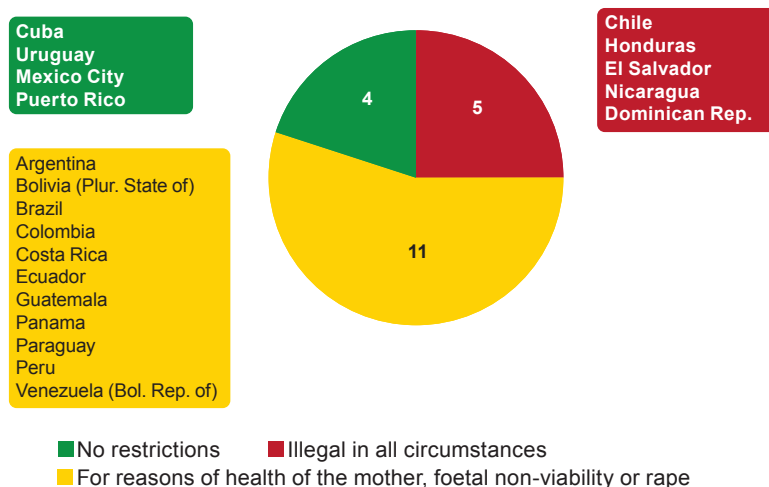
### **3. Violence against women**

Slowly but surely, since the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, violence against women has been rising in importance on the international human rights agenda. The most remarkable advances have been in national legislation, particularly around the issue of violence against women. This has created tension in the public-private dichotomy, producing slow but undeniable change on the sociocultural front. The challenge today in the majority of the countries is access to justice for correct interpretation and effective enforcement of the laws and regulations. Getting gender equality objectives onto the political

agenda of the governments has meant recognizing the threat that violence against women presents to their autonomy and accepting government intervention, which has entailed a reconsideration of the societal notion that violence against women is a private problem.

On this matter, the countries are focusing on creating or improving access to elective abortion services (in the countries where such services are allowed). This involves developing treatment protocols, standards and regulations as stipulated by law. The countries recognize the need to push ahead with policies that reduce the effects of unsafe abortions in the countries that still have complete or partial bans on this procedure (see figure II.16).

**Figure II.16**  
**Latin America: legislation on abortion and elective termination of pregnancy**  
(Absolute numbers)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Another problem that affects Latin American and Caribbean women in terms of their sexual and reproductive rights is the continued existence in several countries of measures that punish women who have undergone abortions, which is a violation of their human rights, given the commitment assumed by the governments in the Brasilia Consensus (2010) to “review laws that punish women who have undergone abortions [...] and ensure that abortions are performed safely where authorized by the law.”

The report on violence prepared by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2014b) states: “The growing calls for the right to a life free of violence within the framework of a review of the implementation of other rights in a number of contexts are indicative of the practical application of the principles of universality, indivisibility, interdependence and non-regressivity of human rights. Because the principle of non-discrimination cuts across the entire system, the indivisibility and interdependence of rights means that they are all equally important and should be equally respected since they are all essential for human life. Violating one of them undermines the others. In addition, according to the principle of progressivity, both the interpretation of human rights and the machineries for their realization should make steady progress without losing ground already gained.” Another problem reported by the countries, mainly in the Caribbean, is rape and impunity for perpetrators. Three of the ten countries with the highest numbers of rape are in the Caribbean. In effect, legislation is inadequate, punishment is too light and there is a culture of impunity.



## (a) Femicide

Violence against women can lead to death, and this is a scourge that persists despite the initiatives carried out by the countries. According to data from the report on violence prepared by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2014b), 496 women died at the hands of a current or former intimate partner in nine countries in Latin America in 2012. That same year, 545 gender-based homicides or femicides were recorded in seven countries in the region, and nearly two thirds of the perpetrators were current or former intimate partners.

Although Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world that has a regional convention for the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women (the Convention of Belém do Pará), and the countries that have enacted laws against violence have seen some real progress, femicide is still not classified as a criminal offence in many countries. Table II.1 lists the countries where femicide is classified as a criminal offence in the respective penal code.

**Table II.1**  
**Latin America (selected countries): definition of femicide/feminicide in penal codes**

Argentina (2012)	Murder of a woman committed by an ascendant relative, descendant relative, spouse, former spouse, partner or former partner, regardless of whether they cohabitated.
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2013)	Act of extreme violence that violates the basic right to life and causes the death of a woman due to the fact of her womanhood.
Chile (2010) and Costa Rica (2007)	Violent death of a woman at the hands of her spouse, partner or former partner.
Colombia (2008) and Ecuador (2014)	Death of a woman due to the fact of her womanhood or her gender status.
El Salvador (2012), Honduras (2013) and Mexico (2007)	Extreme form of gender-based violence against women due to violation of their human rights, both in the public and private spheres.
Guatemala (2008), Nicaragua (2010) and Panama (2013)	All violent deaths of women in the framework of unequal relationships of power, which include marriage and cohabitation.
Peru (2011) and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2007)	Death of a woman caused by an ascendant relative, natural or adopted descendant relative, a current or former spouse or common-law partner, or a current or former intimate partner.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014: Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

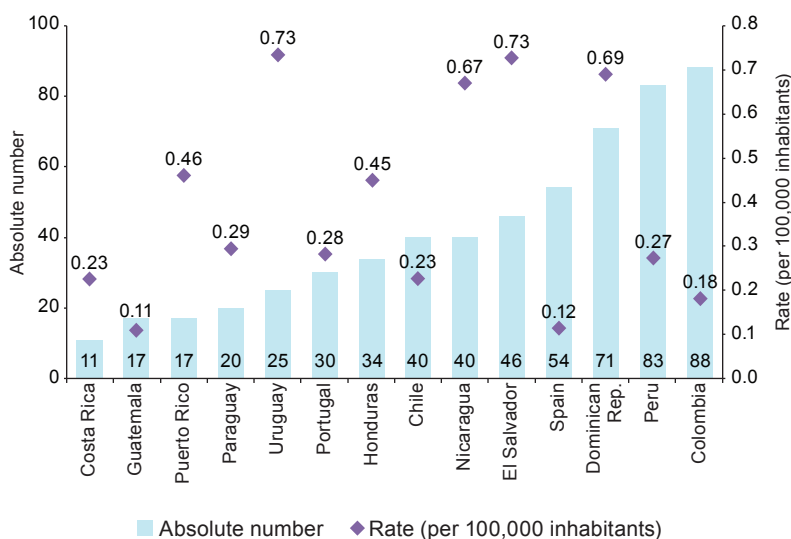
Fourteen countries in the region have classified femicide as a criminal offence, which allows for a regional comparison of official records. Using this information, the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean has developed an indicator for women killed by a current or former intimate partner. However, because several countries do not process information on femicides, the indicator has been difficult to construct and only covers a small group of countries, as observed in figure II.17 (see also figures II.18 and II.19).

**Figure II.17**  
**Latin America (7 countries): femicide or homicide of women for reasons of gender and women killed by a current or former intimate partner, latest data available**  
*(Absolute numbers)*



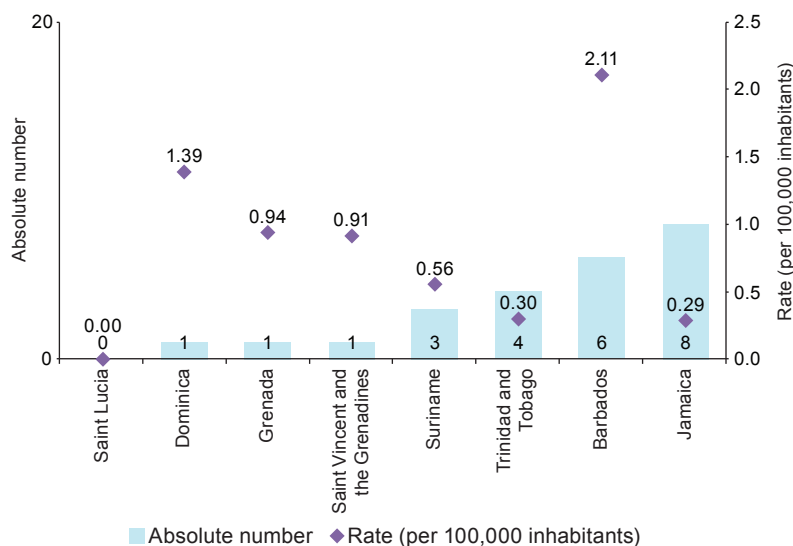
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014: Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

**Figure II.18**  
**Latin America (12 countries), Spain and Portugal: women killed by a current or former intimate partner, 2013**  
*(Absolute numbers and rates)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014: Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

**Figure II.19**  
**The Caribbean (8 countries): women killed by a current or former intimate partner, latest data available**  
*(Absolute numbers and rates)*



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014: Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

Despite the availability of information, one of the most significant methodological challenges to calculating the indicator has to do with the myriad sources from which the data must be culled, including police records, public prosecutor investigations, forensic reports, vital statistics connected with the health system and civil registries, as indicated in table II.2.

**Table II.2**  
**Latin America and the Caribbean: sources of information for recording deaths of women at the hands of an intimate partner or former partner**

Country	Source (institution)	Area of government
Chile	Office of the Attorney General, Special Sex Crimes and Intrafamily Violence Unit	Attorneys-General / Prosecutors
Dominican Republic	Office of the Attorney General	
El Salvador	Office of the Attorney General	
Peru	Observatory on Criminality of the Public Ministry of Peru	
Grenada	Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Development, Division of Gender and Family Affairs, GBV Unit	Executive branch ministries
Guatemala	Judiciary and Public Prosecutor's Office	
Portugal	Annual Report on Internal Security / Observatory of Murdered Women (OMA) of the Union of Women for Alternatives and Answers (UMAR)	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Persons with Disabilities and Youth	
Spain	Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality	
Uruguay	National Observatory on Violence and Crime, Ministry of the Interior	
Costa Rica	General Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice, National Women's Institute (INAMU)	Agency for the advancement of women (independently or in coordination with other institutions)
Paraguay	Communication and Democratic Culture Directorate of the Ministry of Women / National police	
Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Information and Gender Affairs Division	

Table II.2 (concluded)

Country	Source (institution)	Area of government
Colombia	National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences	Forensic services
Honduras	University Institute for Democracy, Peace and Security (IUDPAS), National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). Observatory of Violent Death of Women and Femicide	Universities
Barbados	Royal Barbados Police Force	Police forces
Jamaica	Research Planning and Legal Services Branch, Jamaica Constabulary Force	
Nicaragua	Women's Commissary of the National Police of Nicaragua	
Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico Police statistical reports	
Saint Lucia	Royal Saint Lucia Police Force	
Suriname	Criminal Information Service, Suriname Police Department	
Trinidad and Tobago	Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014: Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

## (b) Comprehensive laws against violence

Nearly 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), all the countries in the region have laws against violence, most have an action plan to prevent and end violence against women and 10 have enacted comprehensive laws against violence. The national plans are based on the Convention of Belém do Pará, a binding international instrument that is essential in the preparation of legislation in the region.

In 2007, Mexico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela became the first countries to adopt comprehensive laws that addressed violence against women beyond the family setting and offered a broad approach to confronting the various manifestations of violence against women. Other countries followed suit with similar legislation: Colombia and Guatemala (2008); Argentina and Costa Rica (2009); El Salvador (2010); Nicaragua (2012); and the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Dominican Republic (2013).

According to the report on violence prepared by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2014b), there are two important proposals for improving access to justice: the Model Latin American Protocol for Investigating Violent Deaths of Women for Reasons of Gender (Femicide/Feminicide), an initiative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the initiative of the Ibero-American Judicial Summit (CJI), 100 Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People.<sup>56</sup>

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2014b) contends that violence against women cannot be analysed or confronted as an isolated matter but rather concomitantly with the economic, social and cultural inequality at play in relationships of power between men and women, factors that have their correlate in the inequality of resources seen in private and public spheres and are directly related to the unequal distribution of work, especially unpaid domestic work.

A standing challenge is to have more and better tools with which to evaluate the progress and outcomes of policies to eliminate violence against women, in order to understand the effects of these policies on women's lives and access to justice, as well as on the capacity of officers of justice to incorporate into their practices an agenda for gender equality and non-discrimination against women.

<sup>56</sup> The member States of CJI are Andorra, Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain and Uruguay. See [online] <http://www.cumbrejudicial.org>.

### (c) Human trafficking

Human trafficking involves many actors, including family, local intermediaries, international criminal networks and immigration authorities, and it may be done for purposes of sexual or labour exploitation. The Beijing Platform for Action urges the countries to establish preventive and punitive measures to end the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. At the international level, most countries in the region have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention (Palermo Protocol). In truth, no country is exempt from this phenomenon.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

In effect, victims of trafficking, deceived or forced by traffickers, are exposed to labour or sexual exploitation. A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2006) estimates that each year approximately 100,000 women and adolescents travel deceived by promises of work in Belgium, Germany, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, the United States and other countries in Asia. Many of these women will become victims of forced labour, but above all they will be victims of sexual exploitation. That is why the countries of the region, seeking to bolster the fight against this crime, have introduced new policies and laws, in addition to action plans to curb this form of violence (ECLAC, 2014b).

Eleven Latin American and four Caribbean countries have specific legislation to combat trafficking in persons. A number of them have developed plans of action: Brazil, for example, has implemented the National Border Strategy headed by the Secretariat for Addressing Violence under the Secretariat of Policies for Women. Intersectoral work in Brazil has also managed to disrupt criminal gangs originating in Spain, after complaints to the Call 180 hotline and action by the Federal Police. Some countries have hotlines for assistance and complaints, as well as safe houses for victims of this crime.

Mexico operates the Special Shelter for Comprehensive Care and Protection of Victims of Trafficking and Extreme Gender-based Violence, coordinated by the National Directorate for Centres for Comprehensive Care for Victims of Violence against Women and Trafficking of Persons. Mexico's Attorney General's Office operates the Complaints and Citizen Assistance Centre (CEDAC) in the areas under its purview. A Special Prosecutor's Office was also established to deal with violence against women and trafficking, and which receives complaints concerning crimes within its jurisdiction and provides comprehensive services to victims.

The existence of centres and safe houses provides an opportunity to gather some data. For example, in Paraguay, between 2009 and 2013 the only temporary shelter for women victims of trafficking tended to 199 women affected by trafficking in persons. There are also subregional initiatives, such as that of MERCOSUR, which under the Plan for Institution-building and Gender Mainstreaming has conducted assessments of trafficking and carried out awareness-raising campaigns. The Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Council of Central American Ministers for Women's Affairs (COMMCA) are working on a project for Prevention of all Forms of Violence against Women, Trafficking and Femicide. Of the 15 countries that have ratified antitrafficking legislation, 9 have done so since 2010. The link between trafficking and violence against women provides an opportunity to build on the progress achieved, in particular with regard to intersectoral cooperation to more effectively address this problem (ECLAC, 2014b).

### III. New priorities and challenges for the post-2015 development agenda

“The challenges set by the governments must be placed in the context of a paradigm shift in production and consumption patterns that is consistent with the magnitude of the phenomenon. That is the depth of the challenge for achieving an inclusive, sustainable development rooted in equality,” the Executive Secretary of ECLAC remarked at the Workshop on Climate Change Perspectives in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>57</sup>

Given the changes in the global scenario and in order to meet the challenges arising from international commitments, there is an urgent need for change, and not a marginal shift but rather a global agreement much closer to the approach inspired by the Beijing agreements than the approaches that prevailed during its implementation. With the demographic transition and aging of the region’s population, the process of urbanization and concentration of new forms of poverty in the cities, citizen insecurity, climate change and vulnerability to natural disasters, along with the loss of external support (such as official development assistance), low economic growth and falling commodity prices, the equality agenda is becoming a structural change proposal. As stated in the inter-agency document on the follow-up to the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 and to Rio+20, coordinated by ECLAC (United Nations, 2013), the gender perspective must permeate development metrics, strategy design and policy goals. For this, changes must be made in the accounting of social reproduction costs, the real value of labour and time and, in short, the concrete functioning of economies and societies. As a cross-cutting dimension of inequality, gender divides need to be incorporated into the analysis in all spheres in pursuit of greater equality, sustainability and effective rights implementation. A key part of the new agenda, then, must be the effort to guarantee women’s economic and physical autonomy and their access to decision-making at every level. This process of gender mainstreaming includes resolving the ambiguities that group together “women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, smallholder and subsistence farmers, fisherfolk and those working in small and medium-sized enterprises” (paragraph 58 (k) of the final Rio+20 document), suggesting that they need special assistance to overcome their vulnerability.

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<sup>57</sup> See the welcoming remarks made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, at the inaugural session of the Workshop on Climate Change Perspectives in Latin America and the Caribbean, on 8 October 2014, at [online] [http://www.cepal.org/prensa/noticias/discursossecretaria/2/54032/Taller\\_perspectivas\\_cambio\\_Climatico\\_CEPAL\\_8octubre2014.pdf](http://www.cepal.org/prensa/noticias/discursossecretaria/2/54032/Taller_perspectivas_cambio_Climatico_CEPAL_8octubre2014.pdf).

## A. Strategic challenges in the region

As has been seen, institutional and legal reforms with a rights-based approach favourable to women exist alongside gender-neutral economic policies geared mainly towards commodity exports, a sector in which women are employed primarily in precarious, poorly paid jobs and are beneficiaries of allowances, transfers or small business promotion programmes (ECLAC, 2013a).

The commitments derived from the Beijing Platform for Action are being implemented in the framework of targeted social policies despite the prescription set out in the Platform for universal policies. The reports show that in many cases, the policies applied over the past 20 years yielded to the dominant paradigm, and legal advances rooted in universal rights have existed alongside extractivist economic policies, labour deregulation, targeted social policies and an excess of social tolerance for a culture of discrimination. Although important advances have been made in terms of legislation and political participation, poverty reduction and small business promotion programmes have dominated the landscape, so it is hard to imagine how these advances will further national development and remove barriers to productivity and access to innovation if, in the end, the potential labour force for productive development is sequestered in social assistance and low productivity programmes. As can be seen in the annex, of the programmes identified in the country reports to reduce poverty and improve the standing of women in the economy and markets, the vast majority are transfer programmes, training programmes for women microentrepreneurs and small business owners and microcredit programmes, and only rarely is there a mention of policies to strengthen the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs, access to formal credit and training in areas of innovation, some of which can be found in the document on women in the digital economy (ECLAC, 2013b).

The dilemma lies in the fact that while the laws and regulations that are cited promote the empowerment of women, the policies that are reported tend to associate women with poverty, women with small businesses or women with microcredit, which relegates women to the sphere of social policies and social assistance more than anywhere else, with no reporting of significant experiences of participation in the labour market and productive enterprise.

At the conclusion of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the regional coordinator of the All Women's Movement summarized the message of the participants at the conference, declaring "Resources, not words."<sup>58</sup> Words had their place, and although they continued to be the way in which women expressed their voices, at that moment in time it was imperative to shine a light on the challenge of providing resources to implement the Platform. Words have been the mechanism for drawing attention to inequalities, building new rights and transforming laws. However, for these words to mean something in the daily lives of all women, financial, technical and institutional resources had to be placed at their disposal. Ultimately, resources can be seen as a measure of the commitment of the governments, though it is also true that to obtain results, they must be coupled with intentions, processes, alliances and circumstances, virtuously connected to bring about real change.

The Platform for Action was adopted at a time when the vast majority of the countries were emerging from the debt crisis, launching structural adjustment programmes, and on the social front, adopting targeted poverty reduction policies that viewed women as a vulnerable group, a different perspective from the approach prescribed in the Platform for Action, which is based on rights and the recognition of women as citizens and social actors. The reports show that over the past five years, the countries have adopted policies that define a new role for the government, one that is increasingly characterized by new forms of policy planning, including decentralization and the reform of budget management models (as in the case of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Mexico), though approaches rooted in the vulnerability perspective persist. Integrating the gender

<sup>58</sup> Applause continues to ring out for the silent demonstration of Gina Vargas (regional coordinator of the All Women's Movement) at the plenary session of the Fourth World Conference on Women, who, exercising her right as a female citizen of the world, held up a placard demanding "Justice, Mechanisms, Resources."

perspective into the countries' national planning systems is a challenge identified in a number of reports that would help connect the short term to the long term.

In general, the challenges identified in the national reports are the result of learning processes, based on national experience in some cases and supported by comparative international evidence in others. The review process provides an opportunity to reflect on the countries' achievements and to identify all the tasks still remaining to ensure that it becomes a reality for all women and girls to realize their full rights. In general, the countries have reiterated their commitment to the process of strengthening gender equality and empowering women in line with the international agreements prepared in recent years on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. In fact, accelerating fulfilment is a fundamental challenge. The magnitude of the challenges identified in the reviews can be interpreted as an indication of the setbacks and limitations acknowledged by the governments, but it should also be seen as a function of the experience, knowledge and political power amassed in the 20 years since Beijing and the increasing visibility, recognition and contribution of gender equality policies for the development and autonomy of women.

Resources continue to be key because although a number of countries report the source and in some cases the increase in resources allocated, these funds are primarily earmarked for the institutionalization of gender equality mechanisms, for policies against violence and for the implementation of gender policies at the sectoral level. Few countries in the region report significant allocations in the budget law. A positive development is that over the past 20 years, despite clearly limited resources for gender equality in the region, there has been an opportunity and a willingness in some countries to incorporate a specific methodology for systematically reporting gender-related public expenditure, as well as ensuring its effectiveness, as noted in the reports by Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay and Puerto Rico.

The country reviews also point out the importance of rethinking the role of international cooperation in gender equality and urging the developed countries to meet commitments assumed in relation to official development assistance, particularly for gender equality.

The Platform for Action is a rights-based agenda, and several countries (including Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador) believe that the region is up against some major challenges if it is to continue to actively promote rights. Progress in the recognition of rights has sparked collective reflection in favour of policies to eliminate racism, machismo and sexism and dismantle patriarchy (this point is explicitly made in the reports presented by Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and the Plurinational State of Bolivia). Along these same lines, Costa Rica's report suggests that a change in the elite political culture is critical. There are more than a few cases in which maledominated political parties are known to pursue everything from legal loopholes to harassment and threats in order to hold onto the majority on the candidate lists. The Plurinational State of Bolivia, in its report, notes that part of this challenge involves obtaining social and cultural acceptance for a broad definition of parity that encompasses all spheres of life and aims to ensure that women are able to exercise their full rights as citizens. The social and religious beliefs that inform machismo are among the sociocultural barriers of discrimination against women that are found to varying degrees in all the countries. Some countries (such as Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and the Plurinational State of Bolivia) mention the influence of conservative, religious and political forces that limit women's exercise of their human rights, particularly their sexual and reproductive rights.

The path to gender equality is above all one of cultural change, and indeed, in their reports, the countries discuss cultural obstacles and barriers as a brake on real progress towards the full realization of women's rights and gender equality. The complex web of social, natural and religious beliefs that assign women the predetermined role of mothers in society has ensured that discrimination against women is present to a larger or smaller extent. Costa Rica, in its report, mentions the importance of implementing strategies to counteract the influence of conservative social forces that deny women the full realization of their human rights. Guyana's report discusses this problem in a section titled "Negative Sociocultural



Norms<sup>7</sup>; the report by the Plurinational State of Bolivia introduces the concept of dismantling the patriarchy of State and society; and countries and territories including Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Chile, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Paraguay, Suriname and Uruguay emphasize the need to uproot the cultural notion of male superiority over women, move away from traditional public policies that focus on men as the heads of household and change misogynist cultural patterns that harm women and support cultural acceptance of violence against them.

### Box III.1

#### Colombia and Guyana: rights-based culture and law

Colombia reported that female circumcision was being practiced in Emberá indigenous communities, based on cultural norms that give rise both to this practice and female genital mutilation.

To prevent rights violations, efforts have been ongoing since 2009 to promote and guarantee the rights of indigenous girls and women through the national sexual and reproductive health policy, as well as to prevent other forms of gender-based violence. Coordinated work with the indigenous authorities and communities to negotiate agreements on issues related to rights, health and violence that are culturally sensitive and value the traditional medicinal practices of the indigenous communities has been very important. Of special note, the Summit of Indigenous and Government Authorities was held in 2012 to open a channel of dialogue in order to develop strategies for the eradication of practices harmful to the health and lives of indigenous women.

Guyana, in its report, discussed actions by the government to confront the culturally accepted practice of corporal punishment, which is inflicted on girls and boys both at school and at home. Since 2009, when the Child Protection Law was enacted, corporal punishment has been prohibited in early childhood centres, but pursuant to the Education Law these practices are still permitted in schools.

The Guyanese government, fulfilling commitments assumed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2010, convened national consultations in 2012-2013 with all stakeholders in the education system to consider eradicating this practice in all schools. Preliminary findings suggest that public opinion is divided on the decision to ban corporal punishment.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has urged the government to implement changes and measures and campaigns to educate and get the word out on the harm inflicted by this type of practice on girls and boys, and to find other ways of disciplining children that do not violate their rights or compromise their physical or psychological well-being.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of national reviews on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) for preparation of the regional reviews and appraisals scheduled for 2015 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference (Beijing+20), 2014.

In this area, tension exists between ensuring compliance with the law and tolerating harmful practices in the name of tradition. Several countries report difficulties with interpreting and enforcing laws. This has come up in relation to the mandate of the machineries for the advancement of women, quota laws, sex education and other cases in which the countries have been unable to approve the policies, programmes or resources needed to fulfil the objectives despite having regulatory frameworks aligned with international human rights conventions and even constitutions that explicitly support gender equality. One of the most conspicuous expressions of resistance to adopting commitments for equality has been the disregard paid to the various problems that affect women in the different stages of life. This disregard is outwardly manifested in the assumption that government policies and programmes benefit the entire population (neutrally) such that there is no need to incorporate or mainstream gender perspectives into them. By this logic, many of these services have led to direct or indirect discrimination against women.

A process of legislative harmonization following the constitutional reforms approved during the period of analysis produced marriage equality laws (in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay), abortion legislation (such as the recently enacted law in Uruguay), including at the subnational level (as in the case of Ecuador), and laws on sexual rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, as in the case of Brazil. These are a few examples of the legislative advances that have been made on the equality agenda. One area of reform has been the decriminalization of abortion and other measures contained in

the penal codes, which in some cases revictimize women who terminate a pregnancy or suffer violence. Some countries, such as Brazil and the Dominican Republic, mention the importance of preventing unsafe abortions as a matter of public health for the effective protection of women's rights.

Action has also been taken to reform civil codes and family and adoption legislation to bring them in line with the new definitions of family recognized under marriage equality laws. Other changes, noted for example in the reports from Colombia, Guatemala and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, are related to the discrepancy that exists between boys and girls with respect to the age of consent for marriage.

A very important phenomenon that should be considered when comparing the present situation in terms of environmental information with that of the early 1990s is the evolution of technology. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have served as key tools for providing access to existing information and also for generating and analysing data. In broad strokes, the situation of women in the digital economy is ruled by a number of factors that reflect the same gender-based social inequalities that prevail in other areas. To further complicate the situation, it is becoming more important by the day to take full part in the information and knowledge society to realize one's full personal and professional potential. More and more men and women are exposed to the new tools of the digital economy, with basic and refresher training becoming standard requirements in the workplace. Accordingly, if no efforts are made to address the inequalities that presently structure the linkages with the labour market, and more specifically with the jobs in the digital economy, gender gaps will widen and only a few women will reap the benefits of the new paradigm. Yet few countries report advances in this area, undoubtedly because they are still struggling with fundamental inequalities, which mask the need to also address these issues and understand the benefits.<sup>59</sup>

Although several countries do not make any specific mention of progress with respect to the specific protection of girls, they do discuss laws that have been enacted on the handling of sexual abuse that occurs in schools, cyber-harassment and bullying, albeit in the framework of child protection laws already in place (for boys and girls). Likewise, national plans to end sexual violence and human trafficking cover boys, girls and adolescents alike. The same is true of educational policies for early childhood and adolescence, laws to end child labour, family policies and caretaking policies. However, girls are the specific focus of programmes for special populations, such as young female victims of violence. Only a few countries report policies or actions to help eliminate the unequal treatment that girls often receive and the inequality of opportunities. The media is lagging on this issue: with some exceptions, including Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, there are no laws in force to ban gender stereotypes and end violence in the media against women.

The Beijing Platform for Action asserts that in the cities and in the countryside, environmental degradation has negative impacts on the health, well-being and quality of life of the population in general, but especially girls and women of all ages. Attention and specific recognition must be given to the special situation and function of women living in rural areas, inasmuch as access to training, land, natural and productive resources, credit, development programmes and cooperative structures can help them participate more actively in sustainable development. In their reports, the countries variously state that they have incorporated the gender perspective into environmental campaigns or established, in some cases, a gender area as part of their environmental machinery. One example is Mexico, which drafted a Declaration on Gender and Climate Change that contains thirteen specific proposals on mitigation, four on adaptation and eight on financing. In general, this is one of the least developed topics in the reports, which suggests that still more work is needed to identify a common approach that the countries can take to mainstream the gender perspective into their

<sup>59</sup> However, the countries chose the situation of women in the digital economy as an issue to discuss at the twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The country reports, round tables and the document prepared by ECLAC (2013b) are available on the website of the twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] at <http://www.cepal.org/12conferenciamujer/default.asp>.

environmental portfolios, an endeavour that the gender and environment authorities should explore jointly. Incorporating gender perspectives into environmental policies remains an item of unfinished business for the majority of the countries.

## **B. Challenges related to decision-making autonomy**

Section G of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, “Women in power and decision-making,” guides the countries in this regard. This issue has strongly emerged as one of the new priorities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the debates on the sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda. In terms of decision-making autonomy,<sup>60</sup> the countries have coincided in their reports, first and foremost, on the need to strengthen the institutional framework for gender (discussed by Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and others). Institutionbuilding is a top priority going forward. In some cases, the countries feel that it is important to allocate resources to the machineries for the advancement of women and to mainstream the gender perspective into the government. The majority of the reports indicate that this is the direction in which the countries will continue to move. The second point discussed in the reports is the importance of women’s political participation and access to decision-making spaces, not only in the public sector but also in the world of private business, a priority that goes hand in hand with the demand for political parity in the countries, both nationally and locally. Deepening and expanding women’s political participation, the issue of parity, financing for women candidates and incentives for participation are some of the challenges involved in finetuning electoral laws. Chile, Costa Rica and Guatemala underscore the need to implement or strengthen quota laws as the sole mechanism for ensuring that women are able to participate equally in politics.

Growing the ranks of women in decision-making positions in the business and professional world and ensuring greater female representation at the subnational and local levels are perennial objectives. Decision-making autonomy entails a host of challenges, especially for the Caribbean governments. There is broad consensus among some countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) that the most pressing obstacle to overcome is the limited extent to which gender perspectives have been mainstreamed into their government institutions. Many countries (Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) also lament the lack of gender-disaggregated information and studies. Cited next among the countries’ concerns are limited personnel, resources and training for the machineries for the advancement of women (Dominica, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands) and the need for institutional strengthening (Colombia and the Plurinational State of Bolivia). Low rates of female representation in positions of leadership are another concern in the countries (Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica and Suriname). Grenada mentions a weak culture of reporting on gender aspects in its government institutions, no national mechanism for monitoring agreements and structural barriers to women’s participation in decision-making. Barbados notes the low number of women candidates in its political process, a problem it plans to address by amending electoral and party laws.

## **C. Challenges related to physical autonomy**

Several country reports note the importance of reducing adolescent fertility rates and decriminalizing abortion (in those countries where there is still no legislation in that regard).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> For more information on gender indicators in the area of decision-making autonomy, see Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <http://www.cepal.org/oig/decisiones/default.asp?idioma=IN>.

<sup>61</sup> For more information on legislation on abortion and elective termination of pregnancy in region, see Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/oig/noticias/paginas/8/50478/P50478.xml&xsl=/oig/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/oig/tpl/top-bottom-fisica.xsl>.

In the area of physical autonomy, the region's countries are striving to guarantee that women can live a life free of violence by ending violence against women. This is one of the issues that have long been at the forefront of international action to improve the situation of women around the world. In paragraph 29 of the Beijing Declaration, the countries participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women reaffirmed their commitment to “[p]revent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.” And Section D, “Violence against women,” of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action elaborates on this point. The countries have reported on their achievements in this regard as well as on the challenges yet to overcome on the occasion of the various reviews of implementation of the Platform for Action.<sup>62</sup> The statistics on violence are the best evidence of the extent to which the countries' efforts have come up short. As stated, this phenomenon is the convergence of multiple forms of discrimination, which affirm the need for intersectoral, cross-cutting policies with a strong territorial orientation.

Concerning violence against women, there have been notable efforts to enforce aspects of the laws related to punishment and victim support, but the scant attention paid to prevention, education and access to justice is troubling (ECLAC, 2014b). The challenges related to violence vary: in some countries where laws have been recently enacted or amended, the imperative is enforcement, as is the case in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, whereas in other countries, such as Brazil, the processes for implementing laws are much longer and significant resources have been dedicated to this purpose, which is the result of lessons learned about the complexity of this phenomenon. The effective use of police resources (as in Guyana), the compilation of data on abuse (as in Barbados) and the implementation of legislation to combat gender-based abuse (as in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) are some examples. The report prepared by Antigua and Barbuda discusses the negative portrayal of women in the media and the limited support among women as factors to overcome. Two countries (Antigua and Barbuda and Suriname) report unequal access to health as an ongoing challenge. Adolescent pregnancy is identified as a pending health and rights-related challenge in several country reports.

## D. Challenges related to economic autonomy

In the area of economic autonomy, the countries insist on the need to establish shared responsibilities for domestic and caretaking work,<sup>63</sup> a prescription that was set out in paragraph 15 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (“Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their wellbeing and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy”) and in strategic objective F.6 (“Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men”) in the “Women and the economy” section. This issue has also been taken up in the various consensus documents produced by the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially the Quito Consensus (2007), the Brasilia Consensus (2010)<sup>64</sup> and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development adopted at the first session of the Regional Conference on

<sup>62</sup> For more information, see the national and regional reports on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) corresponding to the various review and appraisal periods (Beijing+5, Beijing+10 and Beijing+15) [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/P51823.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

<sup>63</sup> For more information, consult the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean database on caretaking laws in the region [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/oig/noticias/paginas/2/46652/P46652.xml&xsl=/oig/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/oig/tpl/top-bottom-economica.xsl>.

<sup>64</sup> For more information, see the website of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/1/28701/P28701.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xslt>.

Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013).<sup>65</sup> The countries have also endeavoured to administer time-use surveys, which have served as the input for calculating the indicator on total time spent on work.<sup>66</sup> Redoubled efforts are needed, too, in labour to ensure that women have access to the labour market under equal conditions as men.

On the subject of time-use surveys, the countries report, as an issue that cuts across the three autonomies, the need to strengthen their national statistics systems to gain access to reliable public information that can be used to assess the status of men and women in different areas. Some countries, such as Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, cite the importance of producing genderdisaggregated statistical information, while others are focused on expanding the gender perspective in statistical production (which goes beyond disaggregating information by sex). This is precisely the line along which the countries diverge in terms of progress made thus far in this area, which all regard as a priority, one that has emerged as a direct result of the demands and struggles fought by women in civil society and in the government to draw attention to the different status accorded to women, in relation to men, in all possible sectors of society. Genderdisaggregated official data and gender analysis can be used to contemplate real progress in the formulation of public policies. Gendered analysis of economic policies on poverty, work, innovation and productive development is not explicitly recognized in the reports but is most certainly indispensable.

The second issue that cuts across the three areas of autonomy has to do with the implementation of plans and laws for equality in the countries, as a way of enforcing the creation of a culture of equality. There are several countries have taken important steps through legislation and intend to continue on this path. Others, such as Grenada, are pushing ahead with plans for equality to improve the situation of women. The countries that are pursuing equality by constitutional and legislative means note the importance of continuing on a path of equal rights for all people.

There is a perennial need to train and upgrade the skills of public officials in the area of gender equality and gender indicators.<sup>67</sup> The reports also point out the need to mainstream the gender perspective into the education sector. Lastly, the majority of the countries insist on the importance of improving access to housing, land and credit, as well as paying special attention to the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendent women, given the many layers of class, ethnic and racial discrimination that they suffer.

The reports mention rising labour participation among women (as in the case of Dominica, Jamaica and Suriname), although labour segmentation persists (a concern expressed by countries including Antigua and Barbuda, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Uruguay). However, there have also been changes in labour and social protection laws (as reported by Chile, in particular) and improvements in the quality of services (as noted by Argentina). With respect to economic rights, labour protections need to be expanded for groups of women subject to discrimination, especially domestic workers, women with disabilities and ownaccount workers, and equal pay for men and women is a perennial challenge (as noted by Brazil and the Plurinational State of Bolivia).

The countries' strategic challenges include implementation of a national statistics system in Uruguay, social protection and improvements in quality of services in Argentina, the high tally of total work in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the need for day-care services. These challenges involve working to develop a differentiated rightsbased approach, as noted by Colombia. With the exception of Uruguay, none of the countries discuss challenges related to education and the digital divide.

<sup>65</sup> See Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development [online] [http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/9/50709/2013-596-montevideo\\_consensus\\_pyd.pdf](http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/9/50709/2013-596-montevideo_consensus_pyd.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> This indicator can be consulted at the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <http://www.cepal.org/oig/aeconomica/>.

<sup>67</sup> The Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has been developing a series of distance courses for public officials on gender equality and gender indicators. For more information, see [online] <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/1/47501/P47501.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

The countries conclude by reaffirming their support and renewing their commitment to the various international instruments established to improve the situation of women in the region and to guarantee their human rights. The Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands note the key importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Other instruments that the countries cite as important are the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará); the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the consensus documents produced by it; and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

Although the higher level assigned to the mechanisms in the government hierarchy, gender mainstreaming and near parity in political representation are important achievements, weak institutional structures, limited gender mainstreaming and cultural and political resistance to equality remain the major challenges.



## IV. Data and statistics

In the Beijing Platform for Action, the world's countries, recognizing the dearth of statistics and data that would support preparation of informed plans and policies to promote objectives of equality, development and peace for women around the world, made a commitment to adopt measures to collect and disseminate statistical information with a gender perspective, as well as design indicators that describe the economic situation of women, make the full extent of their work visible and measure the scope of violence against women in the public and private spheres.

The Santo Domingo Consensus and other agreements of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean acknowledge the need for genderdisaggregated statistical information (collected from censuses as well as surveys and administrative records) so instruments can be developed that take regular measurements to reveal the discrepancies and inequities in the situations of men and women in areas such as time use, poverty and paid and unpaid work. They also cite the importance of compiling, analysing and disseminating data on gender-based violence.

The Working Group on Gender Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC was created in 2006 with the objective of promoting the production, development, systematization and consolidation of statistical information and gender indicators in order to design, monitor and evaluate public policies. This group has fostered the development of technical and methodological capacities to produce and disseminate gender statistics on issues related to time use and unpaid work, the measurement of poverty from a gender perspective and violence against women. It also promotes international cooperation for the development and dissemination of gender statistics and efforts to strengthen ties between producers of information (national statistics offices) and users of information (machineries for the advancement of women).

The advances made by the countries over the past 20 years in the area of gender statistics include the integration of gender statistics into national statistical systems, the creation and operation of government gender observatories and the adoption of this issue area by the member States through their participation in the Working Group on Gender Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. In terms of statistical data available for monitoring progress, the region has made real progress, as documented by the countries in their Beijing+20 reviews and as reported by the Conference. As shown in table IV.1, most of the region's countries have undertaken to assemble a core set of national indicators to monitor progress towards gender equality and are intensifying efforts to harmonize those indicators with the minimum set of gender indicators agreed upon by the United Nations Statistical Commission



in 2013. Most countries also monitor violence against women, though additional work is needed in this area in order to compile internationally comparable indicators. Data on the situation of priority groups of women has been collected less frequently.

**Table IV.1**  
**Latin America: collection of indicators to monitor progress in the area of gender equality**

Country	Core set of national indicators for monitoring progress in the area of gender equality	Indicators approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2013			Collection of data on the situation of specific groups of women	
		Minimum set of gender indicators	Nine indicators on violence against women			
Argentina	Yes	No	Uses its own set of gender indicators	No	Plans to design and produce indicators on violence against women	Yes
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Yes	Yes	36 of 52	Yes	7 of 9	Yes
Brazil	Yes	Yes		No	Uses administrative records to monitor violence against women	Yes
Chile	No	No		No		No
Colombia	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Costa Rica	Yes	Yes	16 of 52, information available for the calculation of 47	No	Uses administrative records to monitor violence against women	Yes
Cuba	No	No		No		No
Dominican Republic	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Ecuador	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
El Salvador	Yes	Yes	34 of 52	No	Uses administrative records to monitor violence against women	Yes
Guatemala	Yes	Yes	Around 70% of the proposed indicators	Yes	2 of 9	Yes
Mexico	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Panama	Yes	No		No	Has taken measures to develop a survey on the perception of violence	Yes
Paraguay	No	Yes	Around 70% of the proposed indicators	No	Uses administrative records to monitor violence against women	Yes
Uruguay	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Yes	Yes		No		Yes

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The region's countries have made notable advances in measuring time spent on unpaid work by men and women (see table IV.2). Since 2003, international meetings have been convened every year with experts—male and female—on time-use surveys, who share their professional experiences with administering time-use surveys as well as with methodologies and application of the information for analysis and formulation of public policies on unpaid work and the care economy. There are also concerted efforts in some countries to place on the public agenda the development of satellite accounts on unpaid work in the household as part of the national accounts system. Mexico has led the way, developing a satellite account of unpaid work, and based on the 2009 National Survey on Time Use (ENUT), it reported that the value of unpaid work was equivalent to 19.7% of the national GDP at market prices in 2012, and 76.1% of that work was done by women. At present, a number of countries in Latin America, including Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, are in the process of developing satellite accounts of unpaid

work. Based on its 2012-2013 National Survey on Time Use (ENUT), Colombia valued unpaid work at 19.3% of the national GDP in 2012, while unpaid work in Guatemala was valued at 18.9% of GDP in 2011.

**Table IV.2**  
**Latin America and the Caribbean: countries that have administered surveys or included regular questions or modules in them on time use and unpaid work**

Country	Administered before 2006 <sup>a</sup>	Survey/module/questions	Administered in 2006 <sup>a</sup> or after	Survey/module/questions
Argentina	2005 (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires)	Activity log	2010-2011  2013	Module in the Permanent Survey of Households Module in the Annual Survey of Urban Households (EAHU)
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2001	Module in the Permanent Survey of Households	2010 and 2011	Survey of Time Use in Households
Brazil	Since 1992	Questions on the National Survey of Households (PNAD)	2009-2010	Questions on the PNAD Pilot survey with log in five states
Chile			2008-2009	Experimental Survey on Time Use in Greater Santiago
Colombia			2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010  2012	Questions on the Comprehensive Survey of Households National Survey on Time Use
Costa Rica	2004	Module in the Multipurpose Household Survey (EHPM)	2011	Survey on Time Use in the Greater Metropolitan Region
Cuba	1997 2001	Questions Survey administered in five municipalities		
Dominican Republic			2006-2007	Question on the Demographic and Health Survey
Ecuador	2004  2005	Module in the Survey of Households Survey on Time Use	2007, 2010 y 2012	National Surveys on Time Use
El Salvador	2005	Short list of questions in the Multipurpose Household Survey (EHPM)	2010-2011	Module in the EHPM
Guatemala	2000	Module in the National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI)	2006 y 2011	Module in the ENCOVI
Honduras			2009 y 2011	Module in the Permanent Survey of Households
Mexico	1996  1998 and 2002	Module in the National Survey on Work, Contributions and Time Use (ENTAUT) National Survey on Time Use (ENUT)	2009  2010	ENUT  Module in the National Survey on Household Income and Expenditure
Nicaragua	1998	Module in the National Household Survey on Living Standards (ENHMNV)		
Panama			2006  2011	Module in the Multipurpose Survey National Survey on Time Use
Paraguay	2001	Questions on the Household Survey		
Peru			2006  2010	Questions on the Permanent Survey of Households National Survey on Time Use
Uruguay	2003	Survey in the Metropolitan Region (Universidad de la República)	2007, 2011 and 2013	Module in the Permanent Survey of Households
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)			2008-2011	Survey on Time Use

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

<sup>a</sup> Year of creation of the Working Group on Gender Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.



## Conclusions

The situation of women in the region has improved slowly but surely over the past 20 years. And yet, progress has been uneven and not always in the same areas, making for a very mixed picture. There are significant differences between and within countries, and rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendent women are at a particular disadvantage, experiencing multiple types of discrimination that exacerbate the structural inequalities that characterize the region. Although conditions for women to exercise autonomy have greatly improved, major challenges remain, and one of the most important is to secure the progress made thus far against the very real risk of setbacks driven by the social and political culture of the countries. This is indisputably the most significant risk reported by the countries.

Legal changes, especially the virtual elimination of openly discriminatory laws, have been one of the most sweeping achievements in Latin America and the Caribbean, seen in nearly every country in the region. Equality between men and women is increasingly recognized in every country in the region too, established constitutionally in several cases as well as in specific laws on equality and in national plans, projects and programmes. Among the advances inconceivable 20 years ago, several countries now recognize the diversity of families and have implemented marriage reform, actions which aside from their legal significance, reflect profound cultural change.

The advances made in decision-making autonomy have come about as a result of institutional reforms in the executive branch, legislative branch, electoral system and justice system, but it is no less true that the region has undergone a change in democratic culture, electing women to the highest levels of representation over the past decade, including to the presidency in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

These advances have allowed for greater representation and participation and the implementation of explicit gender agendas through plans, policies and budgets. Several countries have started labelling their budgets so they can tally the resources being spent on equality. Lack of resources combined with the cultural resistance of decision makers and programme operators often produces threats to the institutional stability of the machineries for the advancement of women and thus slows the forward march of women's rights. Over the years, various attempts have been made to eliminate or limit the scope of these machineries by merging them with family policies, limiting them to vulnerable groups or treating equality policies as assistance policies. In most cases, it has been the active mobilization of women's organizations and the support of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean that has forestalled institutional setbacks. This is the context that should inform

understanding of the importance placed on institutional hierarchy and on recognition of the specificity of gender policies. In the case of the Caribbean, 10 of the 14 countries do not have gender policies (5 of the 10 are in the process of developing such policies). In this subregion, the mandate of the machineries for the advancement of women is not always supported by a legal framework but rather is integrated into action plans, which has enabled action in favour of women.

Population and economic growth will drive a rapid expansion in demand for energy, water, minerals and food in the decades ahead. Access to each one of these resources and the corresponding patterns of consumption already paints a picture of inequality and shapes the challenges going forward, since every challenge must take into account the differentiated impact on the lives of men and women. Demographic changes will alter the economic strength of countries and the global balance of power and will shape demand for goods and services and migratory flows (Howe and Jackson, 2011).

A very important dimension for policy efficacy is the presence of women in all decision-making spheres. In order to strengthen the voice and participation of women, institutional reforms have had to be made in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and in the electoral system. The quota laws implemented by the countries have played a crucial role in this regard, though, as stated, there is a need for proper enforcement in case of violations. There are two other recurrent threads in the reports: the need to strengthen the statistical systems by incorporating a gender focus (which is needed to formulate public policies on gender) and national laws and plans on equality.

In terms of economic autonomy, the incorporation of women into the labour market has proceeded in all the region's countries at different rates and intensities. The defining characteristics of female labour participation continue to hold true: women with higher levels of education, fewer family duties and more resources to pay for caretaking services have higher rates of economic participation. The structure of the labour market has remained unchanged, a fact that when taken with data on time distribution between women and men shows that the costs of labour force participation have been individually and privately borne by women. Public policies have fallen short in terms of improving access to the labour market for women and guaranteeing a permanent place for them throughout the stages of life, which puts them at a clear disadvantage to their male counterparts when it comes to having a full career path with equal pay, as well as the right to a pension so they can face old age independently and with dignity.

Going forward, the challenges for the countries will be to develop policies that not only improve women's access to the labour market and support their permanence in it but also integrate paid and unpaid work. They will have to systematically dismantle the occupational segmentation barriers that keep women primarily in the services and care sectors. They must resolve the pay gap and overcome obstacles to professional development and advancement, the ethnic and racial discrimination that compounds gender inequalities and the absence of social protection and caretaking systems. Until policies redistribute time and work (paid and unpaid) between men and women and assign caretaking responsibilities more equitably not only between men and women, but also between the family, State and market, inequality will not be solved.

In the area of physical autonomy and sexual and reproductive rights, progress has been made on several fronts. Laws have been enacted to prevent violence against women and decriminalize abortion and emergency contraception, though with certain restrictions, such as the need to present a medical prescription.

Maternal mortality rates have fallen but continue to present a challenge for the region's countries, both in terms of measurement and getting to zero. Advances made in curbing violence against women have revolved around legislation and victim services. The challenge today in the majority of the countries is access to justice for effective enforcement of the laws and regulations.

In their reports, the region's governments all note the importance of dismantling the cultural barriers and obstacles that block real progress towards the full realization of women's rights and gender equality, as well as the need to change the misogynist cultural patterns that harm women and support cultural acceptance of violence against them.

The advances have also come with problems in enforcing the new laws because in many countries, the weight of tradition has had a negative influence on the interpretation and enforcement of laws. This has come up in relation to the mandate of the machineries for the advancement of women, quota laws, sex education and other cases in which the countries have been unable to approve the policies, programmes or resources needed to fulfil the objectives despite having regulatory frameworks aligned with international human rights conventions and even constitutions that explicitly support gender equality.

To be sure, as they continue to move the equality agenda forward in the region, the countries must integrate a cross-cutting gender perspective into the design, implementation and monitoring of their national public policies as well as the agreements that they negotiate looking towards the post-2015 development agenda.

In conclusion, the progress made thus far has been slow and insufficient, due to a combination of at least three factors: first, the toll taken by the crisis in the 1980s and the subsequent introduction of structural adjustment programmes characterized by the limited role of the State, labour market deregulation measures and the targeting of social policies, all implemented with no consideration for the differentiated effects on women and men; second, the lack of sufficient political sway among the actors pursuing policies for equality, especially economic policies, to gain access to sufficient political institutional and budget resources; and third, resistance to change coupled with high tolerance for discrimination within institutions, especially in the political and judicial system, the business sector and unions. Against this backdrop, the transformations that have taken place over the past 20 years, though uneven, have been profound, and the hope is that coordination with the post-2015 development agenda will provide the impetus needed to achieve real and lasting equality.



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