



Gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean

Road maps for development



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“We cannot allow the national machinery for the advancement of women to be the sole agency responsible for application of the Beijing Platform. This machinery drives, promotes, coordinates and links efforts, but States are the responsible parties. We need the whole infrastructure of the executive the parliament and local authorities to be permeated by these responsibilities.

We say that we are not satisfied with a Ministry of Women’s Affairs; it is not enough to raise the budget a little. What we need is clear coordination between the Ministries of Development, Public Health, Justice, Economic Affairs, and so on, and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. We need our demands to be included in governments’ annual plans or, even better, before that, in the programmes of political parties competing for power. I cannot see the use of a Ministry of Women’s Affairs working in isolation...”.

Magaly Pineda*

* See Bonder and others (2015).

Foreword

In Latin America and the Caribbean, various measures and concrete public policy proposals exist enshrining the will of the States in the region to overcome the obstacles that prevent women's full integration on an equal footing into all areas of social, cultural and economic life. The gender equality plans drawn up by the countries of the region are important policy and planning instruments that, driven by the machineries for the advancement of women, reflect both the current challenges and States' commitments in this field.

This study by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean presents a review and analysis of the processes of drawing up the gender equality plans now in place in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Since they were first developed in the 1990s and, more particularly, in the twenty-first century, these plans have become real road maps towards gender equality and guaranteeing the rights of women for States in the region, as well as a sign of the political will to make progress in this area.

Today, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development poses considerable challenges to the countries of the world and our region. The next 13 years will require great efforts to fully attain the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which will not be achieved without explicit and cross-cutting gender equality. Women's active participation and decision-making power in all spheres of society—in other words, their full exercise of autonomy—is an essential prerequisite for development and its sustainability. This was recognized by the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean at its thirteenth session, held in Montevideo in October 2016, when the governments of the region affirmed that, without gender equality, sustainable development is neither genuine development nor sustainable.

Analysis of the processes by which these plans were prepared identifies aspects that could improve their scope and impact, both in terms of ending the subordination of women and tackling discrimination against them, and in relation to the need to mainstream the gender perspective in public policies.

This review offers a basis for machineries for the advancement of women, as the bodies responsible for drawing up these plans, and the State as a whole to evaluate the work undertaken and, more particularly, to strengthen intersectoral efforts to devise and implement future plans, as the basis for developing innovative and effective gender equality policies.

One issue addressed in this study is the link between machineries for the advancement of women and gender equality plans. These plans have undoubtedly been crucial to institution-building efforts, while at the same time promoting State action towards gender equality. However, this path is

not without risks. The analysis shows that more needs to be done to mainstream the gender perspective, by bolstering the activities, responsibility and leadership of machineries for the advancement of women and by actively involving all sectors and levels of government in order to agree upon and share goals and to allocate resources in different areas to achieve the objectives.

Based on the conviction that an inclusive State and an active society are two sides of the same coin, the second issue addressed in the study is participation in plan development. It examines how processes have taken into account diverse voices and the concrete needs of real people whose different positions in society mean that they have disparate requirements. In this context, the aim of the study is to open the debate on future challenges in this area, specifically including the voices of those who have had none and encouraging institutional and intersectoral dialogue with government officials. In this connection, the study considers the importance of public consultation and the opening of channels for democratic participation in the preparation, follow-up and evaluation of equality plans.

A review of the substance of the plans is the third element of this study. Rather than listing objectives and strategies, the review examines the State's priorities in connection with gender inequalities and the limits on the exercise of women's autonomy. This analysis provides an overview of the core issues that remain unresolved, despite the progress made by the countries on gender equality.

This review identifies goals that are related to the autonomies proposed by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, which cover unresolved historical problems. The plans include goals concerning violence against women, maternal mortality and adolescent pregnancy, in the field of physical autonomy; political participation well below gender parity, in the sphere of autonomy in decision-making; and the incorporation of women into the labour market, under appropriate conditions, and control of monetary resources and time on equal terms with men, in the area of economic autonomy. The plans also include goals and measures on women's education and training and the protection and sustainable use of the environment, all issues that are also covered by the regional gender agenda. The countries' plans are the national expression of agreements forged in the course of 40 years of sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

A fourth matter considered is the assignment of responsibilities to different State actors, seeking to determine whether criteria have been established for increasing the participation of all State actors in the implementation of the plans. This reveals whether the plan has been, in practice and from the outset, a road map towards gender equality for the State as a whole or just for the machinery for the advancement of women.

Although there is still a long way to go before equality between men and women is achieved, this analysis of the components of gender equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean—together with the fact that they exist at all—reflects States' commitment to equality, to a vision of what they want to achieve and to building an administrative rationale whereby plans endure as technical and political tools used by successive governments.

The proposal on gender equality planning in the region may thus be described as a major achievement that should now be developed further and woven into the institutional architecture for gender equality, understood as a structure composed of stakeholders from the national and local executive, legislative and judicial branches, trade unions and civil society organizations. This must proceed hand in hand with the development of coordinated processes for mainstreaming gender equality and the establishment of participation channels through dialogue and consensus-building, as mechanisms for ensuring that equality policies will be sustainable over time.

The existing achievements need to be consolidated, especially given the current economic uncertainty and the resurgence of conservative political stances in the region. This calls for refining gender equality goals and technical and political instruments and enhancing their synergies with other planning tools, particularly the development planning tools that will gather momentum in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Today, Latin American and Caribbean countries face numerous and complex challenges in the area of gender equality, which require the sustained and cross-cutting commitment of the State to women's human rights and autonomy. The region has a regional gender agenda that must form part of the discussion in relation to future equality plans and that, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, constitutes a frame of reference for proposals and goals.

Lastly, as described in this study, the creation and linking of synergies between equality plans and development planning instruments is both an imperative and an opportunity. An imperative, because development is not possible without gender equality. And an opportunity, because it opens the way for establishing and strengthening an institutional architecture for equality, democracy and development.

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I. Equality plans in Latin America and the Caribbean: designing a road map for gender equality

Equality is a core issue in the agenda of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), an *idée-force* that has become the fundamental value that the development model must achieve (Bárcena and Prado, 2016). Understood as the entitlement to rights, equality requires the State to play a role in attaining thresholds of well-being for the whole population, and achieving it takes neither resources nor strength from economic growth. On the contrary, equality is key to building a development agenda that is shared by the various stakeholders. Insofar as inequalities are the outcome of a complex relationship between political, social, cultural and economic factors, they can only be overcome by means of integrated policies and an active role by the State, consistency between economic and social policies, strengthening of the democratic institutional structure, reduction of territorial inequalities and profound cultural change.¹

Eight years on from the establishment of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was developed by the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC with the support of agencies of the United Nations system and international cooperation institutions such as the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), this tool has become an important information resource for States, civil society and academia for identifying and tracking progress on gender equality in the region, as well as areas in which countries are falling behind with respect to the commitments assumed by their governments on the regional gender agenda.

Since 2009, the work of the Observatory has been structured around the concept of women's autonomy, consisting of physical autonomy, decision-making autonomy and economic autonomy. Autonomy—an essential requirement for the full exercise of human rights and the achievement of equality—is understood as “people's capacity to take free and informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to be and act in accordance with their own aspirations and desires, given a historical context that makes those possible” (ECLAC, 2011, p. 9). In relation to gender, autonomy has been defined as “women's degree of freedom to act according to their own choices rather than those of other people. There is therefore a close link between women's

¹ Inputs are taken from the following publications: *What kind of State? What kind of equality?* (ECLAC, 2010a), *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails* (ECLAC, 2010b), *Women in the digital economy: breaking through the equality threshold* (ECLAC, 2013a) and *Compacts for equality: towards a sustainable future* (ECLAC, 2014).

achievement of autonomy and their spaces of individual and collective empowerment. An individual's degree of autonomy is inseparable from the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the social group to which he or she belongs. Accordingly, the degree of personal autonomy that a woman can develop depends on the potential autonomy of her social group and of women in general within her society. In short, the autonomy of a social group does not depend exclusively on the personal desires of its members" (Fernández, 1999, cited in United Nations, 2005, p. 114).

The distinction between the different autonomies that make up the pillars of the work of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean is an analytical one, since women's autonomy is a single reality expressed in the real expansion of spaces of freedom and in the reduction of equality gaps in all areas of their lives (ECLAC, 2015d). It finds expression in both the public and the private arenas and it constitutes a social covenant, insofar as it requires social recognition and the existence of certain conditions in order to become a reality in all areas of life. It is not enough to guarantee a framework of social accord and the conditions for the exercise of rights in one area and not in others, since the lack of guaranteed rights in any area of women's lives detracts from autonomy overall. From a human rights perspective, the autonomies link up and coordinate in a way that must be made explicit. For that reason, efforts were made in 2016 to identify and describe those links.

The work of States to achieve gender equality is framed within a legal corpus on rights developed by the United Nations, in which women's civil, legal, social, economic and cultural rights have long been approached, especially since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), under the rationale that the construction of societies in which men and women are equal is a task that involves society as a whole and that, from the policy standpoint, must be assumed as policy of State, not as the responsibility of specific sectors working in isolation.

In 2015, 20 years on from the Beijing Conference and as the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were being appraised, the world's governments came to a consensus upon the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, the Agenda is the axis around which global action is taking place to build inclusive societies and end poverty and inequality, in a sustainable framework of respect for the environment. Among the main commitments are: ending poverty and hunger; reducing inequality within and among countries; promoting fair, peaceful and inclusive societies; protecting human rights and achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; and ensuring lasting protection for the planet and its natural resources. The Agenda recognizes the persistence of immense challenges to achieving sustainable development, among which gender inequality is a key one.

In this framework of global concern and commitment to overcoming gender inequalities, it is important to review the State instruments and actions taken to progress towards women's autonomy and equality in the regional context of Latin America, and to identify the lights and shadows in this ongoing process. This approach is complemented by the regional gender agenda, which is the outcome of the work of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2016a) begun in 1977 in Havana. The most recent product of the Conference was the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, adopted in 2016 (ECLAC, 2016b).

The pro-gender-equality legal and institutional changes that have taken place in the region represent its greatest and most widespread achievement so far (ECLAC, 2015a). The strategies of the countries of Latin America to promote equality of opportunities for women are described in their national reports on the implementation of Beijing+20.² Similarly, greater equality of access in the spheres of economic, physical and decision-making autonomy has occurred in parallel and hand-in-hand

² The countries which mention development plans or policies that include equality of opportunities for women are: Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

with the creation and implementation of plans and policies on equality of opportunities. These plans may be seen as State road maps towards gender equality, and this is the framework in which they are analysed in this document.

Equality plans are tools used in most of the region's countries. Largely propelled by machineries or mechanisms for the advancement of women, they serve to direct the action of the State and plan and carry out joint work between the different sectors, thus enhancing the institutionalization and mainstreaming of gender. The report examines the latest equality plan in place in each country of the region, its design, contents and strategic pillars, as well as how it ties in with the current legislation and with national development plans. The purpose here is to offer an overview of these instruments with a view to providing machineries for the advancement of women with a basis for rethinking initiatives in this sphere and strengthening coordinated work with the different sectors in preparing future gender planning instruments (see table I.1).

Table I.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: equality plans

Country	Year	Name of the plan	Responsible entity
Belize	2013	Revised National Gender Policy 2013	National Women's Commission Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
Bolivia (Plur. State of)	2008	National Equal Opportunity Plan "Women building the new Bolivia in the interest of living well"	Department for Gender and Generational Affairs (VGAG) Ministry of Justice
Brazil	2013-2015	Third National Plan for Women's Policies, 2013-2015	Office of the President Special Secretariat on Policies for Women ^a
British Virgin Islands	2011	National Policy for Gender Equity and Equality	Office of Gender Affairs Ministry of Health and Social Development
Chile	2011-2020	Gender Equality Plan 2011-2020	National Women's Service (SERNAM)
Colombia	2013-2016	Indicative Action Plan 2013-2016 of the National Policy for Gender Equality for Women	Office of the Advisory Council for Women's Equity
Costa Rica	2007-2017	National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity 2007-2017	National Women's Institute (INAMU)
Dominican Republic	2007-2017	Second National Plan on Gender Equality and Equity (PLANEG II) 2007-2017	Ministry for Women's Affairs
Ecuador	2014-2017	National Agenda for Women and Gender Equality 2014-2017	National Council for Gender Equality ^b
El Salvador	2014	National Women's Policy 2011-2014	Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU)
Guatemala	2008-2023	National Policy for the Advancement and Comprehensive Development of Women (PNPDIM) and Equal Opportunities Plan (PEO), 2008-2023	Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM)
Honduras	2010-2022	Second Honduran Gender Equality and Equity Plan, 2010-2022 (II PIEGH)	National Women's Institute (INAM)
Jamaica	2011	National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)	Bureau of Women's Affairs (Gender Affairs), Gender Advisory Committee
Mexico	2013-2018	National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women, 2013-2018 (PROIGUALDAD)	National Women's Institute (INMUJERES)
Nicaragua	2006-2010	National Gender Equality Programme 2006-2010	Nicaraguan Women's Institute (INIM)

Table I.1 (concluded)

Country	Year	Name of the plan	Responsible entity
Panama	2012	Public Policy on Equal Opportunities for Women (PPIOM)	National Women’s Institute (INAMU)
Paraguay	2008-2017	Third National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2008-2017	Department for Women’s Affairs of the Office of the President
Peru	2012-2017	National Gender Equality Plan 2012-2017 (PLANIG)	Ministry for Women’s Affairs and Vulnerable Populations
Suriname	2013	Gender Work Plan 2013	National Bureau for Gender Policy Ministry of Home Affairs
Trinidad and Tobago	2009	National Policy on Gender and Development of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Draft Document	Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs
Uruguay	2007-2011	First National Plan for Equal Opportunities and Rights 2007-2011	National Women's Institute (INMUJERES)
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2013-2019	“Mamá Rosa” Plan for Gender Equality and Equity 2013-2019	People’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality

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

^a In October 2015, this became the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights. In May 2016, the Ministry was dismantled and returned to being the Special Secretariat on Policies for Women, and was removed from the Office of the President and placed under the brief of the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship (see [online] <http://www.spm.gov.br/sobre/a-secretaria>).

^b Until 2015, this was known as the Transition Commission for the Definition of Public Institutions to Ensure Equality between Men and Women.

As well as this analysis, this publication reflects upon policy financing, on the visibility of budget allocations to gender equality policies and on the linkages between the national budget and the budget for machineries for the advancement of women, their year-on-year trend in the period covered by this report and, where the information is available, the distribution of spending on women in the national budget.

II. Gender equality in State agendas

The increased presence of women in the public sphere is the result of the struggles of several generations of women demanding recognition of equality of rights with respect to men. However, this growing participation of women in spheres formerly reserved for men is still occurring in the framework of a change-resistant gender order.

Women access the public sphere under lesser conditions than men, whether economic, social or cultural (Astelarra, 2005). They participate in segregated spaces, that is, jobs, occupations or professions that are considered female, with a lesser social and monetary valuation attached to them than “male” ones. Moreover, women’s participation in these spaces is always affected by the place they occupy in the private sphere and by their roles as unpaid caregivers and domestic workers. Their participation in public spheres does nothing to change these roles, which thus impose double work days, with all the associated costs and difficulties.

For several decades now, greater equality for women has been one of the demands made upon States from the field of feminist politics, in which public policies are an important tool for building new relations of equality and strengthening democracy. “Gender demands and feminist thought, framed within a critical view of asymmetrical sex and gender relationships, pose a radical challenge to ideas about both development and the scope of equality. Feminist theory has revealed the distance between normative discourses about equality and day-to-day interactions, highlighting the existence of numerous enclaves in which inequality is reproduced, most particularly the consideration of the other as inferior in status and rights” (ECLAC, 2014).

The gender equality agenda in Latin America has gained strength from converging phenomena. First is the development agenda driven by social movements, especially by the feminist movement, which turned a spotlight on demands for equality and non-discrimination, as expressed in the international agreements to which States have committed. These agreements include: (i) the World Conference on Human Rights of 1993,³ which ended the gender-neutral vision of human rights; (ii) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁴ considered the first tool establishing the rights of women and committing States to a series of measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all its forms, establish the principle of equality between women and men and create public institutions to ensure its implementation; (iii) the International Conference on Population and Development, held in

³ See Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action [online] <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx>.

⁴ See the text of the Convention [online] <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>.

Cairo; and (iv) the Fourth World Conference on Women of Beijing and its Platform for Action (1995), which set forth broad commitments in 12 areas that are still relevant and matters of priority 20 years later. Together, these agreements constitute a framework of goals on which the State must act to build more democratic societies.

A second key element is the achievement and consolidation of democracy, given that the recent history of many of the region's countries includes dictatorships or armed conflicts that damaged democratic institutions and badly undermined the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Third is the process of building the regional gender agenda, which over the years has developed a breadth and depth in thematic and programmatic terms. The government commitments it involves provide important support for national initiatives.

These three elements —fulfilment of international and regional commitments, implementation of initiatives aimed at consolidating and strengthening democracy, and the construction of the regional gender agenda— are shared by all the region's countries and expressed in the guiding instruments of gender equality (gender equality plans and agendas for gender equity or equality of opportunities). All these lead —albeit not always in a linear fashion— to the creation of conditions in which citizens, male and female, can fully exercise their social, economic and cultural rights.

A. Public policies on gender

Insofar as they are political and administrative tools coordinated around explicit objectives (Guzmán, 2001), public policies not only define courses of action taken by the State to address problems and deliver goods and services to society (or a segment of it), but typically contain a set of goals, a mix of instruments for obtaining these goals, a designation of governmental or non-governmental entities charged with carrying out the goals and an allocation of resources for the requisite tasks (May, 2003, p. 279).

Public policies on gender may be defined as policies aimed explicitly at improving the living standards of women and at guaranteeing human rights. The definition is a broad one, since the desired change may be profound or not, depending on the policy, although there is always a quest for social and political recognition that women's status in society needs to change and that the State must activate the tools available to make that happen.

The notion of equality between men and women as a responsibility of State has been enshrined in three types of policy: those on equality under the law, affirmative action and gender mainstreaming (Astelarra, 2005). Since public policies began to tackle the problems arising from gender inequality, they have shifted from an approach of resolving issues specific to women, to one directed at equality and achievement of the full exercise of human rights. However, the most recent policies do not necessarily include equality targets and some of those aimed at problems particular to women actually undo progress towards equality. The Gender Equality Observatory referred to this situation in its 2012 report (ECLAC, 2012b), arguing that the practice of conditional cash transfers took for granted that women would assume responsibility for fulfilling the conditionalities attached to the transfers, at the cost of their own time. This entrenches gender roles and undermines more transformative initiatives and the struggle for equality between women and men.

B. From equality of opportunities to gender mainstreaming

The first attempts by Latin American States to tackle gender inequality took the form of equal opportunities policies. These policies, which revolve around the notion of equal access —in such areas as education, employment, health and public participation— with the aim of remedying unequal outcomes, focus even today on getting women into economically active roles. The underlying premise is that all that is needed to drive gender equality is to open up spaces hitherto closed to women, and

individual effort is viewed as a decisive variable in women achieving their goals. These efforts, broadly accepted in most countries, imply only a small adjustment in existing paradigms of life and work and require no change in notions of women's role in the societal structure. The concept of equal opportunities is thus found in most gender equality policies in the region.

Equality of opportunities is based on the assumption that, in a scenario where everyone has the same opportunities, any differences in outcome are caused by varying merits or capacities. This means that inequalities (of the most capable) arise from individual particularities, since the opportunities are the same for everyone.

Arising from the classic liberalism of the English-speaking world as part of the development of the modern State and spreading later to countries with different political and legal arrangements, equality of opportunities was also construed as a policy action to end discrimination against women, especially with respect to their access to the public sphere (Astelarra, 2006). Equality of rights required a guarantee that they could be exercised, and policies based on equal opportunities were directed to this end, aiming to break down the legal, economic, social, cultural and power barriers preventing women's access to spaces occupied exclusively by men. Given the centrality of the legislative component, a first objective had to be the elimination of discriminatory legislation, followed by the enactment of pro-equity legislation with comprehensive equality laws or specific laws to tackle different discrimination-related issues: domestic violence, labour laws, work-life balance laws, and laws on participation in political institutions. However, this is not enough as long as the gender order persists and people maintain traditional conceptions of identity and gender roles. So, although equal opportunities policies have been successful in some respects, they cannot guarantee non-discrimination or ensure that women are able to join the public sphere, largely because women enter the public sphere without shedding their responsibilities in the private sphere. The concept of equality of opportunities, applied with greater or lesser success as far as public participation in the public sphere is concerned, has been insufficient for women, because it has not taken into account the social organization that forms the basis for discrimination against them or their role within that organization.

The achievement of formal equality without substantive equality⁵ —owing to disparate starting points— inspired a second generation of policies aimed at remedying the problem, showing that people cannot make use of equal opportunities if they start from initial situations of disadvantage. Affirmative action policies focused on correcting that inequality by affording women priority over men (other conditions being equal). Such policies have achieved significant impacts, especially in terms of women in the public arena, by increasing their numbers in spaces previously occupied exclusively by men. These policies have also given rise to a heated debate between those who argue that action must be taken to even out initial inequality, and those who maintain that one inequality cannot be resolved by creating another. The latter argument, however, fails to consider that the principle of equality requires treating equals equally and unequals differently within the time frame that the inequality occurs, in order to obtain the same rights for all.

Affirmative action addresses specific obstacles in different spheres relating to women's autonomies, with concrete, temporary measures and programmes, such as electoral quotas or economic and tax incentives for hiring women. Such strategies attempt to enable women to combine unpaid and care work with a role in the public sphere, and thus broaden their life choices.

However, the increased presence of women in the public (political, economic, social and cultural) sphere does not transform the discrimination-based organization of society. Because the

⁵ The concept of substantive equality figures in General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on special temporary measures to accelerate de facto equality, which states that “a purely formal legal or programmatic approach is not sufficient to achieve women's de facto equality with men, which the Committee interprets as substantive equality. [...] Pursuit of the goal of substantive equality also calls for an effective strategy aimed at overcoming underrepresentation of women and a redistribution of resources and power between men and women” (United Nations, 2004, para. 8).

gender order does not actually change, women's passage from the private to the public sphere continues to carry the burden of gender-marked power relations. "Thus, it is not just a matter of guaranteeing equality of basic access (to education, for example), since gender inequalities are embedded in power relationships in everything from politics to the domestic sphere. In addition, gender relations conspire against equality over the whole life cycle and gender-based disparities are internalized in multiple mechanisms of cultural reproduction" (ECLAC, 2014).

Progress on the formal aspects of equality is both important and necessary, but it is not enough to achieve substantive equality and equality of outcomes. The aim of transforming the societal organization that underlies gender inequality calls for public policies that go further than equality before the law and affirmative action strategies, though these should not be discarded. On the long road towards equality, policies addressing discriminatory situations and affirmative action to facilitate women's incorporation into typically masculine spaces must coexist with other, more deeply transformative policies aimed at effecting a structural change of the social organization.

An advance in the realm of gender policies are those geared towards gender mainstreaming.⁶ These have broadened the State's institutional sphere of action concerning gender equality and recognize and evaluate its gender-differentiated impact. The focus is to address gender issues right from the early stages of the decision-making process through to the implementation stage, seeking to impact on goals, strategies and resource allocation in order to bring about a substantive change in the way policies and programmes are operationalized. With this type of strategy, policies cease to be a responsibility solely of machineries for the advancement of women and instead become the responsibility of every State player, as well as of the State overall.

Processes of institutionalizing gender into the State include the incorporation of new conceptions of gender in the work of the State and the establishment of gender equality as a public policy aim (Guzmán and Montaña, 2012, p. 5). The reality of the region's countries is one of uneven advances and outcomes with respect to the institution of a gender perspective, which thus continues to be a goal for machineries for the advancement of women and for the State overall.

The analysis of gender equality plans in countries that have them does not imply that countries without such instruments have made no progress regarding gender equality policies. Simply, the spotlight has been turned on a specific planning tool that is commonly used in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that has contributed both to gender action by the State and to institution-building for machineries for the advancement of women. Countries such as Argentina and Cuba, which have not prepared equality plans at the national level, have sectoral plans, for example in education and health, and implement public policies and actions for progress on gender equality. They too have outcomes and experiences to show that have made significant contributions to the regional agenda on gender equality.

⁶ In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area 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".

III. Gender equality plans in Latin America

The commitment of the region's countries to the global and regional gender agenda, arising from the international conferences convened by the United Nations and directed towards promoting gender equality, has also been ratified by the regional consensus on women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which form part of the regional gender agenda.⁷ Analysis of the efforts by the countries of the region shows that all these perspectives have signified progress for women, to a greater or lesser extent. This is widely documented in the report delivered by the countries to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference.

An important foundation of the gender agenda assumed by the region's countries is the work and efforts of the machineries for the advancement of women, as well as the development and implementation of gender equality plans. One of the landmarks of gender policymaking, these emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1990s under the influence of the international commitments built up around the Beijing Platform for Action, but expanded especially since the 2000s.

Gender equality plans are technical and political planning tools that have opened a route for gender institution-building, for setting gender equality as a goal, for picking up on priority areas in this field, and for proposing, designing and implementing public policies (De la Cruz, 2009). Plans express the State's commitment to gender equality and form an axis around which other public policies should function. This is evidenced by shifts in the norms that structure relations between the State, the market and society and represent political and institutional options that, in turn, imply changes to the social organization of gender prevailing in social, political and economic institutions (Rodríguez Gustá, 2014, p. 12).

A number of countries in the region have developed equality plans of national scope with varying form and content. But beyond the differences, a comparative analysis of diverse aspects offers information about the objectives of State action, showing the issues that have entered the agenda, the degree of commitment to these objectives by the different State sectors and the depth of changes sought.

It must be borne in mind throughout this analysis that the equality plans of the region's countries are linked to the machineries for the advancement of women. Regardless of the political weight or hierarchy of equality plans, their preparation forms part of the work allocated to these entities. By definition, plans are linked to the countries' gender institutions and are not only an

⁷ "Gender Regional Agenda: New Libguide about the Agreements and Commitments for the Region", 2016 [online] <http://www.cepal.org/en/notes/gender-regional-agenda-new-libguide-about-agreements-and-commitments-region>.

important expression of their work but also an instrument for institution-building and enhancing legitimacy. The equality plans adopted extend the lifetime of institutions by proposing a time horizon for the action of machineries for the advancement of women; this enables them to reinterpret the meanings of actions conducted up to that point and to transcend the immediacy of the present action (Guzmán and Montaña, 2012, p. 23). Efforts are needed to strengthen the virtuous circle enhancing the pro-equality action of the State via the governing bodies of gender equality. This should be viewed in a dynamic manner that also takes into account those aspects of the set-up that can be built into hubs for mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout the State, beyond the actions and responsibilities of machineries for the advancement of women.

A. Normative status of equality plans

The chief interest in the normative status of equality plans lies in their association with the degree of progress in instilling gender equality at the various normative and operational levels of the State. The more instilled gender equality, the more enforceable it is, and the longer-lasting. Analysis shows different tendencies in relation to the preparation and implementation of gender equality plans in the region, from those built as a management tool by the responsible entity, with no greater administrative action than launching them, to instruments adopted by executive decree or based in legislation (see table III.1).

Table III.1
Latin America: normative basis for gender equality plans

Normative basis	Countries
Executive decree	Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay
Mandates established by gender entities	Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru
Mandate of the national development plan	Colombia
Mandate under the Constitution	Ecuador
Management tool of the entity responsible for gender affairs	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chile

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Equality and women's autonomy in the sustainable development agenda* (LC/G.2686/Rev.1), Santiago, 2016.

As is evident in table III.1, most of the countries —Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay— have established gender equality plans on the basis of executive decrees. Plans adopted by this measure have a specific duration. Although in this they differ little from plans established in other ways, there is one important difference insofar as the political and technical backing comes from the President, sometimes jointly with all the government ministers (Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay), which helps to elicit stronger commitment from the different sectors.

Other countries —the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru— have built their gender equality plans in the framework of mandates established by law for gender entities.

El Salvador's plan is based on Decree No. 645 of 2011, enacting the Act for Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women. Article 8 establishes the responsibilities of the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), among them a mandate to prepare a national equality plan containing the outlines of the policy on equality, equity and the eradication of discrimination as provided under the Act.

In Paraguay too, equality plans are the responsibility of the Department for Women's Affairs, established under Law No. 34/1992, with a mandate to promote and foment gender equality.

In Peru, the Ministry for Women's Affairs and Vulnerable Populations is responsible for formulating, planning, directing, coordinating, executing, supervising and evaluating the national policy under its remit, in accordance with Executive Decree No. 1,098 of 20 January 2012, adopting the Act on the Organization and Functions of the Ministry for Women's Affairs and Vulnerable Populations. This equity plan, unlike previous ones, was developed after the adoption of the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (Law No. 28,983 of 16 March 2007) and comes under that law, whose article 4 on the role of the State affirms the need to implement public policies with a gender perspective.

In the Dominican Republic, the State confers upon the Ministry for Women's Affairs the authority to formulate the National Plan on Gender Equity and Equality (PLANEG) pursuant to Law No. 86-99. This plan was designed in 2000 in synergy with civil society and with the backing of the government of the time, and was aimed at mainstreaming gender in the public administration's policies, plans, programmes and projects. Five years after its publication, this first official framework establishing equality of opportunities between women and men in the Dominican Republic served as a reference for the formulation of a medium-term plan, PLANEG II, to be implemented during the period 2007-2017 and thus covering several government terms with a view to its being assumed as a policy of State. PLANEG II is aimed at achieving results that will help resolve the main problems faced by women as a result of gender inequality or inequity.⁸ This plan is due for evaluation in 2017.

Colombia prepared its National Public Policy on Gender Equity for Women following the provisions of the National Development Plan 2010-2014 "Prosperity for All", established by Law No. 1,450 of 2011, whose article 177 sets forth the will of the national government to adopt a national public policy for gender equity. A proposal in which civil society and various executive bodies and representatives of international agencies participated was made in September 2012, and the Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) gave this its approval.

In the case of Ecuador, the National Agenda for Women and Gender Equality 2014-2017 comes under the mandate conferred by the Constitution, which establishes (art. 70) that the State must formulate and implement policies to achieve equality between women and men, through specialized machinery established under the law, mainstream the gender approach in plans and programmes, and provide technical assistance for its mandatory application in the public sector. The Constitution also establishes national councils for equality (art. 156) as the bodies responsible for ensuring the full application and fulfilment of the rights enshrined in the Constitution and in international human rights instruments, and confers upon these councils responsibilities in the formulation, mainstreaming, observance, follow-up and evaluation of public policies related to gender, ethnicity, generational, intercultural, disability and human mobility matters, in accordance with the law.

In Chile, until the Plan for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men 2000-2010, equal opportunities plans had been designed under the responsibility and leadership of the National Service for Women and Gender Equity (now the Ministry for Women and Gender Equality), and based on government programmes of the same governing coalition. In 2000, the government created the Council of Ministers for Equal Opportunities, with a view to including specific policies with gender content in ministries and services, and, as of 2002, commitments on equal opportunities for men and women were established in all ministries. These commitments are appraised annually as part of the public accounting of the Office of the President, a process which is replicated at the regional level. In 2010, the outgoing government—and the coalition—delivered a new Plan for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women 2011-2020. The new administration changed some of the pillars on which work had been ongoing for over 15 years and eliminated some significant content, including that related to sexual and reproductive rights.

The gender equality plan of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is prepared only as a management tool of the body responsible for gender affairs, often without any administrative action

⁸ See "Evaluación de proceso y costeo del Plan Nacional de Igualdad y Equidad de Género 2007-2017 (PLANEG II) del Ministerio de la Mujer" [online] <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/dominicanrepublic/?publications=9936>.

beyond the launch of the plan itself. The plan is prepared in the framework of the *Plan de la Patria* - Second Socialist Plan of Economic and Social Development of the Nation 2013-2019 and continues earlier plans: the first Plan for Women's Equality (2004-2009) and the second, the Juana Ramírez "La Avanzadora" Plan for Women's Equality (2009-2013).

A review of the normative status of equality plans shows that the management rationale adopted by the countries has helped to maintain this technical and political tool throughout the years, accumulating learning and new challenges, to a large extent based on an ad hoc normative framework which ensures continuity and sustainability, either by executive decree or because it is part of the mandate of machineries for the advancement of women. In all cases, regardless of the normative situation, the role and the efforts of women's machineries undoubtedly underpin the continuity of equality plans, which in turn endow them with identity. It is necessary to analyse the extent to which these plans contribute to gender mainstreaming and to which gender planning, in turn, forms part of an institutionalized policy to guarantee equality between men and women. This will only be possible if the results are evaluated at the national level and public institutions are encouraged to embrace these appraisals as the basis for projecting future work.

B. Participatory development of equality plans

Once the mandate is established, the preparation of plans is, in most cases, the outcome of a preparatory process in which the women's and feminist movement has played a key role. It usually incorporates the different voices of the organized movement, and argues for the need to promote societal involvement in policy design and follow-up. This has brought to the agenda the discussion on the weight that democratic, as opposed to technocratic, participation should carry in policymaking, and the primacy of that participation in the design of gender policies as a condition for achieving gender mainstreaming (Walby, 2005). By virtue of the contents of equality plans, participation should prevail.

This underlying framework affords equality plans a legitimacy and enforceability that, regardless of their normative status, makes them a public policy instrument expressing women's real needs more accurately and demonstrating in a concrete manner the place that social participation occupies in public policymaking. It also testifies to the persistence of problems over time and the perception that the changes that have occurred have not generated great transformations in specific groups of women. Broad participation of women from different sectors, with their specific issues, enriches the approach and the action of the State and covers a diversity of hitherto absent demands and policy subjects, and the recognition of the active role of the citizenry—not only as an object of policy but also as a driver of the changes—comes to the fore. This inclusion gives some discriminated groups which public policy has ignored a voice and an impact on the action of the State. Thus, the State's approach is broadened to include sexually diverse groups, women with disabilities and older women, and the place of populations of indigenous, Afrodescendent and mestizo women, among others, is acknowledged.

There are many examples of participatory processes in the construction of equality plans. Most of the countries report consultations with civil society, of varying magnitude and breadth, at the different phases of the development of such instruments. Brazil, for instance, held national conferences on policies for women from 2004 to 2016, on the basis that social participation is fundamental at all stages of the public policy cycle in a fully democratic State (see Brazil, 2013, in annex A2). Brazil's Third National Conference on Policies for Women, held in December 2011, was attended by 200,000 women from all over the country and 2,125 delegates at the national level. The Conference produced a National Plan on Policies for Women, which increased the inclusion of gender issues in various spheres of government.

Peru has been pursuing an inclusive process at a territorial level as well. This involved 17 government sectors, 7 constitutionally autonomous bodies and 25 regional governments which, together with 19 civil society organizations and specialist public bodies, drafted the current National

Gender Equality Plan 2012-2017. The organizations involved represented groups working for women's rights, domestic workers, women's unions, children and adolescents, older women, female victims of violence, women with HIV, women in custody, LGTB organizations, rural women, indigenous, Amazonian and Afrodescendent women, and businesswomen (Peru, 2006, pp. 14 and 15).

In Uruguay, over 3,000 women representing social organizations from 214 localities nationwide, together with national government agencies, departmental intendancies, ministerial gender liaisons, autonomous bodies and the Office of Planning and the Budget, municipal gender offices and the territorial coordinators of the Ministry of Social Development, prepared the First National Plan for Equal Opportunities and Rights 2007-2011.

In Mexico, the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) convened a consultation forum for the preparation of PROIGUALDAD 2013-2018 in Mexico City, which was attended by 600 participants, men and women representing civil society, academia, officials of state and municipal departments of federal bodies and the federal district itself, representatives of the various sectors of the federal administration, the business sector and the consultative and social councils of INMUJERES. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) were used to support nationwide participation by online consultation, as well as an online forum that received 691 proposals from 27 states, including Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Jalisco, Baja California, Veracruz and Quintana Roo.

Belize, the British Virgin Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica and Nicaragua have reported experiences similar to those mentioned above.

Social participation in the development of equality plans demonstrates the place of participation in policymaking as a fundamental component of development and democracy, and in creating links between the State and society. As may be appreciated in the examples given, social participation has been key, owing both to the participating organizations' capacity to make proposals, and to the willingness of the government authorities to engage in dialogue.

The transformations that are still needed in the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to gender equality and economic and social development call for active democratic States and active societies as well. Broader engagement by citizens gives initiatives greater probabilities of achieving their objectives and of benefiting people more widely. It offers a benefit in terms of the problems and issues that are relevant for individuals and turns a spotlight on emerging themes and on the analysis of old challenges from new angles. It also contributes to processes of policy follow-up and enforceability.

Equality plans are thus the outcome of a participatory process that conveys more accurately the specific situations of people who, insofar as they come from different sectors of society, do not necessarily have the same issues or demands vis-à-vis the State. States' willingness to listen to and consider diverse voices is a condition for the exercise of freedom and crucial to the quality of democracy (Guzmán and Montaña, 2012). In turn, the processes involved in participatory construction foster social and democratic innovation, because they link up individual women and groups and leverage their negotiating power with respect to the State. As a result, women are able to exercise their citizenship beyond the demand for rights. This is something that machineries, as public institutions, should promote, and something that should become a matter of policy, enabling the negotiation of interests at the local level of public policy and women's organizations.

A challenge in this area is that, although participation by civil society organizations broadens the scope of issues to include those affecting a vast diversity of women, the fact remains that women who are not part of organized movements—and are thus much less likely to influence public policies—may be precisely those who face most difficulties in exercising their rights. Both State entities and civil society organizations in general, and women's organizations in particular, should reflect on this point and on their capacity to integrate different voices. This draws attention to the importance of decentralization and of engaging in work at the local level. The implementation of

equality plans, including participation as a fundamental component at all phases (preparation, implementation and evaluation), often runs into the specific difficulty experienced by machineries for the advancement of women and the responsible bodies when it comes to working in a decentralized manner, owing chiefly to the limited institutional means and resources available.

Another challenge related to the construction of democratic dialogue, negotiation and consensus-building is that the discussion of equality plans with government stakeholders requires a deliberative approach in public administration and in policy design and follow-up. The institutional and intersectoral dialogue generated in the process of implementing equality plans means acknowledging the voices of government officials in designing how plans are to be created and implemented. These are spaces in which decisions are made about priorities and about how to implement the actions set forth in the plan and, undoubtedly, often afford a place to the voice of States' citizens.

C. Objectives, content and strategic pillars of equality plans

To the extent that gender equality plans may be seen as an expression of the State's view of the place and value of women in society, its objectives and spheres of action amount to more than a mere list of what is to be done and the strategies upon which they base the proposed action: they express recognition by the State of the main issues relating to gender equality and the priorities established for overcoming them. This being so, it can be said that the major issues persist, visible in the contents of gender equality plans and their objectives. A deeper exploration of the measures is needed in order to distinguish progress and see how, within these major issues, nuances have been introduced which take into account the achievements and problems overcome, and new demands arising both from institutional practices and from the reality of women in their broad diversity.

The objectives in the plans analysed show a certain diversity of approaches towards the same end, and although the deepening of women's rights and gender equality underlies all of them, the emphases vary and the thematic range tends to exceed the three autonomies and their interlinkages covered by the Gender Equality Observatory of ECLAC. A good way to look at this diversity is in the light of the commitments set forth in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These both demonstrate the Platform's continued relevance and show that, despite the substantial progress made in the past few decades, the core problems identified then still exist and call, 20 years later, for actions aimed at redressing them, as proposed by the plans.

The contents of equality plans are thus analysed here on the basis of the spheres of action of the Beijing Platform for Action, associating the autonomies when appropriate and identifying objectives and emerging issues.

Accordingly, the spheres to be analysed as components of decision-making autonomy are women in power and decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. Under physical autonomy, the spheres analysed are violence against women and women and health, and under economic autonomy, women and the economy and women and poverty.

All the plans contain objectives and measures related to these spheres of inequality. Some other components, which do not come under these autonomies as they are framed today, but are emerging relevant concerns, are addressed separately.

The description and analysis of the objectives and measures also considers the type of strategies driving the measure, distinguishing between awareness-raising and training, a second tier of affirmative action, and a third tier acting upon the normative/institutional structure.

1. Decision-making autonomy

(a) Women in power and decision-making

In equality plans, the objective of achieving greater participation by women in spheres of power and decision-making has two facets: one is the normative aspect, with measures aimed at generating legislation to promote greater participation by women in all decision-making arenas (this includes quota and parity laws), and the other is promotion of a broad range of measures to build women's citizenship, from actions to make it easier for women to obtain identity documents to initiatives to develop and strengthen women's leadership at the local and national levels.

Sixteen Latin American countries have adopted quota laws of some sort, and six of these include parity. Although this has led to a significant rise in the proportion of women in parliament and in municipal councils in several countries, the process has not been entirely smooth. Actions and measures are therefore ongoing to improve efficiency in the implementation, oversight and follow-up of the laws in place. Barriers to the fulfilment of quota laws have made it necessary to target actions on electoral law and its application. In Brazil (whose law stipulates that women make up 30% of electoral lists), efforts are being focused on oversight and on the enforcement of sanctions for non-compliance. Colombia, which has a quota law (581/2000) establishing that 30% of administrative positions be filled by women, also has measures for following up on the standards established. In 2014, 59.7% of bodies countrywide were in compliance with the legally required percentage of at least 30% of positions filled by women (Administrative Department of Public Functions of Colombia, 2014).

Among the countries that have parity laws, Costa Rica, which has a law establishing the principles of parity and rotation on electoral lists (Law No. 8,765 of 2009), has taken steps to promote normative changes and develop jurisprudence and procedures to ensure the proper application of current laws on women's political participation. This is all coordinated through the electoral justice system, setting an example for the region (see Costa Rica, 2007, in annex A2). The law also promotes normative and administrative changes aimed at achieving parity in women's participation and representation in political parties, State powers, public administration and civil society organizations.

Mexico's National Development Plan 2013-2018 establishes measures to promote leadership and the significant participation of women, including support for ruling 12,624 of the electoral tribunal in matters applicable to the registration of candidatures for election. Mexico enacted a parity law through a modification to the Constitution (Decree No. 135 of 2014), establishing that, among other functions, political parties must have rules to ensure gender parity in candidacies for federal and local legislators.

The Second Honduran Gender Equality Plan 2010-2022 (II PIEGH) seeks to mainstream a gender perspective into the Electoral Affairs and Political Organizations Act, by guaranteeing parity, sequentiality and rotation in the composition of electoral lists, as well as introducing affirmative action measures establishing quotas for indigenous and Afrodescendent women. The Honduran law, adopted two years after the preparation of the plan (Decree No. 54 of 2012), stipulates a quota of 40% for women, rising to 50% in the 2016 elections.

Other countries with quota and rotation laws that have produced good outcomes in terms of women's participation, especially in parliament, also include measures in their plans either to tackle barriers to implementation or to broaden and improve the plans themselves. Ecuador, where 41.6% of parliamentary seats are held by women (the third highest share in the region after the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Cuba), includes a measure in its plan to ensure participation of the LGBTI population, as well as by representatives of ancestral peoples and territories.

In this connection, Guatemala's plan focuses on measures to increase the participation of indigenous women and proposes reforming the Electoral Affairs and Political Parties Act to establish parity between men and women. Based on an intersectional approach, the plan sets out legal and administrative reforms to guarantee the principle of equality between men and women, and rotation between indigenous and mestizo women, including affirmative action for Mayan,

Garifuna, Xinka and mestizo women. Among the many measures to promote women's participation in decision-making, Guatemala's plan includes one to establish and implement mechanisms that certify the identity documents of Mayan, Garifuna, Xinka and mestizo women, in order to register them as citizens with full rights.

Countries that already have quota systems or parity legislation for increasing women's participation in decision-making have tended to find, in the process of applying them, that improvements need to be made at the implementation stage. Meanwhile, countries without such systems continue to pursue objectives and measures to generate policies, together with strategies for dialogue with electoral bodies in order to achieve results.

As well as inclusion in normative instruments, some countries' plans include a broad and varied spectrum of actions, depending on the situation with respect to women's access to decision-making and participation in policy design. The Plurinational State of Bolivia, which has one of the region's highest percentages of female parliamentarians (46.2% in 2014), is making progress in this regard and is proposing to guarantee women's access to birth registries and identity documents needed for the exercise of citizens' rights; these measures constitute a basic threshold for recognizing women as rights-holders. The country's plan tackles one type of difficulty experienced by women who are already able to participate and are actively doing so: harassment and political violence. The plan promotes and encourages formal reporting of these obstacles to participation, which occur even in contexts where quota or parity laws have had a positive impact and where women have a stronger presence. Another country that has developed measures of this sort is Peru, which provides a ruling that public entities must guarantee women and men access to birth certificates and national identity documents (DNI), in the framework of the country's "zero undocumented persons" strategy.

Other well documented themes for concern in this sphere include two in particular: (i) women's training with regard to both the exercise of civil rights and leadership (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia); and (ii) parity in State institutions, in all elected leadership positions in political parties, in access to the financing of political campaigns, and in the leadership of trade unions and business organizations.

(b) Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

The objective of gender mainstreaming in public policies testifies to an increasingly rigorous view of the State's position regarding its commitment to equality. In this framework, plans include institution-building aimed at mainstreaming gender in the public administration as a condition closely linked to the respective mechanism for the advancement of women.

The institutionalization of gender is being consolidated in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 60% of the countries, mechanisms for the advancement of women are high in the political hierarchy, so it may be said that they are now an established institution within the State, despite instances of political and ideological resistance that can generate setbacks in terms of hierarchy and responsibilities.

Equality plans are tools that acknowledge the central place of gender mechanisms in leading or orientating public policies towards gender equality. However, the resources allocated to gender mechanisms to carry out their mission do not always match the magnitude of the responsibilities they are assigned under the plans. For that reason, plans are undergoing changes and incorporating new targets referring to the political hierarchy and weight of gender equality mechanisms, such as the strengthening of financial and technical resources.

The equality plan of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, is taking shape as a strategy for recognizing women's contribution to the country's development and establishes the commitment of the Bolivian State in its totality to its six pillars of development. In this framework, the plan calls for the institutional strengthening of public machineries responsible for designing and implementing national policies for gender equality. This means that the State is committed to helping to guarantee the institutional status of public machineries by allocating physical and financial

resources and qualified human resources, at all levels of the public administration. These efforts are directed towards strengthening gender mechanisms by raising their hierarchical level in different State bodies, a task that falls to the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Generational Affairs, which reports to the Ministry of Justice. The gender mechanism is thus low in the State apparatus hierarchy in this case. Gender mainstreaming in the public administration is included under this same objective.

The institution-building in Costa Rica's equality plan is aimed at strengthening the political, technical and financial competences of the National Women's Institute (INAMU), at both the central and local levels, as a condition for achieving the objectives of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity, along with the enactment of appropriate legislation, ongoing training and adequate budget allocation. Chile has proposed, within the objectives of its plan, to strengthen the National Women's Service (SERNAM), which became the Ministry for Women and Gender Equity in 2016, with an increase in the technical capacity of its human resources and strengthening of its national level structure, in order to mainstream gender effectively in public policies. Its remit also includes training for public officials in gender issues and diverse actions at the national, regional and local levels, under the responsibility of SERNAM.

The incorporation of gender mainstreaming, featured in many of the region's plans, is combined with action on the multiple discriminations faced by women, in particular those who are most vulnerable, such as migrant, indigenous, Afrodescendent, young and older women. The intersectional approach is usually lacking in other types of plans and programmes designed and implemented by States. Brazil's plan, for example, enters more deeply into the intersecting inequalities of gender, race and ethnicity as interdependent variables. The Plurinational State of Bolivia also addresses this issue with a focus on the decolonization of gender, by emphasizing the importance of examining relationships between urban and rural indigenous peoples, between mestizo and indigenous women, and between white and mestizo women, and includes a category of "community" as a basic model of organization of indigenous peoples, expanding this concept to encompass all communities. Guatemala's Equal Opportunities Plan, which targets mainly indigenous women—especially Mayans, Garifunas and Xinkas—, sets as an objective under institutional mechanisms the promotion of the gender and ethno-cultural focus in the work of the three State agencies and support for the creation or strengthening of institutional mechanisms to promote the integrated development of Guatemalan women. Under this objective, it is proposed to strengthen the institutional structure of the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM) and of the Ombudsman for Indigenous Women (DEMI), by adapting their internal regulations for the fulfilment of their functions and competencies, and bringing them under the legislation covering executive agencies.

Mexico has set as a cross-cutting objective of the National Programme for Equality of Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women 2013-2018 (PROIGUALDAD) the incorporation of gender equality policies into the three levels of government and the three powers of the State, and to strengthen its mainstreaming in the organizational culture. To this end, it is identified as essential to have bodies which coordinate and institutionalize gender mainstreaming in public policies, i.e. mechanisms for the advancement of women at the municipal level and by federal entity, together with the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) at the federal level. This objective includes a vast range of strategies, under the responsibility of INMUJERES, encompassing the monitoring of progress on harmonizing gender equality legislation and the implementation of actions to promote parity in decision-making positions, in both the public/political sphere and in the private sector. It also includes the promotion of gender equality in the design, execution and evaluation of public policies, and the institutionalization of equality policies at the three levels of government, and, in this framework, institutional capacity-building for all the entities involved in fulfilling the National Policy on Equality between Women and Men, among other things.

In addition to strengthening institutions by increasing financial and human resources, there are at least two relevant challenges. First, the need to involve all the State powers and all the different levels of government: gender mainstreaming throughout the State apparatus is something which, despite the time that has elapsed and the progress made, remains an objective yet to be achieved. In this regard, it is

important to reflect upon how mechanisms for the advancement of women and their role as coordinators or drivers of equality policies can be strengthened politically at the same time as developing the gender equality responsibilities of all the sectors of the State, without replacing each sector's necessary action in achieving gender mainstreaming.

A second relevant challenge is to step up gender equality action at the countries' different political and administrative levels and to obtain the corresponding increase in resources—human, financial and administrative—for this purpose. This point is related to the objectives of decentralization and participation. The decentralization aspects present in some plans reflect this challenge, especially considering that most countries do not have gender mechanisms at the local level, which is essential precisely because gender mainstreaming is still an unattained target. Among the countries of the region that have a federal structure, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico have a gender institutionality encompassing the municipal as well as the state level. Mexico, for example, reported that in 2015, 74% of municipalities had local women's institutes. Among the countries with unitary systems, Chile, Colombia, Cuba and El Salvador have regional, departmental or municipal offices of mechanisms for the advancement of women.

The case of the Caribbean countries is rather different, since although most of the mechanisms for the advancement of women are low in the political hierarchy (only Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago have such mechanisms at a high level), none of their equality plans includes institutional strengthening among its objectives. As a result, they continue at low- (Belize, Jamaica Suriname) or mid-levels (British Virgin Islands) of the hierarchy.

2. Physical autonomy

The area of physical autonomy, which includes health, reproductive and sexual health and violence against women, is widely addressed in all the region's equality plans. The predominance of measures relating to health—including sexual and reproductive health—over measures aimed at tackling violence could reflect the fact that many countries have specific plans for combating violence against women, as well as domestic and gender violence. Accordingly, this important issue is tackled only in a general manner in equality plans.

(a) Violence against women

Equality plans often include measures for tackling violence against women even where these coexist with comprehensive plans against violence as a parallel tool.

Brazil, Colombia and Nicaragua have specific plans against gender violence that include a large number of measures. This is very important, given that indicators of violence against women in the region are showing no signs of falling. The objectives and measures proposed in equality plans reflect a permanent state of emergency. In all these plans, action is aimed largely at the care and protection of victims of violence, necessary in light of the reality experienced by women in the region, and various countries have undertaken many initiatives in this regard. In the area of prevention, proposals still tend to be focused on awareness-raising campaigns which, though essential for drawing attention to the problem, fall short of what is needed. More progress is needed towards the implementation of measures in this direction.

The plans also show the need to consolidate legislative and judicial mechanisms by which States can fulfil the commitments they have undertaken and, in countries that already have special laws against violence, ensure their enforcement. There are good examples of efforts to broaden prevention, but these tend to focus on the diversity of situations and contexts in which violence is perpetrated. Many plans include care for victims of smuggling and trafficking, as well as preventive measures. Brazil devotes an area of action under its plan to dealing with people trafficking and sexual exploitation, with measures running from modification of legislation to prevention, and care and protection of victims. The Dominican Republic has a similar strategy. Mexico's plan proposes to make trafficking in persons a federal crime, and to provide shelters for victims of other types of

violence, among other measures. Paraguay proposes to implement special information systems and a specific law in this regard. Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras also have measures in place to tackle trafficking in persons.

There are multiple measures addressing violence against women and this exercise aims simply to show that, for the most part, these reflect the demands of women and women's organizations themselves, covering the realities of violence in all its forms. New situations and contexts raise new challenges, and new approaches put old, hitherto partially hidden problems in the spotlight and at the centre of debate. The registration of murders specifically of women is an ongoing process and reveals the sheer dimensions of this scourge. This is a concern in all the plans and calls for a stronger legal framework for protecting women against violence, including types of violence not recognized under the law, such as femicide. In Honduras, for example, it was proposed in 2010 to classify femicide as a specific crime and this became law in 2012. In countries where femicide is already penalized, plans propose measures to establish or improve mechanisms for recording it. Mexico, which has classified it as a crime, proposes to typify femicide and create specific records in federal entities under its plan.

Measures to address and eliminate violence against women are accompanied by others aimed at prevention. Many plans also include capacity-building initiatives for women, aimed at enhancing physical autonomy. Costa Rica addresses the linkage between violence and economic autonomy, on the basis that progress is needed on labour legislation to tackle different forms of violence suffered by women, such as bullying and sexual harassment at work, an issue also tackled in Panama's plan. As well as reconciliation measures for achieving gender equality in employment, Mexico proposes a series of actions in which economic autonomy intersects with the eradication of gender violence in the labour sphere and in other public arenas, for example on public transport. Another aspect of violence that is treated in depth in the countries' plans has to do with women's participation in the political arena; political harassment and violence are addressed as a serious obstacle to women's autonomy and must be reported (Ecuador and Plurinational State of Bolivia). In Ecuador special mention is made of the LGTBI community and the need to broaden the legislation to guarantee conditions free from labour violence. Another intersection between violence and economic autonomy in the region's equality plans concerns reparations for victims of violence and the promotion of benefits (Colombia and Honduras).

(b) Health and sexual and reproductive health

As well as the right to a life free from violence, physical autonomy includes health and sexual and reproductive health. The significance of these components in the region's plans varies greatly: in some countries, such as Colombia and Mexico, measures against violence account for over 80% of physical autonomy measures, while in others, such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama, most measures are directed towards health and sexual and reproductive health. This varied situation is attributable in great measure to the existence of specific plans against violence. In El Salvador, for example, the programme *Ciudad Mujer Joven*, implemented by the offices of Ciudad Mujer in San Martín, Usulután and Santa Ana, is coordinated by the Secretariat for Social Inclusion (SIS), and aims to impact on different areas and dimensions of the national policy on women and its coordination with public policies in general, and has made a significant contribution to the prevention of violence and to the care and reparation of rights of victims of gender violence.⁹ This programme involves public institutions from different sectors that deliver care and services in the areas of health, sexual and reproductive health, economic inclusion, production development, justice and protection for victims of violence against women.

In the sphere of health, the measures included in the plans may be classified as: (i) general measures, aimed at improving the quality of preventive health policies and care for women, and (ii) measures aimed at sexual and reproductive health in particular. Most of the plans consist chiefly

⁹ See [online] <http://www.inclusion-social.gob.sv/ciudad-mujer-joven/>.

of general preventive measures.¹⁰ Brazil's plan, which shows a balance between the two types of measures, fully addresses the different aspects to be considered in detail. It focuses on strengthening the national policy on comprehensive health care for women and on building the principles of that policy into the various policies and actions of the Ministry of Health; on expanding and improving gynaecological care; on support for reproductive planning for women, men, adults and adolescents in the context of comprehensive health care and guarantee of women's sexual and reproductive rights; on reducing maternal morbidity and mortality; on promoting and broadening care for women—including young and adolescent women—in situations of domestic and sexual violence; on promoting and expanding access to information on prevention, treatment and control of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis; on reducing cancer mortality in the female population; on strengthening participation and social oversight in the implementation and follow-up of the comprehensive national policy; on promoting mental health care for women; and on expanding health care for women in special situations, be it because of their place of residence, socioeconomic status, race, ethnic identity or any other characteristic.

Maternal mortality continues to be a concern at the global and regional levels.¹¹ The measures included in the region's equality plans reflect this and include the different variables that impact on these avoidable deaths. Preventing maternal mortality, like treatment of health issues in general, is approached with a view to ethnic and territorial relevance, and covers universal professional care in pregnancy, for the birth and during the puerperium, the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (especially HIV), and the treatment of obstetric complications arising from abortion which, being illegal in many countries, is performed in clandestine and unsafe conditions, especially in the case of the poorest women.

Linked to this issue, work on raising awareness and training of health personnel is an important part of equality plans, together with dissemination among women of their rights in relation to health, especially sexual and reproductive health. There is also growing concern to ensure that these measures are extended to the LGBTI population, to women with disabilities and to vulnerable groups of women. Ecuador and El Salvador, among other countries, propose many measures in this direction, as does Guatemala, whose action targets the indigenous population in particular and includes, as a basis for health and sexual and reproductive health measures, adopting measures to review, adapt and modify the policy, values, principles, practices and standards applicable in the health sector and programmes and projects, based on the philosophy of equity between women and men and including cultural relevance (see Guatemala, 2009, in annex A2). Respect for cultural diversity and the effort to create plans that treat cultural relevance as a principle applicable to all measures represents progress and a key achievement, found especially in the area of physical autonomy and in relation to health.

Other issues that are always present are unplanned pregnancy and adolescent pregnancy, which plans address both in relation to women's physical autonomy and with respect to the impact on economic autonomy. Here, measures always appear to fall short and early motherhood, which cuts short women's possibilities of study and future work options, continues to impact on the poorest women in particular. According to data from the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC, adolescents with low levels of schooling are at least five times more likely to be mothers than those with more formal education (CELADE, 2012). The region's adolescent fertility rates are among the highest in the world and show no sign of falling, despite a steady decline in overall fertility (Rodríguez Vignoli, 2014).

Plans include several different types of measures in this area. Some countries address the problem from the point of view of school dropout and adopt measures to keep adolescent mothers in the education system (Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, British Virgin Islands, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico

¹⁰ See annex A2.

¹¹ One of the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 3 ("Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages") is to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030.

and Uruguay). Several plans include measures aimed at preventing adolescent pregnancy and motherhood, promoting the inclusion or improvement of care for this group in sexual and reproductive health programmes, as well as campaigns to prevent pregnancy and increase contraceptive use (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago).

Ecuador, for example, has sexual and reproductive health measures for adolescents, including the supply of emergency contraception and natural and ancestral medicine. It also promotes male co-responsibility, seeking a change in cultural patterns (see Ecuador, 2014, in annex A2), as well as the inclusion of adolescents in education and sexual and reproductive health programmes.

The minimum thresholds achieved by the countries in terms of health, and especially in sexual and reproductive health, as reflected in their plans, are not static. What is more, although plans are grounded in international and regional commitments, they can still achieve greater progress and establish safeguards against resistance or setbacks. Progress in this area is particularly sensitive to political cycles, and this needs to be taken into account when developing plans. Women's participation and a stronger representation of diverse specific situations and conditions are two recommendations for establishing baselines that are less likely to come open to question at a later point.

3. Economic autonomy

The plans set forth a large and diverse number of measures in the area of economic autonomy. In terms of the spheres of action contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, a first distinction may be made between poverty-reduction measures (women and poverty) and those concerning the economy in general (women and the economy). As will be seen, plans in the region include measures that refer, within these two major spheres, to care, social protection, unpaid work, total work time and the interlinkages of all these issues with gender inequality. The measures proposed involve multiple levels of intervention and cover a spectrum of matters running from awareness-raising activities, advertising campaigns, financing issues and access to State resources to changes in the legislative framework.

(a) Overcoming poverty

Although most of the region's equality plans do not treat poverty reduction as a specific topic, many do include measures to this effect at different levels of action, especially with regard to the promotion of and access to paid work. Poverty reduction in the region, along with women's increased presence in the labour market in recent decades, may explain in part why this issue has lost prominence in recent plans, while remaining present in other spheres.

One of the challenges addressed is broadening women's employment opportunities, promoting and improving opportunities for poor women and strengthening entrepreneurship in this group (Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay), as well as concern for specific groups of women living in poverty, such as older women (Belize), the LGBTI population (Ecuador), young women and women with disabilities, Afrodescendent women, indigenous women, rural women, and female heads of household in poverty and extreme poverty (Panama).

Several plans address the living standards of poor women, especially those who are the main breadwinners of poor households, and propose measures to deliver housing solutions (Ecuador and Mexico), property ownership and access to credit (Belize and Ecuador), especially in the case of indigenous and rural women.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mexico and Panama, whose plans include strategies aimed at meeting the nutritional needs of poor women, also include other measures for tackling urgent situations. Mexico, for example, proposes to register female breadwinners of households with nutritional deficiencies in a social protection system and provide them with training in self-care.

(b) Women and the economy

All the region's plans include measures relating to women's independence and economic rights, access to employment and appropriate work conditions, and control over resources under equal conditions. They also include the availability of commercial and training services, such as access to markets and technology. Lastly, to different extents they address the harmonization of responsibilities in domestic and care work between women and men.

The measures are highly heterogeneous in terms of their impact and refer, in general, to four major issues concerning women's access to: (i) decent work, (ii) different types of resources linked to economic autonomy —financial resources, credit, natural resources, and assets (housing, land, capital); (iii) training and technology; and (iv) time. Plans do not address all these components in the same way: some address a few or all of them under one main pillar, while others have measures under each major issue, and others have differentiated strategies for the various components. Although at first sight the plans differ in this respect, especially in the details in the case of plans with differentiated pillars, in practice their impacts are fairly similar. Most seek to strengthen and promote the exercise of rights, awareness-raising and delivering resources of different kinds both to women and society in general, and to agents of the State. They also promote change through amendments to the normative and legal framework and, in a few cases, through affirmative action measures.

In relation to women's access to decent work, measures seeking change of a more structural nature refer a great deal to working conditions and to the elimination of gender inequalities and inequities in the labour market (such as wage gaps or violence in the form of labour or sexual harassment). This is the area in which most of the normative and legal measures are found, and most of the plans propose new laws or amendments to existing ones (Belize, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Panama, Paraguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay) in relation to access to employment and hiring, wages and other benefits, and job security for women.

Reference is also made to the responsibility for childcare. For example, Costa Rica proposes eliminating maternity costs as a factor driving gender gaps between men and women, by redistributing the financing of maternity through employer contributions to the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS), so that the cost is no longer assumed directly by each employer. It is also proposed to review, adopt and apply labour legislation in situations of discrimination, such as separation due to pregnancy or breastfeeding, and forms of violence such as sexual or workplace harassment.

One particularly important point is wage equality. The countries have adopted a range of measures to tackle this issue (see table III.2).

Table III.2
Wage equality in gender equality plans

Country	Measures proposed in the respective plan
Bolivia (Plur. State of)	Promote the quality of employment and wage equality between men and women, and protect the labour rights of women (economic, production and labour pillar)
Brazil	Steer the adoption of bill No. 6,653/2009 on gender equality in the workplace (equality in the world of work and economic autonomy)
Chile	Narrow the existing wage gap between men and women by at least 50% (equal access to opportunities pillar)
Dominican Republic	Develop campaigns for pay without gender discrimination; promote compliance by businesses with labour code principles VII and X on freedom from discrimination, and with article 194 establishing equal pay for equal work regardless of sex
Ecuador	Strengthen and upgrade oversight and regulation mechanisms to ensure fair wages and salaries for all working women, as well as the application of all labour benefits in contractual relationships, in order to close the gaps between men and women (production and employment pillar)

Table III.2 (concluded)

Country	Measures proposed in the respective plan
El Salvador	Reform the legislation to guarantee the principle of equality and non-discrimination, both in access to jobs at all professional levels and the corresponding hiring processes, and in pay and other benefits (economic autonomy area) Enforce compliance with the principle of equality and non-discrimination in public and private institutions as part of oversight and public auditing responsibilities (economic autonomy area)
Guatemala	Take measures to create and apply surveillance mechanisms to ensure fulfilment of the labour rights of working Mayan, Garifuna, Xinka and mestizo women, taking into account the specific circumstances, with regard to equality between men and women and their pay (labour equity pillar)
Honduras	Take measures to ensure that the State establishes or strengthens legal and institutional mechanisms to provide compliance with the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (policy 1, pillar 5, on promotion, protection and guarantee of economic rights, work, employment, and access to, use of and control over resources) Promote a reform to the Labour Code with a gender perspective, to ensure the labour rights of women (policy 2, pillar 5, on promotion, protection and guarantee of economic rights, work, employment, and access to, use of and control over resources)
Jamaica	Eliminate gender disparity in wages and in labour laws; identify, through a process of consultation, legislative provisions that need amendments (labour and economic empowerment pillar)
Mexico	Promote wage equality and the formation of female corps in the public sector, and drive the creation of a forum within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (STPS) to incentivize compliance with the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) of ILO (cross-cutting objective 3: promote women's access to paid work, decent employment and production resources, in a framework of equality)
Panama	Promote compliance by the State with ILO conventions 100 and 111 and review legal and institutional rules to enable women's organizations to demand fulfilment of labour rights, particularly the right to equal pay for equal work (line of strategic action 1: fulfil women's labour rights with no discrimination whatsoever, ensuring their incorporation into paid employment with equal conditions and opportunities in all sectors of production)
Paraguay	Enact and/or enforce laws to guarantee women's and men's right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value (pillar of access to economic resources and to employment)
Peru	Guarantee women's economic rights under conditions of equity and equality of opportunities with men
Trinidad and Tobago	Evaluate the existing labour laws to ensure that they promote gender equity and remove barriers to the equitable participation of men and women, giving consideration to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Harmonization of Labour Laws Create and revise where necessary the legislation mandating gender equity in hiring, promotion, salaries, separation and other conditions of work (labour and employment pillar)
Uruguay	Adopt and implement the Plan on Equal Opportunities and Treatment at Work, and in this framework conduct information and awareness-raising campaigns concerning labour laws, ILO conventions on equality and the Plan itself (strategic lines of equality in production)

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of national gender equality plans and policies.

Other initiatives propose actions of a different type to generate change. For example, Honduras proposes creating systems of incentives for companies to comply with the rules, and Colombia promotes the development of a Gender Equality Management System Certification Programme (SGIG) to make organizational changes in private and public enterprises in order to close gender gaps and change the economic and social culture, with the award of a Gender Equity Seal.

As well as promoting decent work conditions for women, plans also refer to the development of competences to enhance their employability. All the plans provide for measures of this sort, usually including literacy initiatives in the case of poor women, and different levels of business skills-building. In Chile's case, this strategy has been implemented by the National Women's Service through the municipalities, jointly with the National Training and Employment Service (SENCE), and has helped to increase women's capacities and competences and broaden their labour market participation.

Some plans have special equalization and training measures for adolescent mothers to facilitate labour market integration (Costa Rica). Others, as in Brazil and Uruguay, have initiatives for women's professional training and positioning in occupations that do not entrench the sexual division of labour.

Another important theme in the plans relates to access to different types of resources linked to economic autonomy, whether financial resources, credit, natural resources, or assets such as dwellings, land and capital.

Many of the measures in this area target female heads of household, rural women or indigenous women, and women running business start-ups. They range broadly, and in some plans number several dozen, encompassing from ensuring basic rights (such as having an identity document) to programmes for financing, credit and enterprise support (technical, financial or other). An important point in many plans is access to housing and, in the case of rural and indigenous women, to ownership of land (Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay). Honduras and Panama, for example, propose affirmative action measures with regard to access to credit, land, water, training and technology for campesino women. Uruguay is opting for dual entitlement to ownership or use of land and dwellings for established couples, whether or not in a formally legalized union, regardless of their sexual orientation (except in the case of women who are victims of domestic violence).

(c) Access to sufficient time for autonomy

A recognition of how important the availability of time is for women as a condition for their economic autonomy is a cross-cutting element in all of these plans and, as is also true in the case of other issues, it is addressed at different levels and within different institutional frameworks. Thus, awareness-raising measures that form part of campaigns and educational initiatives aimed at promoting a cultural shift towards a greater sharing of caregiving responsibilities are combined with shorter-term measures focusing on the development of caregiving, and especially childcare, services and infrastructure that are of immediate benefit to women. These plans set out very few standards or guidelines on this theme, and most of those that do exist pertain to the extension of the duration of parental leave for mothers and fathers (Brazil and Uruguay).

The sharing of responsibility and a better distribution of domestic and caregiving duties between men and women are both core elements of these plans. This is the framework within which many countries are working to measure the total amount of time spent working by women and men (which is crucial information in delineating the disadvantageous position of the former) by developing satellite accounts on unpaid work for inclusion in their time-use surveys (Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia).

A related aspect that is addressed in many different ways has to do with the economic instability associated with unpaid domestic work and the different approaches that the State is using to deal with this issue. The proposals included in these plans are designed to provide, broaden and/or improve (depending on the country) social protection coverage for women that engage in unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks (Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Panama and Paraguay). By way of example, the measures being put in place in some of these plans are outlined below:

- (i) In the section of its plan focusing on economic, production and labour issues, the Plurinational State of Bolivia makes a commitment to strengthen and develop community-based and governmental caregiving services for children, older adults and persons with disabilities in order to ensure that women have access to employment (Salazar and others, 2012).
- (ii) In Colombia, the section of the plan focusing on economic autonomy includes a number of commitments in the area of caregiving. One such commitment is to ensure that the children of women involved in the Community Mothers initiative have access to child development centres so that their mothers can take part in the Community Homes Programme. Another is

to promote economic autonomy and recognition of the work performed by the women known as “community mothers” by ensuring that they are paid a basic wage and that their children are cared for through the provision of various types of services.

- (iii) El Salvador’s plan recognizes the importance of developing a comprehensive public policy on caregiving, and it recently set up a commission to monitor work on a national policy on caregiving; representatives of various agencies sit on that commission, including representatives of the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU). As noted in one governmental publication (2015), the various lead agencies for policies dealing with each target population group are to have a role in defining, implementing and coordinating that policy.¹² The plan also recommends that the National Council for Children and Adolescents, (CONNA), the National Council for the Comprehensive Care of Older Adults, the National Council for the Comprehensive Care of Persons with Disabilities (CONAIPD) and the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU) serve as policy coordinators.
- (iv) Equality Strategy Unit No. 10 of Uruguay’s plan focuses on developing measures that will help to ensure an equitable distribution of family responsibilities.¹³ These measures are to include an expansion and improvement of government caregiving services (for children, persons with medical conditions, persons with disabilities and older adults) and the introduction of legislative amendments that will provide women and men with parental leave on an equal basis. These measures have now been incorporated into the Integrated National Caregiving System (SNIC) that was established in 2015 under Law No. 19.353.
- (v) Chile’s plan contains an entire strategy pillar on benchmarking progress towards the achievement of family co-responsibility. It provides for the creation of a system to support caregiving for dependent persons (older adults and persons with severe disabilities) so that women and men will be able to pursue and participate in their personal, employment-related and family activities and initiatives on an equal footing. It also sets out the objective of promoting the right to care, along with the duty to care for oneself and others, especially with regard to childcare and the care of older adults (see Chile, 2011, annex A2).
- (vi) The first section of Ecuador’s equality plan is aimed at reducing the unpaid domestic and caregiving workload of women by ensuring that these duties are shared by the public and private sectors, society, the family and the community (see Ecuador, 2014, annex A2). Ecuador is constructing a comprehensive, cross-sectoral policy on the various components of caregiving under its National Cross-Sectoral Early Childhood Strategy. The Strategy does not, however, make any mention of a participatory role for the National Gender Equality Council. It is to be implemented on the basis of the National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017 under the leadership of the Ministry for the Coordination of Social Development in association with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sports. The implementation of the Strategy will also be coordinated with the National Secretariat of Planning and Development, the Ministry for the Coordination of Knowledge and Human Talent, the Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, the autonomous decentralized governments, civil society organizations, businesses, households and communities.

¹² The National Commission on Caregiving Policy is composed of representatives of the National Council for the Comprehensive Care of Persons with Disabilities (CONAIPD), Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), the Salvadoran Institute for the Integrated Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA), the Ministry of Education, the Gender Equity Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Older Adults Directorate of the Social Inclusion Secretariat (SIS) and the Directorate of Strategic Programmes and Human Rights and Gender Unit of the Technical Secretariat of Planning of the Office of the President (STPP).

¹³ See [online] <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/decretos-originales/184-2007/2>.

In a number of the plans, concerns about the situation of women who perform paid domestic work are reflected in measures designed specifically to address the instability and substandard conditions associated with this type of work in most of the countries of the region, which lack sufficient legislation to protect these workers and whose existing laws provide them with fewer labour rights than other workers (Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru).

4. The interrelationship of the various forms of autonomy

As noted earlier, the objectives set out in these plans go beyond the bounds of the areas of physical, decision-making and economic autonomy addressed by the Gender Equality Observatory. A number of these issues, which are addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action and are outlined in detail in the plans, can be analysed from the perspective of interrelated forms of autonomy. One case in point concerns the objectives relating to women's education and training, which can be approached from a perspective that combines economic, decision-making and physical autonomy, since education for women has an impact on their autonomy in an overall sense.

Another important issue is the environment, its protection and sustainable use as viewed from a gender perspective. This entails a consideration of the differentiated negative implications of environmentally unsustainable actions as well as the active role that women should play in supporting sustainability.

(a) Education and training for women

Efforts to improve the education of the population in general and of women in particular encompass everything from the eradication of illiteracy and gender mainstreaming in school curricula to encouraging more women to enter scientific fields.

The information provided by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean as inputs for the regional report and assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action indicates that many of them have special literacy programmes.¹⁴ Within the framework of the countries' equality plans, this concern is reflected in the measures that are being proposed. This problem is still a serious one in many countries of the region, and women who lack literacy skills obviously have difficulties in securing gainful employment. The countries have adopted a variety of measures to address this problem:

- (i) The Plurinational State of Bolivia plans to provide priority access to literacy programmes to women over 15 years of age.
- (ii) El Salvador is proposing various types of affirmative action measures to boost women's participation in literacy programmes and to keep girls in school.
- (iii) Guatemala is seeking to wipe out illiteracy among Mayan, Garifuna and mestizo girls, adolescents, young people and adults by offering various types of programmes and undertaking different initiatives to, for example, set up systems for planning and following up on programme monitors' activities and evaluating them on a participatory basis.
- (iv) Honduras is working to do away with illiteracy among women by analysing their different situations and needs and by mainstreaming an intercultural gender perspective into teaching materials.
- (v) Panama includes post-literacy measures in its plan.
- (vi) Ecuador is planning to develop and strengthen literacy programmes for older adults that will place emphasis on cultural relevance and on local and ethnic dimensions.

¹⁴ The Dominican Republic (whose 2010 Constitution places the State under an obligation to eradicate illiteracy), El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Suriname and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

- (vii) Mexico is planning to launch a national literacy drive that will target girls, adolescents, agricultural day labourers and migrants.
- (viii) Peru is focusing on literacy programmes for rural women.

Another of the countries' concerns in the field of education is the need to make sure that students remain in the educational system. The dropout rate among girls, which is closely associated with caregiving duties and early motherhood, is a major obstacle to the exercise of the right to education by many girls in the region, and there are a substantial number of plans addressing this problem (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Uruguay). Some of the efforts being made in this area are aimed at developing affirmative action policies, as in El Salvador, to keep girls and adolescents in school at the basic and middle-school levels and help young women and adolescents, especially those who dropped out because they became mothers, to return to school. Honduras is planning to offer scholarships and other incentives for poor girls and adolescents to help ensure that they have access to the educational system and that they will remain enrolled. Mexico is also working to provide scholarships that will help female students stay in secondary and higher education and to expand the coverage of these incentives to cover the entire educational cycle for indigenous girls. Panama is working to enforce its laws against child labour as a means of combating one of the reasons why children drop out of school and one of the factors contributing to the violation of the child and adolescent population's right to education.

Many of the proposed measures are designed to address the need for trained educational professionals who are aware of gender issues and of the importance of cultural diversity in general and of sexual and gender diversity in particular. They also reflect an awareness of the need to mainstream a gender perspective into education policies. In addition, they address concerns about gender violence in school and provide measures designed to promote cultural change, to provide protection and to supply training for teachers in these areas.

The linkages among education, quality employment and gender are addressed in a number of these plans (Belize, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago), with special attention being devoted to the inclusion of women in scientific and technological fields of knowledge. Some countries are proposing affirmative actions such as the following:

- (i) Brazil is preparing to introduce affirmative action and student aid measures to provide access to women to education and training in professional and technological fields of study that few women have traditionally entered and to ensure that women in those fields of study remain there;
- (ii) Ecuador is planning to introduce affirmative action mechanisms into the country's scientific, academic and technological fields in order to capitalize upon the talent of women and LGBTI persons as it works to promote and facilitate the professionalization of women and LGBTI persons in all areas of activity focused on altering the production matrix, with emphasis on non-traditional branches of activity;
- (iii) Honduras is also seeking to introduce affirmative action measures and to offer scholarships for the technical, technological and scientific training of women on an equal footing in terms of conditions and opportunities (as is the Dominican Republic).
- (iv) Mexico is taking steps to introduce affirmative action measures in the form of scholarships for university and postgraduate studies as a means of bringing more women into careers in the sciences and technology and is looking to develop affirmative action measures that will bring more women into the National Researchers System.

In the field of education, some of the plans include legislative efforts. The plan of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, refers to the need for gender mainstreaming in the draft Elizardo Pérez and Avelino Siñani Education Act and its accompanying regulations and operational guidelines. The objective of this law is to build a non-patriarchal society grounded in gender equity,

undifferentiated roles, non-violence and the full enjoyment of human rights. In Uruguay, as well, one of the measures called for in the plan is the formulation of an education law that will ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into the education system.

(b) The environment

The environmental concerns reflected in the Beijing Platform for Action are also evident in the plans developed by 15 of the countries, with the approaches being taken to those issues varying in terms of their perspectives and areas of emphasis. Of those 15 plans, 10 of them include environmental concerns as a central element: Brazil (“Sustainable development with economic and social equality”), Ecuador (“Environment”), El Salvador (“The environment and comprehensive risk management”), Guatemala (“Natural resources, land and housing”), Honduras (“Gender, access and sustainable use and control of biodiversity, natural resources and risk management”), Panama (“Environment”), Paraguay (“A sound, sustainable environment”), Peru (“Assessing the value of women’s contribution to sustainable natural resource management”), Trinidad and Tobago (“Agriculture and natural resource development”) and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (“Ensure the preservation of the Pachamama in all spheres of activity of women and men”). Other plans, such as those of Colombia and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, include objectives and measures relating to environmental concerns and the use of natural resources within the framework of economic autonomy. Finally, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay are introducing measures dealing with access to quality services, Mexico is focusing on the creation of safe environments for women, and Trinidad and Tobago are addressing issues relating to agriculture and natural resource development.

Most of these measures have to do with gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes on natural resource management and use, on natural resource access, management and use by women and on household production activities. The measures are aimed at achieving substantive equality in the use of such resources and their impact on quality of life and in the mitigation of the consequences of climate change for the population as a whole and for women in particular (Brazil, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay). These measures target rural women, in particular, and, in countries such as Brazil, Guatemala and Honduras, they place emphasis on indigenous and Afrodescendent women.

Another cluster of strategies that is closely linked with the foregoing has to do with the promotion of women’s participation in decision-making circles dealing with natural resource use and the management of policies, programmes and actions in these areas. Efforts are directed towards strengthening and fostering women’s action in those spheres and their empowerment in terms of autonomous decision-making in matters relating to the environment and living conditions (Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia), the implementation of biodiversity agreements and treaties (Paraguay), social infrastructure programmes (Brazil), water and sanitation programmes (Plurinational State of Bolivia) and others. Efforts are also being made to promote the participation of women’s organizations and the formation of associations to work to improve women’s opportunities within the production sector.

Training in sustainable resource use is provided for in a number of the countries’ plans, along with information and awareness-raising campaigns in this area. Measures for promoting environmental research that incorporate a gender perspective are also provided for.

The promotion of women’s employment and involvement in production activities and start-ups related to natural resource use or recycling also features in the plans of Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Panama.

In terms of regulatory action, proposed measures deal with the review and alignment of standards and regulations (the Dominican Republic and El Salvador) or with the more effective enforcement of existing regulations (Ecuador) as a means of ensuring that women are not discriminated against.

D. Allocation of responsibilities, intersectorality and mainstreaming

These plans, which are a tool for implementing government measures for achieving gender equality, provide a roadmap for the State as a whole. Although the countries' machineries for the advancement of women are the lead agencies for these plans, the wide variety of measures and actions, which encompass all the various spheres of State action, entails the active participation of all the various sectors—a proposition which, as has been seen, poses certain challenges.

Establishing specific gender objectives in the various sectors of State action is an important stride forward, although it is not enough in and of itself; gender mainstreaming, i.e. the State's incorporation of the gender dimension in all aspects of its operations, remains a challenge.

It is also true that some of the actions that these plans assign to specified ministries are quite limited in scope. Be that as it may, their very presence serves as a means of placing the issue of discrimination on the public agenda. The analysis undertaken in this section of the study of the number of measures assigned to each ministry in each of the countries' plans and the percentage of the total represented by those measures has shown that not all of the plans assign responsibility for the implementation of specific measures to each ministry or agency. It is possible that, in the course of the implementation of the measures set out in the plans, efforts will be coordinated with the relevant agencies, but this cannot be determined on the basis of the plans as they now stand.

Eleven of the plans provide more detailed information on the responsibilities to be assigned to the various sectors. Most of these activities are assigned to the corresponding machineries for the advancement of women and to the ministries and agencies responsible for education, labour and health, as appropriate. Even so, since these mechanisms, which have quite limited resources, bear responsibility for coordinating the implementation of these plans, and given the plans' scope, which in many cases encompasses a vast number of lines of action and measures, the situation is quite complex.

Although many of these plans do assign responsibilities to various sectors, since they have been developed by the national agencies for the advancement of women, the lion's share of the work involved in their implementation falls to those agencies. This situation may hamper efforts to take advantage of the opportunity offered by these plans to further policies for attaining greater equality and placing gender issues firmly on the agenda of the State. Ultimately, the objectives defined in these gender equality plans constitute a roadmap for the State as a whole, not just national offices for the advancement of women, and the associated objectives, measures and actions are to be taken up as an integral part of their work. This means that the various agencies working in these areas will be responsible for these initiatives starting from the design stage and continuing on through their implementation and follow-up.

When developing new equality plans, offices for the advancement of women should analyse and evaluate the various assignments that have been made in terms of project responsibilities and weigh their true political and budgetary importance. In most cases, the workloads taken on by these mechanisms have been enormous and have probably exceeded their capacities. It is also possible that, in some countries, these tasks have been shared with other sectors and women's offices have been assigned a lesser role. Yet even in these cases, a question arises as to the objective of these plans. Given the way they have been developed in each country, is the plan a roadmap that will guide the State in making progress towards gender equality or, despite all the efforts that have been deployed, is it simply a roadmap for the corresponding women's office, while the other various State agencies, even though they have a key role to play in making sure that these measures achieve their goals, do not see themselves as active participants?

Box III.1

Policies for gender equality without a plan for gender equality: the Cuban experience

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) convened a national seminar entitled “Cuban Women of Beijing: Looking Towards the Year 2000”. The outcome of that seminar was a set of recommendations that ultimately opened the way for the creation of the National Action Plan for Follow-up of the Beijing Conference (PAN). This plan, which was approved by the State Council of the Republic of Cuba on 7 July 1997, states that it is the responsibility of the State of Cuba to ensure compliance with the resolutions of the Conference in order to further the advancement of women. In addition to other organizations, FMC played a central role in developing the Action Plan.

PAN, which was conceived of as a tool for guiding efforts to further the advancement of women, encompasses 90 measures for implementation in the various spheres of responsibility of the different government and other agencies. It covers seven areas: women and the economy; women and communication media; women and community outreach; women and legislation; research and statistics; reproductive and sexual rights; and access to management-level positions. The steps taken by Cuba based on the Action Plan demonstrate the commitment of the State of Cuba at all levels, since all government agencies are assigned responsibility for their implementation. FMC is central to the processes of assessing, monitoring, furthering and evaluating the application of the Plan of Action. Successful outcomes of this initiative include the level of representation of women in the legislature, which, notwithstanding the lack of a quota law, is one of the highest in the region (48.9% compared to a regional average of 28.4%). In the area of caregiving, the policy on child day care (Sáez, 2015) not only guarantees an early, non-sexist education, but also takes on board the concept of co-responsibility for care, thereby supporting the participation of women in the different spheres of public life.

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

Experience has shown that securing the commitment and participation of the various sectors in the implementation of these gender equality plans is a challenge that has yet to be met, and the countries are well aware of this. One of the strategies for facilitating this process is the establishment of inter-agency boards or commissions to monitor these plans’ implementation. Colombia’s plan, for example, provides for a management model in which a cross-sectoral coordination mechanism is to be overseen by the Presidential Advisory Council for Women’s Equity. It also sets out six main areas of action and defines specific objectives and benchmarks for each of those areas, as well as assigning the various responsibilities and specifying the allocations of the corresponding technical, financial and human resources. The indicators are monitored in order to track the progress made. Interestingly, however, the progress reports indicate that, although the various agencies in question do have the necessary response capacity, they compile the necessary information only when it is requested by the monitoring body. In other words, the various agencies’ performance in terms of independent monitoring and follow-up is weak (Presidential Advisory Council for Women’s Equity, 2015). This means that, even though monitoring tools are in place and agencies’ responsibilities regarding the plan’s objectives are established by law, the various sectors are having difficulty in meeting their obligations regarding the achievement of these objectives on their own without the intervention of the coordinating mechanism.

In Brazil, the efforts deployed by the Special Secretariat on Policies for Women to implement the National Plan for Women’s Policies has been cross-cutting in both a horizontal direction (across the various ministries) and a vertical one (between the national, state and municipal levels of government). A coordinating committee to monitor the plan’s implementation has been set up that includes all the relevant ministries, although a large proportion of the work involved in coordinating, organizing, overseeing and assessing the plan’s implementation has been shouldered by the Special Secretariat.

Cross-sectoral action, which is an implicit part of most of these plans, since they include objectives that call for the active participation of various sectors, is difficult to achieve and often requires the relevant gender mechanism to devote a great deal of effort to coordinating the work and eliciting the concerted action of the other agencies involved and, in some cases, the gender mechanisms are not in a position to do so. In addition to the constraints that these mechanisms must deal with—constraints that may diminish the effectiveness of the plan’s implementation—the dynamics between the coordinating body and the various sectors involved in the plan are an important factor. The relationships between the various ministries and

the gender mechanisms differ, since, first of all, these sectors have differing characteristics in terms of commitment, experience and willingness to regard gender equality as an intrinsic part of their mission and their work. A second factor is that they are not monolithic but instead may be composed of a cluster of varying approaches. A further consideration is that some sectors remain more reluctant to implement a gender equality agenda, although this may not necessarily be the main problem in this context. Thus, when developing these plans and setting out the various objectives, actions and measures that involve the participation of given ministries, thought must be given to the methods to be used to secure a commitment to the plan all along the continuum from the highest level of government down to the officials and civil servants who will be tasked with carrying out specific measures. In other words, while it is important to continue efforts to raise awareness at all levels in order to overcome pockets of resistance and build alliances, the more political aspects of securing a real commitment at the ministerial level is a challenge that must be taken up by the ministries and agencies themselves, more than by women's machineries. Many of these plans are structured around a vast number of measures and actions that entail determined efforts on the part of the various sectors and whose success will depend, in large part, on the extent to which the plan's objectives are aligned with those sectors' own objectives and goals.

E. Evaluation

This section will deal with evaluation as a tool for monitoring and follow-up. Fewer than half of the plans specify the procedures to be used for this purpose. The countries that do have such procedures in place include Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Peru. In the case of Brazil, a specific section is devoted to the assessment of the equality plan's implementation which covers coordination among the different national and local government bodies and agencies. In addition to providing for the monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan for Women's Policies, goals have been set for expanding and strengthening the institutional framework for gender policies in the federal, district, state and municipal executive branches, for training and skilling civil servants in areas having to do with gender and the multiple forms of inequality, and for compiling, organizing and disseminating data, studies and research on the subject. Brazil also has a coordinating committee charged with monitoring the plan. The committee is composed of representatives of the various sectors involved and meets regularly to track the progress made.

The evaluation process conducted by the Presidential Advisory Council for Women's Equity of Colombia is structured around the detailed information provided by the officials involved in the plan's implementation concerning the technical and financial resources allocated for each action. The CONPES 161 dashboard and benchmarks are used to track the progress made in each of the areas of action and to prepare regular assessments.

Costa Rica's monitoring mechanisms include an information and assessment system run by the National Women's Institute (INAMU) as the coordinator for the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity. This system is designed to track the management and monitor the substantive achievement of the policy's objectives in six modules, each of which corresponds to a specific objective and has indicators for follow-up and evaluation.

Ecuador's National Plan for Living Well identifies the National Council for Gender Equality as the body responsible for monitoring and evaluating the progress made in terms of the plan's gender equality indicators and goals.

El Salvador's plan provides for the establishment of a national substantive equality system which in turn is composed of a system for monitoring and evaluating the National Equality and Equity Plan for the Women of El Salvador. This system is provided for in the Act for Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women and is designed to create the necessary conditions to enable ISDEMU to monitor, follow-up and evaluate progress in the implementation of the plan. ISDEMU plans to put measures in place that will ensure the successful completion of the following

tasks: (a) the compilation, analysis and publication of all the statistics relevant to the objectives set out in the above law; (b) the preparation of studies on discriminatory situations and the gaps existing between the positions of women and men in the various spheres of activity of Salvadoran society; (c) oversight aimed at ensuring the progressively greater disaggregation of the relevant statistics so that the corresponding information can be captured, organized, centralized, maintained and furnished to the agencies and persons that bear institutional responsibility for the plan's implementation; and (d) the design of a system of indicators for use in formulating public policies and studies.

Guatemala has made provision for the tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Policy for the Comprehensive Promotion and Advancement of Women and the Equal Opportunity Plan for 2008-2023. It has also established that the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM) will regularly assess the progress made in implementing the plan and evaluate how it is affecting women's lives. To this end, it will need to define the mechanisms to be used for tracking, monitoring and evaluating the plan's implementation and to develop a system of indicators.

In the plan developed by Honduras, the formulation and application of a public policy is to go hand in hand with a system for monitoring and evaluating implementation processes and their effects. The difficulties encountered when attempting to evaluate the progress of the preceding plan, which mainly had to do with the availability of statistics that would make it possible to measure progress in the application of the country's gender policies, have been identified and, in response, steps are to be taken to negotiate with the government agencies responsible for producing statistical data to ensure that they supply that information regularly and at a sufficient level of disaggregation. To this end, a series of prioritized indicators for each policy area of the Honduran Gender Equality and Equity Plan have been established.

In Mexico, the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) monitors the indicators established for the National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination against Women 2013-2018 (PROIGUALDAD). This system of indicators is used to determine which goals have been attained and to undertake a quantitative assessment of progress towards cross-cutting objectives.

Peru's plan provides for the evaluation of the preceding plan and establishes that the system to be used for monitoring and assessing the 2012-2017 plan is to be run by the General Directorate for Gender Equality and Non-discrimination of the Ministry for Women's Affairs and Vulnerable Populations and that the processing of the relevant information and the preparation of the corresponding reports are to be the job of the Equality and Non-discrimination Policy Directorate, which is a department of the General Directorate and is to serve as the technical secretariat for the plan.

Finally, the Dominican Republic's plan reflects recognition of the fact that the absence of a monitoring and evaluation programme for the 2000-2004 plan made it difficult to gauge how much progress had been made. Consequently, the Second National Plan on Gender Equality and Equity (PLANEG II) 2007-2017 includes a system of indicators to be used in monitoring its implementation.

Clearly, an assessment system, which is one of the components that should be a part of any planning instrument, is often not incorporated during the design phase of many countries' equality plans. The absence of a monitoring and evaluation system equipped with indicators for the assessment of each action or objective, in combination with the very large number of measures and actions provided for in many of these plans, makes it difficult to track their progress and effectiveness.

Another important consideration has to do with the need to make a more determined effort to secure the participation of the various sectors involved in the implementation of these plans on an intersectional basis, whether by setting up interdisciplinary bodies to conduct evaluations throughout the plan's implementation or by developing other tools that can be used to ensure that the gender institution is not the only agency that shoulders this responsibility. One promising approach in this connection is the formation of linkages with other planning instruments, particularly national development plans.

The information derived from these systems continues to refer primarily to process management and the outputs of those processes; steps should be taken to compile more complete information on actual results and their social effects (ECLAC/SEGIB, 2011).

IV. Planning for gender equality

This section will provide an overview of the relationship between development plans and gender equality plans and will discuss the implications of the fact that most gender equality plans were first devised in the 1990s at a time when development planning was not considered to be a priority. Whereas planning was gradually abandoned in the region in the 1980s and 1990s, it is now being repositioned and reshaped as a tool for the reconstruction and development of the region's nations. In its present form, it differs in various ways from the praxis and ideology of planning as it existed in the mid-twentieth century.

Thus, “at the same time as the term ‘developing countries’ arose, so did the global challenge of constructing an institutional apparatus to promote the industrialization, growth and well-being of underdeveloped societies. Its emergence marked the start of the long years of planning of development (and not “for development” as it is currently styled). Industrialization was seen as the catalyst for modernization and economic and social change; the State was charged with promoting it, while planning was given the role of setting out the path to be followed and of organizing processes of comprehensive change.” (ECLAC, 2015c, p. 4).

This approach was abandoned during the debt crisis, and during the adjustment period the ideas of “liberalization, deregulation and privatization as the watchwords of State functions” came to prevail. The return and reinforcement of democracy in many countries of the region during the 1990s, in conjunction with the emergence of a new economic context, led to the reinstatement of development planning as a priority, and an appreciation of its importance has grown further with the progressive modernization and professionalization of the civil service and its institutional structure. This process has not, however, proceeded without some difficulty. As noted by the World Bank, some of the major administrative problems faced by the region's governments lie in the “insufficient technical capacity at the centre of government for formulating and evaluating policies (ex ante and ex post); limited coordination between sectoral policies, which leads to inconsistencies and incoherence; scant possibilities of challenges being levelled —from either the executive or legislative branches or from outside the public sector— during policy formulation; and a disconnect between policy formulation and implementation. More specifically, it is possible that planning agencies, while they may have analytical capacity, may not have enough influence over the executive branch or budget policies” (ECLAC, 2015c, p. 6).

This is also a problem that affects the institutional framework for gender policy and equality plans. The situation is compounded by the fact that “executive-branch systems for following up on national goals are still weak, with indicators that are often inadequately defined or that fail to specify how the actions of the executing agencies contribute to attaining those goals. Neither do they help

alleviate budgetary inertia or to improve the general coherence of government programmes. One current challenge is to strengthen the quality control of public policies by better defining how ministries and agencies are to contribute to countries' priority development goals" (World Bank, 2011).

The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC has noted that, in order to meet current planning challenges, which include those involved in creating national planning systems in the countries of the region, it will be necessary, in addition to delimiting the requisite functions and institutional structures, "to enquire as to the best ways and strategies to keep that complex system operational and to ensure it functions with efficiency, versatility, flexibility and —most challengingly— relevance" (ECLAC, 2015c, p. 7).

The present situation facing the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean —with the voicing of new demands, the appearance of new stakeholders and new concepts of development within the framework of regional and global development objectives— poses a challenge in terms of the need to take these new dynamics and new relationships into consideration. As noted by ECLAC in its analysis of the relationship now existing among society, the State and the market: "A new State architecture must be created that will allow the State to play its rightful role as leader of our countries' development strategies. By casting a critical eye on its historical performance, we should be able to define that role, give the State the proper tools and determine its precise place in conjunction with the market and the citizens, achieving an optimum balance of this trilogy in the development dynamic" (ECLAC, 2010b, p. 234). This new equation gives rise to a number of demands that must be met in the areas of transparency, accountability and participation; in the three (social, economic and political) dimensions of democracy; in terms of the participation of society in the processes of defining, applying and implementing policy; and in relation to the recognition of each member of the population as possessing rights whose enjoyment must be protected and promoted by the State.

Given these conditions, ECLAC advocates the formation of long-term compacts that entail certain requirements relating to each of the three components of this equation. The State, in its leading role, must have a development and fiscal strategy, must administer the functions of government in a professional manner and must ensure transparency and social participation. The market, for its part, must be regulated, must have sufficient financing and must be coordinated with the country's development strategy. Meanwhile, society (the citizenry) should engage in advocacy for stronger institutions, public policy access and political, social and economic democratic guarantees.

Another important consideration is the 17 Goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While the Goals are not legally binding, the expectation is that governments will embrace them as their own and will set up national institutional structures to attain them.

The Sustainable Development Goals focus on economic, social and environmental inclusion. Economic inclusion is understood to entail change in the production sector and that sector's development, along with action aimed at closing productive and technological gaps, achieving full, quality employment, eliminating gaps in access to infrastructure, assets, and goods and services, and eliminating gaps in education, especially in scientific and technological fields. Social inclusion involves universal access to social protection as part of a rights-based approach, the equitable distribution of the rents and productivity gains associated with natural resource use, environmental protection, the provision of public services, and quality of life and of the urban environment. Environmental inclusion, for its part, deals with access to public goods, an equitable distribution of the rents and productivity gains associated with natural resources, environmental protection, the supply of public services, and quality of life and of urban environments.

None of these objectives will be achievable unless decisive progress is made towards the elimination of gender gaps in all these areas. Without gender equality, development is neither a genuine nor sustainable process.

Initiatives aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals must therefore be continued and refined, and a dialogue must be established between the agencies in charge of those initiatives and the bodies responsible for planning systems in the countries of the region. While a number of

countries have already sought to mainstream a gender perspective into these instruments, these efforts need to be strengthened and expanded. The agenda established for the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals served to further the use of this approach, and it is to be hoped that the 2030 Agenda will exert an even stronger influence in this respect. ILPES has launched an initiative to provide a virtual platform for the compilation of these plans in a single site and has drawn up overviews for each plan that, in addition to setting out their specific areas of strategic action and objectives, provide an analysis of how they incorporate the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals based on the understanding that these planning tools make up part of the regional architecture for the pursuit of the global development agenda.

Modernizing public administration while placing special emphasis on the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and, hence, on an intersectional approach that necessarily entails a consideration of the combined effects of gender inequality on the many other forms of discrimination to which women are subject is a cultural and political innovation. This requires the identification of certain areas of the State for further modernization, with compacts and alliances among various stakeholders. Those agreements and partnerships then provide a channel for different voices that can have an influence on technical and political processes. It is therefore important to leverage the available human, technical and financial resources and to reinforce the State's gender architecture so that it can play a more influential role in the coordination of efforts to implement gender equality policies and processes and so that it can be more fully aligned with the development planning agenda, with the emphasis being on the regional gender agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ECLAC, 2016a).

The inclusion of the gender equality agenda in the 2030 Agenda and the linkage of equality plans with core planning instruments are processes that demonstrate the widely varying situations that exist in the region. Table IV.1 lists the national development plans that, to varying extents, include gender equality or improvements in the status of women among their objectives and that may therefore create virtuous links with the corresponding equality plans.

Table IV.1
Latin America (15 countries): national development plans
that mainstream a gender perspective

Country	Plan	Coordinating entity
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Economic and Social Development Plan in the Framework of the Integrated Development for Good Living Act 2016-2020	Government
Brazil	Brazil 2022	Office of the President, Secretariat of Strategic Affairs
Colombia	Outline of the National Development Plan 2014-2018. Everyone for a new country. Peace, equity, education	National Planning Department
Costa Rica	"Alberto Cañas Escalante" National Development Plan 2015-2018	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy
Dominican Republic	National Development Strategy 2010-2030. A Journey of Transformation towards a Better Country	Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, National Council for State Reform
Ecuador	National Development Plan. National Plan for Living Well 2013-2017	National Secretariat of Planning and Development
El Salvador	El Salvador productive, educated and safe. Five-year Development Plan 2014-2019	Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Office of the President
Guatemala	National Development Plan K'atun: Our Guatemala 2032	Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Office of the President
Haiti	Strategic Development Plan for Haiti as an Emerging Country in 2030	Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation

Table IV.1 (concluded)

Country	Plan	Coordinating entity
Honduras	Vision for the Country 2010-2038 and National Plan 2010-2022	National Planning System
Mexico	National Development Plan 2013-2018	Government
Nicaragua	National Human Development Plan 2012-2016	Government of Reconciliation and National Unity
Paraguay	National Development Plan Paraguay 2030	Technical Secretariat of Planning for Economic and Social Development of the Office of the President
Peru	Strategic National Development Plan. Bicentenary Plan: Peru towards 2021	National Centre for Strategic Planning
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	The “Patria” Plan. Second Socialist Plan of Economic and Social Development of the Nation, 2013-2019	Office of the President

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

The countries that have included gender equality in their development plans are: the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru.

The plan of the Plurinational State of Bolivia establishes the concept of “good living” as its policy horizon. One of the ways in which it defines this concept is that it involves valuing and reassessing the role of women, particular indigenous women, in the vanguard of the peoples’ struggles for emancipation in keeping with the principles of the duality, equality and complementarity of men and women. This plan rests on 13 pillars, 3 of which make direct reference to gender and to women. The goal of eradicating spiritual poverty, which is part of the first pillar (the eradication of extreme poverty) deals with the need to confront violence against women. In the eleventh pillar (sovereignty and transparency in public administration), the goal of establishing a transparent judicial system that guarantees justice for all men and women includes the objective of increasing women’s participation in the judiciary so that half of all court officials will be women.

One of Brazil’s goals for 2022 is for women and men to be on an equal footing and free of all forms of violence that could impinge on their economic, political or social activities. It sets forth the objective of ensuring that all Brazilian women and men —be they black, white, Asian, Indian or mestizo, and without distinction in respect of their religion or beliefs— will have the same opportunities for social mobility and for economic and political participation (see Brazil, 2010, annex A4). Its goals are structured around the economy, society, infrastructure and the State. The section focusing on society defines 10 spheres of action, one of which (“Women”) has the following objectives: achieving equal pay for men and women; ensuring equality in participation at the highest levels of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government; eliminating all forms of violence against women; and promoting the integral health of women and upholding sexual and reproductive rights.

Three pillars underpin Colombia’s development plan for 2014-2018: peace, equity and education. There are five cross-cutting strategies for the plan’s implementation: (i) strategic competitiveness and infrastructure; (ii) the transformation of rural areas; (iii) social mobility; (iv) security, justice and democracy as a basis for building peace; and (v) good governance. Gender issues, along with issues relating to disability, ethnicity and age, are expressly included in the latter three. In the area of security, justice and democracy as a basis for building peace, gender discrimination and the inequities that exist in all spheres of women’s lives are expressly recognized. In the section concerned with strengthening democratic institutions, one of the stated objectives is the consolidation of public policies focusing on gender equity and the public policy on risk prevention, protection and guarantees for the rights of women victims of the armed conflict. To this end, the Colombian government is committed

to using a gender perspective and gender-responsive budgeting to strengthen the planning, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting processes of the agencies responsible for those policies' implementation (see Colombia, 2014, annex A4). The public policy on gender equity (CONPES (Social) 161) and the public policy on risk prevention, protection and guarantees for the rights of women victims of the armed conflict (CONPES 3784) will also be assessed with a view to adjusting those policies and aligning them with the National Development Plan and the various mechanisms in place for the promotion of the advancement of women (see Colombia, 2014, annex A4). Mention is also made of the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence and the provision of care for victims of such violence. The development of the policy framework provided for in Law No. 1,257 of 2008 with a view to the removal of limitations on women's right to a life free of violence is defined as one of the established objectives in this area. Other measures provided for in the plan are: (i) improving progress reporting procedures for measuring advances, based on the established indicators, of policy application by disaggregating the information by gender and victimization incidents; and (ii) creating a national intersectoral and inter-agency coordination mechanism to support a comprehensive approach to gender violence, to be led by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in coordination with the lead agency for public policy on gender equity and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. There are also commitments for the application of three gender equity measures: (i) the development of the National Care System based on the provisions of Law No. 1,413 of 2010 and the formulation of a national agenda on the economics of care and treatment; (ii) the implementation of the public policy on the LGBTI population, which is aimed at helping to put a stop to the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion of LGBTI persons in Colombia; and (iii) a special consideration of the different situations of victims of the armed conflict and their return and/or relocation, especially with regard to the prevention of gender violence in the case of women victims.

Costa Rica's Alberto Cañas Escalante National Development Plan casts gender equality and equity as an underlying principle of development and one of the core elements of the generation of development synergies.¹⁵ Gender issues are present across all 16 sectoral objectives, and the human development and social inclusion sector sets out a programme for the implementation of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity and the National Plan to End Violence.

Ecuador's plan, which casts "good living" as its policy horizon, sets out six basic components of the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the process involved in achieving good living: the diversification of production and economic security, universal access to superior quality goods, social equity (which includes gender equity), social participation, cultural diversity and sustainability. The plan sets out 12 objectives, 6 of which make explicit reference to means of addressing gender inequality. Objective No. 1 (consolidating the democratic State and building up the power of the people) and Objective No. 2 (advocating equality, cohesiveness, inclusion, and social and territorial equity in diversity) refer to diversity, cultural belonging and a gender and intergenerational approach. Some of the associated measures focus on the creation of a comprehensive information subsystem on rights violations within the National Information System (SNI) that would provide a consolidated, inter-agency database disaggregated by gender, intergenerational issues, ethno-racial factors, disability and human mobility status. Provision is also made for the introduction by the State of mechanisms for altering sociocultural patterns that perpetuate violence of all sorts, including gender and ethno-racial violence. A national caregiving system is also to be set up that will provide specialized treatment for older adults. Gender issues are also explicitly included in Objective No. 3 (improving the population's quality of life), Objective No. 4 (building the citizenry's capacities and potentials), Objective No. 6

¹⁵ The elements involved in the generation of development synergies are: open governance, gender equality, the rights of vulnerable population groups, local government, the Making Development as We Go (*Tejiendo Desarrollo*) Programme, national forums for dialogue, the prevention and suppression of corruption, public employment risk management and adaptation to climate change, the improvement of public investment project management and a rights-based approach.

(consolidating the overhaul of the justice system and strengthening security while strictly respecting human rights, which entails the prevention and eradication of gender violence in all its forms) and Objective No. 9 (ensuring the availability of decent forms of employment).

El Salvador's national development plan, which also focuses on what is known as "good living", explicitly recognizes the central importance of equality between women and men. To this end, it establishes that the State should strive to guarantee equal conditions in three senses: treatment, opportunities and results. The focus is on narrowing existing gaps in terms of social and gender equality as a means of ensuring that the members of the population will increasingly be able to enjoy their economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. The public policy approaches required in order to attain good living must focus on human rights and gender, while the strategies needed to achieve that goal must revolve around equity, social inclusion and social protection. The aims of these strategies in relation to gender are to narrow the equality gaps in the various areas of State action and to promote equality in the outcomes of those efforts. Some of the basic guidelines for ensuring that government agencies incorporate cross-cutting approaches to gender, human rights and life cycle issues and that they devote the necessary attention to priority groups are: information on the population should be broken down by sex, age, area of residence and priority groups within the population; government agencies should use affirmative action measures as part of their implementation of public policies for addressing social inequalities and, in particular, should apply existing gender policies in the various areas in which they provide services; gender policies should be applied in the various areas identified for policy action; and all public-sector agencies should fulfil their commitments in relation to equality and non-discrimination against women and, to that end, should establish gender units and should adjust their standards and participatory mechanisms accordingly.

Guatemala's K'atun National Development Plan 2032 states that well-targeted initiatives for formulating policy actions to strengthen gender equity and a sense of cultural belonging, respect for diversity and legislation that upholds human rights are all factors that support the sustainability of such efforts. The aim is to reduce poverty and to find alternative means of meeting the needs of the population. The State, as the guarantor of the enjoyment of human rights and the leader of the development process, must ensure gender equality and respect for differences, eliminate exclusion, racism and discrimination, and advocate for a culture of peace that goes hand in hand with environmental and natural resource protection. The aim of achieving ethnically sensitive gender equity is incorporated into many different sections of the plan, including the sections entitled "Urban and rural Guatemala" and "Well-being for the people", which call for the institutionalization and internalization of the right to social protection, health care for mothers that will reduce the maternal mortality rate, guarantees for the right to health and the right to quality of life for women in their childbearing years, guarantees for health and for sexual and reproductive health in particular, and guaranteed access to all levels of education. These objectives are also present in the sections entitled "Wealth for all" and "Natural resources - today and in the future", which focus on energy use, the sustainable management of energy sources, access to water, the modernization of agriculture as a means of attaining food security, land use and agricultural production.

Ensuring gender equality is one of the cross-cutting objectives of Haiti's development plan, along with job creation and access to employment, the integration of young people and persons with disabilities into the development process, the improvement of housing conditions, risk management, food security and land management.

Gender equity is also a cross-cutting principle that runs through the entire development plan of Honduras, which characterizes gender equity as a crucial element in the achievement of the country's development objectives and in overcoming hunger, poverty and disease. It is also seen as a necessary part of equality in education, in all areas of work, in the opportunity to be represented in public and political affairs and in the equitable management of resources.

Mexico's development plan revolves around five national goals: (i) Mexico at peace; (ii) An inclusive Mexico; (iii) A Mexico with quality education; (iv) A prosperous Mexico; and (v) A globally responsible Mexico. All of these goals are linked through three transversal strategies, one of

which is, for the first time ever, gender mainstreaming (the other two are democratizing productivity and a modern government that is close to the people). It also provides for the National Programme for Equality of Opportunities and Non-discrimination against Women (PROIGUALDAD) to become part of the National Democratic Planning System, which is used to guide the efforts of the departments and agencies of the federal public administration to achieve national development goals. Gender mainstreaming in the National Development Plan of Mexico is based on recognition of the fact that full development cannot be attained unless the inequalities affecting over half of the population are eliminated. To this end, the plan is designed to foster a deep-rooted process of change that begins with the internal workings of government institutions (see Mexico, 2013, annex A4).

In Peru, the Bicentenary Plan: Peru Towards 2021 characterizes gender equality as an essential element in overcoming structural inequality, the disconnect between the educational system and the demands of the production system, low labour productivity, and unequal and low wage levels in the formal sector, which are directly linked to poverty. Consequently, the objectives set out in Item No. 5 of its Strategic Component No. 1, which deals with the political promotion of equity, includes the elimination of all forms of discrimination between women and men, full access for women to educational services at all levels and to decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, and the consolidation of land titling systems that will ensure equality of opportunity for women and men and that will embody respect for cultural diversity and appropriate land use while averting unwarranted changes in its use. A number of specific, chiefly programme-based action strategies are then defined on that basis.

Paraguay's development plan defines three strategic areas for action: poverty reduction and social development, inclusive economic growth, and positioning Paraguay in the world. The poverty reduction strategy calls for the protection and promotion of human and cultural rights by the State, including the right of all men and women to participate in all spheres of development on an equal footing. This includes an effort to increase women's labour participation rate, with a goal being set of a 75% rate of participation in the formal labour market on equal terms and conditions. The Plan also sets out the objective of attaining gender equality and promoting an integrated gender-based approach in public policy with a view to providing equality of opportunity and conditions for men and women. The cross-cutting lines of action are: equality of opportunity throughout the life cycle while ensuring the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, place of birth or family environment; efficient and transparent management of public affairs; and environmentally sustainable land management.

One of the objectives of the second of the four strategic areas of action included in the Dominican Republic's development plan ("A cohesive society with equality of opportunities and low levels of poverty and inequality") is equality and equity between men and women. This section of the plan includes measures designed to strengthen women's autonomy.

One of the general strategic objectives that forms part of the overall national goal of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's development plan for transforming the country's economic system is to consolidate gender equity and, within that framework, to imbue women's political participation with greater depth, mainstream the gender perspective in public policy and develop policies on respect for sexual diversity, among other measures. It also calls for measures to safeguard the health of the population that will address specific needs relating to ethnic identity, age, gender, area of residence and social environment.

As may be seen from this detailed description, while the countries are preparing national development plans to serve as instruments of government policy —plans that set out basic areas of action and strategies for achieving social, economic, cultural and productive development— and although they have begun to incorporate a gender perspective (a tendency that was spurred by the Millennium Development Goals in the years leading up to 2015), this is an ongoing process, and greater efforts are called for. The fact that the countries have explicitly placed gender issues on their agendas does not necessarily mean that they are mainstreaming a gender perspective. Frequently, gender equality goals are an add-on that is not necessarily linked in with sectoral or more general

goals, and the prevailing attitude is often that their achievement is the sole responsibility of women's mechanisms or offices. A review of the region's equality plans demonstrates that a large percentage of the actions that they call for are assigned to the corresponding women's mechanism or office. This suggests that these plans run the risk of becoming another road map—in symbolic terms but also, in part, in practice—for gender machineries rather than for the State as a whole. Be that as it may, they can be used as a tool for gaining greater legitimacy and for strengthening the institutional structure underpinning efforts to address gender issues.

In addition to charting the means to be used to mainstream gender issues into public policy, these plans are an important tool for creating linkages between women's mechanisms and the other branches of the State (Guzmán, 2003). They have been used to open up and strengthen working relationships between women's machineries and other sectors. While this, in itself, is a reflection of the headway made by all of the countries in the area of gender mainstreaming, this process has not been without its difficulties.

The linkage of equality plans with core planning instruments thus provides a dual opportunity. In order to achieve development with gender equality, it is important to analyse the role that national development plans play in the implementation of gender equality plans, especially in situations where the latter appear to be a task assigned entirely to the corresponding women's mechanism or office. The inclusion of a gender perspective in development plans is important for the achievement of both gender equality and development goals, and this should serve as the planning framework for women's machineries, in particular, and for the State, in general.

V. Funding for gender equality policies

The Latin American and Caribbean region is experiencing a long-term shortfall in funding for gender equality policies as the slowing pace of the region's economies and fiscal adjustments put the advances made in the last two decades at risk. With a “gradual decline in government spending on social programmes, specifically those aimed at promoting gender equity” (ECLAC, 2016a, p.45) —which spells trouble for efforts to ensure the continuity of programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and violence against women and to increase funding for sectoral policies on the elimination of gender inequalities— the emphasis needs to be on the provision of funding for gender equality policies based on the premise that an analysis of fiscal policy must focus on public revenues, on the one hand, and public spending, on the other.

International human rights standards in the area of gender equality are based on a series of agreements under which States have assumed the obligation to adopt measures, especially economic and technical measures, to the maximum extent available given their available resources, with a view to the progressive achievement of the full realization of those rights (United Nations, 1966, art. 2). The principle of the progressive realization of rights obligates States to work steadily and as swiftly as possible to attain the full realization of human rights by, among other strategies, mobilizing the necessary monetary resources. Once a step forward has been made toward the realization of a right, there is no going back; in other words, the enjoyment and the guarantee of that right must be maintained at their present stage of progress and then improved upon (INMUJERES/UN-Women, 2014).

The aim of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is to attain de jure and de facto equality between men and women in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This means that standards and laws must be fully enforced in order to ensure that women are not discriminated against and that actual, effective policies and programmes are put in place to address the various forms of gender-based discrimination. Although the Convention does not contain specific provisions on the allocation of funding for such policies, it does enjoin States parties to ensure that women are not discriminated against in any area of government. To this end, the corresponding strategies must provide for visible budgetary allocations for the implementation of these policies in order to guarantee women's exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men (art. 3).

The recommendations adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) address the need to review macroeconomic and social policies, to analyse the tax system and to adjust public spending in order to ensure equality between men and women. The Conference called upon governments to “systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures; adjust

budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures, both for enhancing productive capacity and for meeting social needs; and achieve the gender-related commitments made [in other United Nations summits and conferences] (United Nations, 1995, par. 346).

In line with the global agenda, the region's agenda is based on commitments made by the governments of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to strengthen government mechanisms assigned leading roles in the implementation of policies for women and in ensuring that they are provided with sufficient funding —funding that cannot be either reallocated or reduced— so that they can meet their objectives and reinforce their role as lead agencies for the implementation of gender equality policies. It is also made clear that there is a need to undertake institutional reforms and to pass the necessary budget legislation to make it possible to achieve gender equality. Governments have also reaffirmed their commitment to “ensure that the gender perspective, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, is fully included in the design and implementation of national development plans and public policies and programmes in all areas of State action, as well as in the process of budgeting resources to finance them” (ECLAC, 2004, art. 6 (iii)) and have asked for the inclusion “in national and subnational budgets sufficient resources to broaden the public supply of high-quality comprehensive health services for women in all their diversity” (ECLAC, 2010c, art. 6 (b)).

At the twelfth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013), the countries agreed to “define and establish instruments for periodically measuring the unpaid work done by women and ensure that public budgets are endowed with the funds required by the machineries responsible for compiling and systematizing the information for conducting national time-use surveys in order to facilitate the design of appropriate and fair public policies” (ECLAC, 2013c, B, art. 55).

They also agreed to adopt “budgets with gender as a key, cross-cutting factor in the allocation of public funds, with a national accounting system that takes account of gender issues, and ensure that sufficient funding is ring fenced in all policy areas to fulfil all the commitments made by States to achieve the goals of equality and social and economic justice for women” (ECLAC, 2013c, F, art. 113).

The document entitled *40 Years of the Regional Gender Agenda* (ECLAC, 2016a) attests to governments' ongoing efforts to propose measures for strengthening women's machineries as part of the overall institutional structure for the promotion of gender issues so that they will have the human and budgetary resources they need to speed the pace of progress towards the objectives set out in global, regional and national plans and to implement the associated policies. The importance of allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the achievement of gender equality is recognized in a series of regional and global agreements that urge States not only to provide the necessary funding for institutions, policies and programmes that are working for the advancement of women but also to mainstream the gender perspective in all of those institutions' budgets and to make the objective of gender equality a visible component of their national budgets.

The analysis of fiscal policies is of fundamental importance when the time comes to review gender equality plans and policies. An egalitarian fiscal policy can serve as a key redistributive tool for turning the situation around and improving the distribution of resources between men and women. It can become a source of discrimination, however, if the tax policy is based on the collection of indirect taxes that cover basic goods and services: these kinds of taxes have a greater impact on the poor, and especially on women, because women are short on both income and time and because more women than men are poor. Fiscal policy will also be discriminatory when it is based on income tax exemptions, which favour men because they have more economic resources than women, and when income taxes are differentiated by source (dependent and independent employment) and ignore differences between households. In that kind of situation, a single mother who works independently may pay more taxes than a male wage earner who is the sole breadwinner for a nuclear family. This kind of tax structure discriminates against single-parent households, most of which are headed by women, and can discourage women who are married to wage earners from entering the labour market. A discriminatory effect also arises when public spending is concentrated in sectors where most of the

workforce has traditionally been male and when it is not channelled into caregiving services that can help women make the switch from reproductive to productive work. Transfer programmes that have very strict conditions for women's participation also dissuade them from entering the labour market and discriminate against them relative to other groups that are given tax benefits and subsidies but are not subject to the same types of demands or requirements (ECLAC, 2012a).

In analysing the direct correspondence between the objectives and strategies of gender equality plans and budgetary allocations, it becomes clear that budgeting is a crucially important management tool for economic and social programming. Therefore, the degree of linkage and integration between these plans and the budget should provide a vehicle for clearly setting out what is to be done and what resources and means are available. In order to meet this challenge, the governments have agreed "to establish permanent government mechanisms, with specific mandates, division of duties, resource allocations and work plans, for intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination, especially between machineries for the advancement of women and central planning and budgeting units, to participate in the preparation and implementation of development plans and public budgets, mainstreaming the gender perspective in planning and budgeting at the national, subnational and local levels (ECLAC, 2016b, p. 14).

Ensuring the budgetary visibility of gender equality strategies implies multiple interactions between the various stakeholders and, although for the most part the frequency of this kind of interaction has been on the rise in the countries of the region, the differences among the various approaches to formulating gender equality plans and how they are positioned in the different countries' budgets appear to be widening in many cases. This state of affairs bears a relation to cultural and ideological sources of resistance to gender equality in the civil services of the countries of the region, but it also has to do with a number of more general issues relating to budgeting and planning. Some of those issues are the following:

- (i) Equality plans are long-term instruments, whereas budgets are short-term tools (annual tools in most of the countries of the region).
- (ii) These plans are generally part of government policies, are based on a programmatic approach and are designed to address certain problems. The budget, on the other hand, is a legal instrument subject to the approval of the legislature, is sectoral in nature and is shaped by the organizational structure of the civil service. Consequently, equality and gender policies for which priorities have already been established by government stakeholders are then subject to negotiations within the ideological and political forum of the countries' legislatures; the result of which is often that women's policies are relegated to a position of secondary importance.
- (iii) Budget laws are general pieces of legislation that indicate how resources will be used and have an inertial, recurrent structure. Even though the introduction of certain policies may alter the structure of the budget, these policies do not always bear a direct relationship to the equality plans designed to implement them. They have a complex structure based on classifiers and codes that are repeated year after year, and the creation of new classifications is an issue that is hammered out in preliminary debates that are not always held in the same calendar year as the corresponding budgetary debates.
- (iv) In addition to all this, the technical teams and experts tasked with guiding budgetary processes are not the same people who are involved in developing policies and programmes. They are highly specialized in their respective areas and, even more importantly, are not involved in the political debates on policy content, much less in the content of policies that have been formulated by means of a participatory process involving innovations proposed by members of the citizenry.

A. Gender mainstreaming in public budgets

Information on initiatives launched by national machineries for the advancement of women that focus on influencing budget debates, design, formulation and evaluation illustrates how different State actors influence and adopt decisions to increase or reduce public expenditure on gender equality and sheds light on the challenges involved in gender mainstreaming in the planning of all the various areas of government action.

While it is true that machineries for the advancement of women have been at the forefront of most of the initiatives for mainstreaming gender-equality budgeting at the State level, such initiatives have also been spearheaded by agencies responsible for budgetary policy, legislative bodies, sectoral executing agencies and other State offices. The fact that national machineries for the advancement of women have partnered with agencies tasked with implementing budgetary policies have without doubt contributed to the success of these initiatives and to their institutionalization (Coello, 2015).

An analysis of the budgets of Latin American countries that incorporate a gender perspective reveals the presence of a wide variety of impact strategies, most of which fall short of the scope required to achieve their ambitious goals. An overview of some of the types of work done to mainstream programmatic strategies for achieving gender equality in fiscal policy, and particularly in budget legislation, will serve to illustrate the kinds of efforts deployed by national machineries for the advancement of women in the region in order to have an impact on public budget debates, design, formulation and evaluation.

1. Influencing public budget classifications

A number of countries have developed budget classifiers that incorporate a gender perspective, and these classifiers make it possible to identify gender equality programme budget lines and gender equality planning budgets as a basis for reporting on public expenditure devoted to addressing women's issues.

One example of efforts in this area is the creation and institutionalization of the Gender-Based Budget Classifier System (CPEG) developed by Guatemala as part of a process launched in 2003 by the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM). The aim of the initiative was to introduce budget classifiers for operational planning purposes and in procedures for the development of draft institutional bills and the draft budget bill for the 2004 fiscal year. For political reasons (the failure to pass the 2014 budget bill) and owing to technical difficulties, this proposal was not put into practice. Nonetheless, under the National Policy for the Promotion and Integral Advancement of Women and the Equal Opportunities Plan for 2008-2023 (PNPDIM-PEO), the use of gender classifiers has garnered political and legal backing, and it has been established that the most senior authority in each agency will be responsible for ensuring that gender-based budgetary classifiers are applied and that the data are captured by the Integrated Accounting System (SICOIN); the Ministry of Public Finance has also been authorized to apply this classification system (Decree No. 19-2010, art. 13).

The General Budget Act for the 2011 fiscal period introduced the standards set forth in article 36 of Decree No. 54-2010 concerning access to budget information disaggregated on the basis of gender classifiers. This provision requires government agencies to report to the Technical Budget Directorate on budget allocations for the advancement of women.

The Gender-Based Budget Classifier System should be considered a technical policy tool that public agencies can use for budget planning and definition when preparing their draft budget proposals. It provides an array of conceptual elements that are of assistance in registering and classifying budget allocations according to how they will benefit women and thus helping to ensure that they are a more visible part of government budgets. This system of budget classification with a gender approach has been used by 93 institutions in their annual budgeting processes (OAS, 2015).

In Ecuador, the Gender Equality Policy Allocation Classifier has been part of the planning and budgeting processes of the Ministry of Finance since 2012. This system has made it possible to register, monitor and easily identify government investment in gender equality initiatives corresponding to each of the strategic areas of action provided for in the Plan for Equality of Opportunity for Ecuadorian Women 2005-2009 and, currently, in the National Agenda for Women and Gender Equality 2014-2017.

In Nicaragua, the Integrated Administrative, Financial and Auditing Management System (SIGFA) has been adapted to register programmes that allocate funds for the achievement of gender equality, and the Plurinational State of Bolivia has incorporated a gender expenditure classifier in its national budget. This classifier, which is based on the use of a series of different categories, contributes to the coordination of the budget in both conceptual and operational terms. These initiatives help to provide a shared conceptual definition of what constitutes investment in gender equality (OXFAM, 2014).

2. Budgetary visibility of gender policies

Monitoring of the implementation of gender equality plans has demonstrated that there is a direct correlation between budget allocations and progress made in their visibility. A number of countries have reported to the relevant international agencies that they have introduced budgeting processes that incorporate a gender perspective or that they have stepped up their efforts to do so by mainstreaming a gender-based approach in their national budgets and laws. This lays the groundwork for investing in the eradication of the causes of inequality.

The Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean has analysed the budget laws of 24 countries; in 95% of those cases, there are budget headings or lines that specify activities aimed at closing gender gaps and overcoming gender inequality.

In almost all the countries that were analysed, there is a heading for mainstreaming gender equality mechanisms. In Argentina, for example, the expenditures of the National Women's Council are set out in the Budget Act (in 2015 and 2016), and evidence a 132% increase in the budget. Policies for combating violence against women can be readily identified in 8 of the 24 countries, but a budget item for gender equality policies can be clearly identified in just 4 of them. The visibility of these budget lines, where they exist, is the result of gender mainstreaming strategies designed to have an impact on core planning instruments.

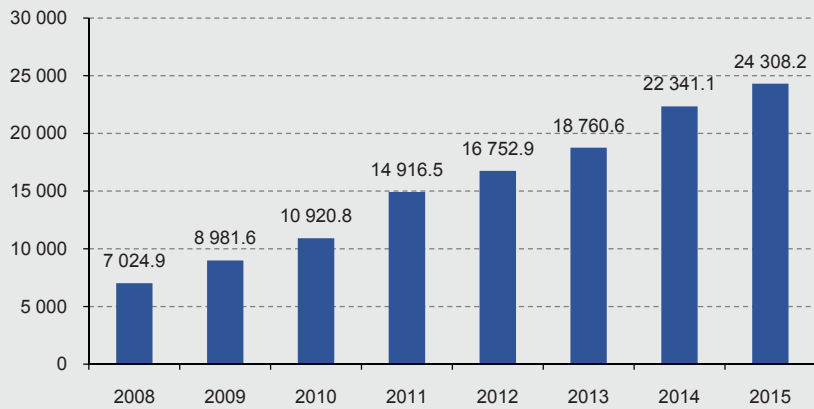
The upswings in expenditure on gender equality policies in some countries, such as those seen in Brazil and Mexico in 2014 and 2015, or the fact that, in others, such as Peru, spending levels have been maintained over a number of years, as is shown by the data provided in the budget law, are the outcome of specific government budget strategies. For 2014 and 2015, Brazil had a national budget law that included expenditure lines earmarked for programme implementation, along with specific anti-violence laws that include budget allocations, in addition to a national budget law that earmarked funds for mechanisms for the advancement of women, for specialized offices and for health and education. Mexico has set up the Institutional Expenditure Monitoring System (SICE), which includes Sub-item 12: Gender Equality Programme. In Mexico, work is now under way on the analysis of the text of the Budget of Expenditures of the Federation Decree, which indicates that there was a year-on-year increase of 8.8% in the budget item entitled "Expenditures for achieving equality between women and men" from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2015 (see box V.1).

Box V.1
Mexico: allocated expenditure for women and gender equality

In response to pressure from Mexican civil society, in 2003 the Commission on Equity and Gender of the Chamber of Deputies began to earmark and reallocate funding in order to address the most urgent women’s issues (reproductive health, poverty and violence), promote gender equality and support gender mainstreaming.

Based on the General Act on Equality between Women and Men (2006), the General Act on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007) and the Federal Budget and Treasury Responsibility Act (2006), which states that gender equality is one of the criteria to be used in the management of public resources (art. 1), two transitional articles relating to the gender perspective (art. 17 and art. 18) were introduced into the Budget of the Federation Decree for fiscal 2007. The Budget of the Federation Decree for the following fiscal year included an annex listing programmes to be funded out of the Allocated Budget for Women and Gender Equality, in addition to an article on the gender perspective. Since the inclusion in the Budget of the Federation of this annexed list of programmes to be funded out of the Budget for Women and Gender Equality, expenditures for women and gender equality have tripled and have been trending upward trend in each successive fiscal year (see figure 1).

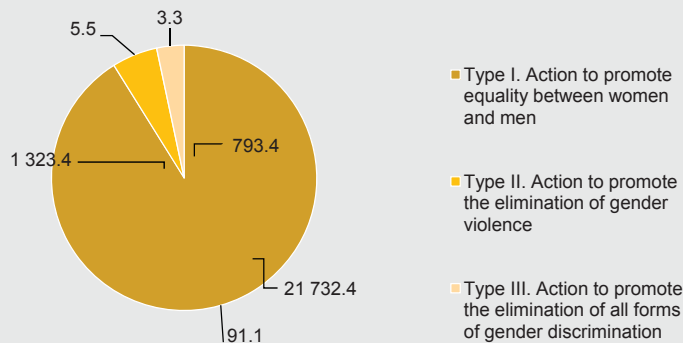
Figure 1
Allocated expenditures for women and gender equality, fiscal years 2008-2015
(Millions of Mexican pesos)



Source: Centre for Studies on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity (CEAMEG), on the basis of a review of the budget decrees issued by the Federation for fiscal years 2008-2015.

The Allocated Budget for Women and Gender Equality has been analysed by branch of activity, by programme and by individual activity. The distribution of budgeted funds indicates that, for fiscal 2015, resources were primarily channelled into promoting equality between women and men and, to a lesser extent, putting an end to violence and promoting action to do away with all types of discrimination (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Distribution of the Allocated Budget for Women and Gender Equality, by type of action provided for in the federal budget, 2015
(Percentages and millions of Mexican pesos)

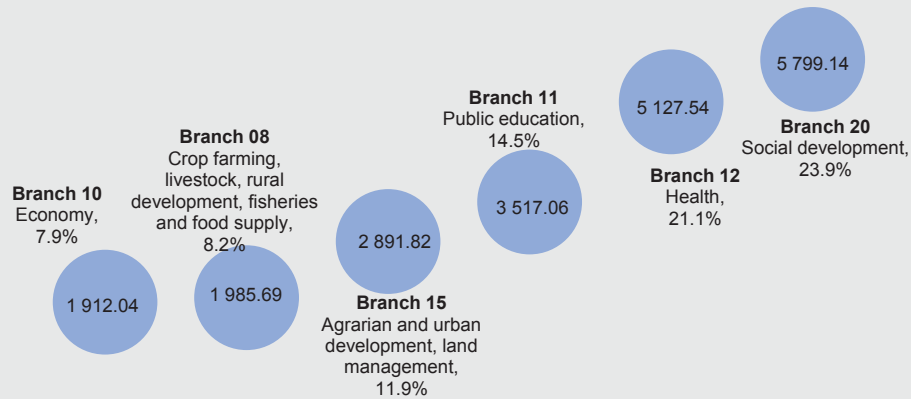


Source: Centre for Studies on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity (CEAMEG), *Políticas públicas y presupuesto etiquetado para la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres en México*, Mexico City, 2015.

Box V.1 (concluded)

The Allocated Budget for Women and Gender Equality in the 2015 Budget of the Federation includes 25 branches of activity, with 87.4% of the allocated budget being concentrated in 6 of those branches. This distribution shows that the government’s priorities in terms of the implementation of the National Policy on Equality between Women and Men are social development, health and public education, in addition to agrarian and urban development and land management, crop farming and livestock, rural development, fisheries and the food supply and, finally, the economy (see figure 3).

Figure 3
Concentration of budget allocations for women and gender equality,
by branch of activity in the Budget of the Federation, 2015
(Percentages and millions of Mexican pesos)



Source: Centre for Studies on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity (CEAMEG), *Políticas públicas y presupuesto etiquetado para la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres en México*, Mexico City, 2015.

The allocated disbursements for women and gender quality are an important affirmative action measure and strategy for mainstreaming the gender perspective in public expenditure. This will entail working to ensure that budget allocations are appropriate and are properly specified and monitoring budget disbursements to ensure that public funds are being used to benefit women and that they have an impact in reducing inequality and helping to narrow gender gaps.

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

By Law No. 71 of 2008, Panama tasked the National Women’s Institute with promoting gender mainstreaming in the general budget and working with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance in the application of monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure their effectiveness. The allocations for 2014 and 2015 are no more than 0.2% of the total budget, however. In 2014-2015, specific budget allocations for combating violence against women and an upward trend in related expenditure levels could be identified in only eight of the countries having national plans aimed at putting a stop to such violence (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru). Because the allocations are spread out among a number of different government agencies, however, the identification of all earmarked funds was not always possible.

In their periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a number of countries provide information on their gender equality policies, although that information often does not include quantitative or disaggregated data. Many of the English-speaking Caribbean countries have reported on their strategies and have included them in their 2014-2015 budgets. More specifically, the periodic report submitted by the Bahamas provides information on the public funds being disbursed for the construction of a shelter for women and their children and

on the funding provided by international organizations for use in combating gender violence; international funding for policies aimed at putting a stop to violence against women is drawn upon by a number of countries of the region (OHCHR, 2014).

Information on gender mainstreaming in government budgets in the region has been a valuable source of knowledge for national machineries for the advancement of women, which have built up a significant level of capacity in this respect. One factor that clearly does not help to strengthen that capacity, however, is the absence or incompleteness of specific information on the amounts and percentages of funding allocated each year for these strategies and for the implementation of equality plans by various government divisions. Furthermore, even though policies on the prevention and punishment of violence against women and on treatment and compensation for women victims of violence are overseen or coordinated by these machineries, the funding for these activities is neither transparent nor readily identifiable in most of the countries. The same problem exists in connection with policies for boosting women's labour participation rate.

The marginal character of funding allocations for the implementation of policies to combat violence against women clearly attests to the hurdles that must be overcome in order to fully enforce anti-violence laws and to improve the governments' fulfilment of their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention of Belém do Pará. There is no doubt about the fact that present budgetary allocations fall short of what is needed to prevent and punish femicide, sexual violence and sexual harassment, among other forms of gender violence, and to provide redress to victims. It is also a fact that the significant legislative advances that have been achieved do not directly correlate with expenditure levels. Thus, there is still quite a long way to go in order to fully safeguard people's human rights in this respect. As noted by Rodríguez and Pautassi in a recent study on the fiscal and socioeconomic implications of violence against women, fiscal constraints should under no circumstances be an excuse for inaction on the part of the State in combating violence against women—and all the more so because it has been demonstrated that action in this regard is economically more efficient than inaction is (Rodríguez and Pautassi, 2016).

One of the main challenges for the achievement of equality between men and women is the absence in most of the countries of specific allocations earmarked for the implementation of policies on the prevention of gender violence and redress for the victims, policies designed to increase the number of employed women and policies on the creation of caregiving systems, among other priorities on the regional gender agenda. It is also important for States to make active use of gender analyses of tax revenues so that they will be able to track how much of a contribution to those revenues are being made by men and women. A closer examination of fiscal policy will undoubtedly help governments to monitor progress towards gender equality, have a clearer picture of what improvements have been made and increase the transparency of investment directed towards the promotion of women's rights.

VI. Conclusions and challenges

The development of gender equality plans, insofar as they are a type of planning tool, represents a commitment to the future, setting out objectives and tracing a road map for achieving them. This entails a certain degree of consensus about the social, economic and cultural changes that a country should seek, and such plans are therefore more of a blueprint for the country than a blueprint for its government. In the past, the plans that have been implemented have covered extended periods of time and have remained in place as technical policy tools. This constitutes a significant political achievement and a stride forward in the struggle to promote women's human rights and gender equality. The different countries' machineries for the advancement of women have played a key role in driving progress, and it is difficult to imagine that equality plans would be in place were it not for the presence of an institutional framework for addressing gender issues.

Gender mainstreaming at the State level has paved the way for new forms of public policy planning which, in combination with new attitudes towards gender within the framework of State affairs, have made it possible to establish gender equality as a public policy objective. While the countries of the region have pursued similar processes with respect to the paradigm of women's rights and gender equality, the advances made and the effects of gender mainstreaming have varied from one country to the next and, to this extent, they continue to figure among the objectives of national machineries for the advancement of women and the State as a whole as they strive to achieve equality and autonomy for women.

Along with the power resources that national machineries for the advancement of women have amassed over the last two decades and their impact on various State actors, the normative status of these plans attests to the presence of a management model that ensures the continued use and sustainability of this technical policy tool.

In nearly all the countries, these plans are the outcome of participatory processes involving various sectors of civil society and different State actors in their definition, follow-up and reformulation. As a result, they reflect the actual interests and problems of the populace and their expectations in terms of what the State should deliver.

From a political standpoint, these plans should be based on consensus so that their goals will be shared by the various social, political and technical stakeholders and so that those stakeholders will all be committed to work for their successful realization. Gender mechanisms have worked hard to ensure the establishment of participatory processes that have made it possible for a wide and very

diverse range of women to make their voices heard. The participation of so many people has made it possible to set objectives that reflect the actual concerns of the people and to establish priority areas of action that address their real needs.

Public administrative processes have increasingly been incorporating the views of women who had previously been silenced or ignored (such as Afrodescendent women, indigenous women and women with disabilities) and those of sexually diverse populations, among other realities. This has enriched the debate and expanded awareness of the range of urgent situations and needs, thereby laying bare the debts owed by the State to women.

The objectives, content and strategic areas of action set out in these plans involve a broad array of institutional subjects and actors and are closely linked to the capacity of the corresponding machineries for the advancement of women to position themselves within the framework of government. Equality plans, as tools that are employed by the State as a whole, provide a roadmap for the machineries, but not for the State. More than a quarter of a century after their establishment, these mechanisms continue to grapple with formidable challenges of institutionalization owing to the difficulties encountered in prioritizing strategies and measures in relation to gender issues, and to the unwillingness of some State actors to shoulder their institutional responsibilities in this regard.

The inter-agency efforts of national machineries for the advancement of women have generated a series of strategies for creating an impact at the sectoral level that have resulted in the introduction of gender equality goals in the various agencies and entities of the State. This is still a work in progress, however, since intersectorality has not yet become a part of the institutional culture of Latin America governments. The incorporation of intersectorality as an implicit objective in these plans, which generally include actions that require the active participation of diverse sectors, is no easy task, and the introduction of this approach often demands a level of effort on the part of gender mechanisms that they are not always in a position to make.

The incorporation of a gender perspective into the workings of government is a crucial element in attaining gender equality. The work of the various sectors needs to be aligned with the objectives and goals defined in the corresponding gender equality plan; this takes a joint effort that is not easy to achieve but is essential if shared responsibilities are to be fulfilled.

A very senior government body—the Council of Ministers or another body of the same standing—should be involved in the development and approval of the gender equality plan and its follow-up in order to lock in a sufficient level of commitment and political will to support its implementation. Steps also have to be taken towards incorporating the equality plan goals into the government's wider strategic institutional planning objectives. To accomplish this, priorities will have to be established and agreed upon at an intersectoral level within the framework of the budgetary debate.

The fact that evaluation and follow-up procedures have not been developed to the point where they can measure actual results and effects on women's lives reveals the present shortcomings of gender equality policy planning. Evaluation efforts often focus on the fulfilment of management objectives rather than exploring the effects of gender equality policies on women and their environments. Flaws in follow-up and evaluation systems also have a variety of repercussions, including the presence of stumbling blocks that hinder budget execution and the negotiation of future funding streams, unsatisfactory systems of follow-up indicators and a failure to compile enough information about the affairs of the State, particularly in regard to the equality plan's impact.

In order to link the countries' gender equality goals with their development aspirations, synergies between the different core planning instruments need to be created or generated. Development with gender equality necessarily entails the inclusion of a gender perspective in national development plans, and this is especially important within the context of the debate surrounding sustainable development.

The budgetary visibility of gender equality strategies brings to light inconsistencies between development plans and gender equality policies in terms of their impact on fiscal policy and poses significant challenges for the coordination of the work of the various lead agencies for different public policies.

An analysis of budget laws demonstrates that a great deal of headway has been made in disaggregating budget expenditures by agency or institution, even when the percentage of the total budget allocated to a given agency is quite small relative to the work that it has been assigned. This type of underfunding has a negative impact on efforts to attain gender equality goals and demonstrates the limited scope of State action in these areas in some countries.

Budget processes often do not dovetail with existing gender equality plans and, with some exceptions, the profile of gender policies as a component of national budgets is faint or nonexistent. This is chiefly a consequence of the existence of strong cultural and ideological resistance to the idea of incorporating gender equality into government affairs in the countries of the region.

The structures of both gender equality budgets and public budgets are generally well-established and are repeated from year to year in nearly all of the countries of the region. Considerable year-on-year increases in funding are seen in very few countries and, where sustained increments are seen (as in Mexico), they are usually the result of consensus-based efforts to modify the budget on the part of a variety of stakeholders, including legislators, the governmental machinery for the advancement of women and civil society, in order to mainstream gender equality policy in budgetary debates.

One of the challenges that is underscored by the findings of this study relates to the need to undertake a deeper analysis of fiscal policies and revenues in order to gain a broader understanding of the implicit gender biases in the countries' budgets. Attaining a truly sustainable development process with gender equality will require the compilation of evidence of the links between macroeconomic factors and inequality-related situations, such as "time poverty" and income poverty among women and violence against women. Proceeding in this manner will set the stage for developing high-priority public policy proposals that will offer comprehensive, coordinated responses for preventing, addressing and redressing the inequalities affecting the lives of so many women in the region.

In order to develop gender equality policies that will have more concrete results and a greater positive impact on women's lives, the scope of action of national machineries for the advancement of women will need to be broadened, inter-agency mechanisms for setting policy priorities need to be established at the most senior level and planning tools that are linked in with national development strategies need to be created.

Finally, the coordination of political and technical processes that tie in national development agendas with the regional gender agenda at the national level, with the focus on the 2030 Agenda, is a development planning imperative for the short and medium terms.

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Annexes

Annex A1

Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean: a tool for analysing and monitoring the situation of women

The Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean compiles analysis of women's autonomies based on a series of strategic indicators, agreed by the governments of the region, and legislative repositories, which allow the progress made and setbacks faced in tackling these aspects of gender inequality to be measured. It also reviews, through a series of specialized reports, the instruments and strategies that the States of the region have implemented to tackle core inequality issues and in response to cultural resistance to change, particularly with regard to women's autonomy and gender equality.

The indicators for each autonomy covered by the Observatory, although limited in number, are important as they take into account key aspects of gender inequality. In recent years, they have been expanded in accordance with the demands of equality and with the availability of data in the countries. The Observatory now has available, recurrent data on the three autonomies and takes into account five physical autonomy indicators, seven decision-making autonomy indicators and five economic autonomy indicators. When developing the indicators for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals, these can be used as a model, particularly for measuring unpaid working time, as Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region with a repository that generates databases, based on time-use surveys carried out in the region, which reveal comparable national trends. The same is true for measuring femicide, since the work carried out jointly by all the countries has allowed an indicator to be developed using official data from administrative records, which reveals the extent of the problem in the region.

ECLAC updates the databases constantly and systematically with the information from the Gender Equality Observatory indicators. These databases are disseminated and made available to governments, academic centres, civil society organizations, international organizations and any interested person through the website.

The repositories of legislation on violence against women, quotas or parity laws, care policies and legislation on abortion include constitutional provisions and specific laws and regulations adopted by the relevant institutions. They also allow analysis to be carried out of countries' compliance with international agreements or responses to be formulated to discrimination or inequality faced by women of the region.

With regard to fair policies, it is clear that gender equality policies can be differentiated from other policies and that the different stages of their development (design, discussion, implementation or follow-up) reveal the innovative public sector approaches. States respond to the new challenges of taking equality and non-discrimination into account in practice, by recognizing multiple forms of discrimination and differentiated needs and, consequently, adopting specific measures, contents and protections or reparations aimed at citizens under fair policies. Analysis of fair policies takes into account critical reviews of public policies undertaken by some countries that have produced results and examines how this has been able to transform situations of gender injustice.

The type of information available for each of the autonomies in terms of indicators, coherent legislation and evaluated public policies is detailed below.

A. Physical autonomy

Physical autonomy refers to women's ability to decide freely over their own body. The Observatory presents analysis of two major social dimensions in the region: respect for reproductive rights and tackling violence against women.

Physical autonomy indicators

- **Femicide**
Data are available for 18 countries. This is the number of gender-based homicides of women aged 15 or over, per year, given in absolute numbers and rates per 100,000 women. Under national laws, it is referred to as femicide, feminicide, or aggravated homicide due to gender.
- **Women's deaths at the hands of their current or former intimate partner**
Data are available for 23 countries. This is the number of women aged 15 or over killed by their current or former intimate partner, expressed in absolute numbers and rates per 100,000 women.
- **Teenage maternity**
This is the total number of young women aged between 15 and 19 who report having had at least one live-born child at the time of the census, divided by the total number of young women in the same age group, multiplied by 100. The denominator of this indicator is the total number of young people aged between 15 and 19, whether or not they are parents.
- **Unmet family planning needs**
Data are available for 24 countries. This is the percentage of fertile, sexually active women, who declare that they do not want more children or want to delay their next pregnancy but who are not using any contraception. The concept of unmet family planning needs refers to the gap between a woman's reproductive intentions and her contraceptive use. For the purposes of monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, unmet needs were expressed as a percentage based on women who are married or in a consensual union.
- **Maternal mortality**
Measuring maternal mortality is a complex process and the data from the different available sources do not necessarily coincide. For the purposes of comparability across countries and originally within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group calculates the maternal mortality rate for each country. This information does not always coincide with the data that countries have, based on their own records, which are collected by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). While the data used to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (and the Millennium Development Goals before that) is provided by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group, the Gender Equality Observatory publishes both sets of data.

1. Repository of physical autonomy laws

(a) Laws against violence

Violence against women is one of the most serious violations of women's rights, which prevents them from fully exercising their autonomy. In compliance with the commitments under the Convention of Belém do Pará, the only binding international legal instrument that specifically addresses gender-based violence, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women and other relevant instruments, Latin America and the Caribbean has made progress in developing a set of regulations and has adopted laws and policies to combat discrimination and violence against women (see table A1.1).

Table A1.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: laws against violence

Comprehensive laws against violence	Law on domestic violence	Law on trafficking in persons	Law on sexual harassment	Femicide/feminicide
Argentina ^a	Anguilla	Antigua	Argentina	Argentina
Colombia ^a	Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Belize	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Costa Rica	Bahamas ^a	Barbados	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Brazil
El Salvador ^a	Barbados	Brazil	Chile	Chile
Guatemala	Belize	Chile	Chile	Colombia
Mexico	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Costa Rica
Nicaragua	Chile	Costa Rica	Ecuador	Dominican Republic
Panama	Dominica	Dominican Republic	El Salvador	Ecuador
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) ^a	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Honduras	El Salvador
	Ecuador	Ecuador	Mexico	Guatemala
	Grenada ^a	El Salvador	Panama	Honduras
	Guyana ^a	Guatemala	Peru	Mexico
	Haiti	Guyana	Puerto Rico	Nicaragua
	Honduras	Haiti	Saint Lucia	Panama
	Jamaica ^a	Honduras	Uruguay	Peru
	Paraguay	Jamaica	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
	Peru	Mexico		
	Saint Kitts and Nevis ^a	Nicaragua		
	Saint Lucia ^a	Panama		
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Paraguay		
	Suriname	Peru		
	Trinidad and Tobago			
	Uruguay			

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

^a Under way.

(b) Legislation and regulations on reproductive rights

Table A1.2
Latin America: laws on abortion

Grounds	No restrictions	To preserve the mental (and physical) health of the woman	In cases of rape, statutory rape or incest	To preserve the physical health (and the life) of the woman	Malformation of the foetus	To save the life of the woman	Total ban
Countries	Cuba	Costa Rica	Argentina	Argentina	Colombia	Guatemala	Chile
	Uruguay	Ecuador	Bolivia	Bolivia		Panama	Dominican Republic
	Mexico City	Peru	(Plurinational State of)	(Plurinational State of)		Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Honduras
	Puerto Rico		Brazil	Brazil			El Salvador
			Colombia	Colombia			Nicaragua
			Panama	Paraguay			

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

2. Fair policies

Table A1.3
Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay: fair policies for women’s physical autonomy

Brazil: LawNo. 11,340 (Maria da Penha)	The Maria da Penha law is a major step forward in guaranteeing women’s physical autonomy and establishes a framework for action that, on the one hand, recognizes and assumes the responsibility of the State in tackling violence against women and, on the other hand, offers concrete responses. The law sets a new standard by recognizing violence against women as a human rights violation and not as a less serious private crime. Thus, the legal regime for human rights violations is applied to cases of violence against women
Colombia: Policy to guarantee access to voluntary termination of pregnancy	This policy guarantees access to voluntary termination of pregnancy in accordance with the legal provisions. Access to voluntary termination of pregnancy is allowed on three grounds, recognizing women’s fundamental right to make free and informed decisions about their bodies
Uruguay: policy to reduce violence against women	This policy represents achievements in inter-institutional agreements and work at the local level. It has strengthened the Departmental Commissions on combating domestic violence and their links with the local reception committees of the Integrated System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents from Violence (SIPIAV). The National Advisory Council has been able to influence other sectors and this can be seen in the greater participation of institutions at the invitation of the Council or in the increase in requests for advice. It has also helped to consolidate the inter-institutional response system for women who experience gender-based violence

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

B. Autonomy in decision-making

Autonomy in decision-making (or political autonomy) refers to women’s presence in different levels of the branches of government and to measures aimed at promoting their full participation on an equal footing. In this area, the Gender Equality Observatory covers indicators on participation in the political arena, fulfilling the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action to strengthen mechanisms for the advancement of women and the status of ratification and signature of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Autonomy in decision-making indicators

- Executive power: percentage of women in ministerial cabinet positions
Data are available for 36 Latin American and Caribbean countries. This is the percentage of women who hold ministerial portfolios during a presidential term or in a prime minister’s government.
- Legislative Power: percentage of women in the national legislative body (single or lower house)
This is the proportion of women who hold seats in the national parliament. Generally only the lower or single house is used for international comparisons.
- Judicial power: percentage of women judges in the highest court or the Supreme Court
This is the percentage of female judges or magistrates who sit on the highest court of justice or the Supreme Court in 33 Latin American and the Caribbean countries.
- Local power: percentage of elected mayors who are women
Data are available for 26 countries of the region. This is the percentage of women elected as mayors for a term of local government. The title “mayor” is used for this indicator because it most commonly refers to this position in Latin America and the Caribbean, but the indicator also includes municipal provosts, prefects, trustees and presidents.

- **Local power: percentage of elected city council members who are women**
This is the percentage of women elected as city council members for a term of local government. Data are available for 25 countries of the region.
- **Countries that have signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**
Data are available for 38 Latin American and Caribbean countries. It shows the ratification status of the States of the region regarding this Convention and its Optional Protocol.
- **Level within governmental hierarchy of national machineries for the advancement of women**
Data are available for 39 Latin American and Caribbean countries. This indicator takes into account the status that countries have formally conferred on these mechanisms through laws, decrees and other official means. In Latin America, they can be classified as: high level, for mechanisms that have ministerial status or whose head has ministerial rank; intermediate level, when the mechanism reports to the Office of the President but its head does not attend cabinet meetings (department of the Office of the President, a ministry, national institute or other body); and low level, when mechanisms report to a ministry or a lower ranking authority (vice-ministries, institutes, boards or other bodies).

1. Repository of laws on autonomy in decision-making

Table A1.4
Latin America: Quota and parity laws

Country	Year	Level of implementation	Percentage
Argentina	1991	National parliament and provincial legislatures	30
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2010	Office holders and alternates in the senate, the lower house, departmental and regional assemblies, municipal councils and other elected bodies	50
Brazil	1997	All proportionally elected offices (legislative, municipal and national)	30
Chile	2015	Parties' deputies and senators (neither male nor female candidates can exceed 60% of the total)	40
Colombia	2011	Political parties	30
Costa Rica	2009	All elected offices	50
Ecuador	2009	Multi-candidate parliamentary and municipal authority elections	50
El Salvador	2013	Legislative assembly, Central American Parliament and municipal councils	30
Guyana	2001	Political parties in national and regional elections	33
Honduras	2012	Candidate lists for positions of power and on political parties' executive committees, and for elected office	40; 50 (since 2016)
Haiti	2012	All levels of the public sector and political parties	30
Nicaragua	2012	The national assembly and the Central American Parliament	50
Mexico	2014	Federal congress and local congresses	50
Panama	2012	Political parties	50
Paraguay	1996	Governing bodies	20
Peru	2006	Municipal and regional councils	30
Dominican Republic	2000	Deputies and municipal office	33
Uruguay	2009 (introduced in 2014)	Primary and other elections, including for the legislature, municipal mayors, departmental assemblies, self-governing local authorities, electoral boards and political parties' executive committees	Not stated
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2009	Regional legislative councils, city councillors and district councillors in Alto Apure (2008)	50

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

Table A1.5
Countries with parity laws

Country	Year adopted	Applies to	Binding	Sanction
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2008	Chamber of Deputies and Senate	Yes	Candidate list not registered
Costa Rica	2009	Legislative Assembly	Yes	Candidate list not registered
Ecuador	2008	National Assembly	Yes	Candidate list not registered
Honduras	2012	National Congress	Yes	Fine equivalent to 5% of total State funding
Mexico	2014	Chamber of Deputies, Senate, local congresses	Yes	Candidate list not registered
Nicaragua	2012	National Assembly	Yes	No
Panama	2012	Political parties' internal elections and primaries	No	No

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

2. Fair policies analysed

Table A1.6
Plurinational State of Bolivia and Costa Rica: fair policies for women's autonomy in decision-making

Plurinational State of Bolivia: Gender parity and rotation in election bodies	This policy, which aims to ensure women's participation in State election bodies and in the leadership of political parties and groupings, has produced significant results in terms of women's presence in State bodies
Costa Rica: policy of parity and alternation under the Electoral Act	This policy helps to ensure women's equal access to election bodies. In 2010, Costa Rica was the country that reported the largest increase in the proportion of female deputies in the world

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

C. Economic autonomy

Economic autonomy is women's ability to generate their own income and resources, based on access to paid work on an equal footing with men. It covers time use and women's contribution to the economy.

Economic autonomy indicators

- People without their own income, by sex

Data are available for 16 Latin American countries. It shows the female (male) population aged 15 years or older who do not earn their own monetary income and who are not in education (according to their employment status) as a proportion of the total female (male) population aged 15 years or older who are not in education. The result is expressed as a percentage.

- Total working time

Data are available for 10 Latin American countries. It shows the total working time, which is the sum of paid working time and unpaid working time. Paid work refers to work done to produce goods or provide services for the market and is calculated as the sum of time devoted to employment, job searches and commuting to and from work. Unpaid work refers to work carried out for no form of payment, mainly in the private sphere. It is measured by quantifying the time a person devotes to producing goods for his or her own consumption and unpaid domestic and care work for his or her own household or to help other households.

- Unpaid working time, by own income and sex

Data are available for 7 Latin American countries. This takes into account the time spent by the population aged between 20 and 59 on unpaid work, i.e. work done for no form of payment, mainly in the private sphere. It is measured by quantifying the time a person devotes to producing goods for his or her own consumption and unpaid domestic and care work for his or her own household or to help other households. The indicator is disaggregated by sex and by whether individuals earn their own monetary income or not.

- Feminity index of poor households

Data are available for 17 Latin American countries. It shows the differences in the poverty (indigence) rate between women and men. A figure greater than 100 means that poverty (indigence) is higher among women than men, while a figure less than 100 means that the opposite is true.

- Distribution of total employed population by productivity and sex

Data are available for 17 Latin American countries. It shows the distribution of the employed population aged 15 or older by productivity. To this end, the economic sectors are evaluated according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev. 2. These sectors have been grouped together in the following levels on the basis of their average labour productivity (in PPP dollars at 2005 prices):

- Low-productivity sector: agriculture, trade and services
- Medium-productivity sector: construction, manufacturing and transport
- High-productivity sector: financial operations, electricity and mining

1. Repository of economic autonomy laws

Table A1.7
Latin America: maternity and paternity leave

Country	Maternity leave	Paternity leave
Argentina	90 days	2 days
Bolivia (Pluri. State of)	45 days before birth and 45 days after	3 days
Brazil	120 days (private sector) and 180 days (public sector)	20 days
Chile	24 weeks	5 days
Colombia	18 weeks	8 days
Costa Rica	4 months	5 days
Cuba	18 weeks	After leave and breastfeeding benefits, the parents may decide which of them will care for the child for the first year
Dominican Republic	12 weeks	2 days
El Salvador	16 weeks (private sector) and 12 weeks (public sector)	3 days

Table A1.7 (concluded)

Country	Maternity leave	Paternity leave
Ecuador	12 weeks	10-15 days
Guatemala	12 weeks	2 days
Honduras	12 weeks (social security)	Not included
Mexico	12 weeks	5 days
Nicaragua	12 weeks	5 days
Panama	14 weeks	Not included
Paraguay	18 weeks	2 weeks
Peru	98 days	4 days
Uruguay	14 weeks	13 days (dependents) and 10 days (no dependents)
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	26 weeks	14 days

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

Table A1.8
The Caribbean: maternity and paternity leave

Country	Maternity leave	Paternity leave
Antigua and Barbuda	13 weeks	Not included
Bahamas	12 weeks	7 days unpaid
Barbados	12 weeks	Not included
Belize	14 weeks	Not included
Cayman Islands	12 weeks	Only for the public sector
Dominica	12 weeks	Not included
Grenada	12 weeks	Not included
Guyana	13 weeks	Not included
Haiti	12 weeks	Not included
Jamaica	12 weeks	Not included
Saint Kitts and Nevis	13 weeks	Not included
Saint Lucia	13 weeks	Not included
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	13 weeks	Not included
Suriname	12 weeks in the public sector and in the private sector only where collective labour agreements exist	Not included
Trinidad and Tobago	13 weeks	Not included

Source: María Nieves Rico and Laura Pautassi, "Childcare leave: A right of children and parents", *Childcare and Parental Leave*, Challenges, No. 12, Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2011.

Table A1.9
Latin America and the Caribbean: leave to care for dependents, 2016

Type of leave	Number
Maternity	20
Paternity	14
Parental	4
To care for a seriously or terminally ill relative	4
Adoption	8
To care for a son or daughter with a disability	3

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

2. Fair policies analysed

Table A1.10
Colombia, Cuba, Chile and Mexico: fair policies for women’s economic autonomy

Colombia: women’s domestic work included in the national accounts	Analysis of LawNo. 1,413 which regulates the inclusion of the care economy in the system of national accounts. This reveals the economic contribution of women’s domestic work to society
Cuba: 55 years of childcare that gave women more free time	Review and analysis of the Children’s Circle policy in Cuba, which addressed inequality by creating State-run childcare institutions, thus promoting women’s access to the formal economy and mitigating the disadvantage they suffer as carers compared to men
Chile: pension reform	This policy seeks to rebalance a redistributive injustice by reducing the pension gap between men and women and by encouraging cooperation to strengthen women’s economic autonomy
Mexico: budget allocations for women and gender equality (GEMIG)	GEMIG ensures that the neutrality of public budgets is questioned with regard to gender, by providing that a gender approach must be incorporated in order to effectively meet the differentiated needs of women and men. A major step forward in generating data on the benefits of expenditure is the requirement to disaggregate by sex, which is crucial to identifying the extent to which spending helps to overcome gender inequalities

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

Annex A2 Equality plans

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Annex A3


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Annex A4

National development plans

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This study by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean presents a review and analysis of the processes of drawing up the gender equality plans now in place in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Since they were first developed in the 1990s and, more particularly, in the twenty-first century, these plans have become real road maps towards gender equality and guaranteeing the rights of women for States in the region, as well as a sign of the political will to make progress in this area.

Analysis of the processes by which these plans were prepared identifies aspects that could improve their scope and impact, both in terms of ending the subordination of women and tackling discrimination against them, and in relation to the need to mainstream the gender perspective in public policies.

Today, Latin American and Caribbean countries face numerous and complex challenges in the area of gender equality, which require the sustained and cross-cutting commitment of the State to women's human rights and autonomy. The region has a Regional Gender Agenda that must form part of the discussion in relation to future equality plans and that, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, constitutes a frame of reference for proposals and goals.

Lastly, as described in this study, the creation and linking of synergies between equality plans and development planning instruments is both an imperative and an opportunity. An imperative, because development is not possible without gender equality. And an opportunity, because it opens the way for establishing and strengthening an institutional architecture for equality, democracy and development.



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