

The progress and evolution of women's participation in production and business activities in South America

Beatrice E. Avolio and Giovanna F. Di Laura

Abstract

In 1994, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean approved the Regional Programme of Action for Women, whose guidelines remain in force thanks to a decision approved at the ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 2004), thereby reaffirming their commitment to the goals prescribed for equitable participation by women in economic activities. The present article sets out to analyse the progress and evolution of women's participation in production and business activities in South America, considering the situation of female employment, its evolution over the past decade and its differences from male employment. The article also analyses men's and women's time use, women's share of employment in jobs with higher average earnings (executive positions) and women's empowerment and economic autonomy (female entrepreneurs).

Keywords

Women, women's advancement, businesswomen, women's employment, work study, entrepreneurship, statistical data, South America

JEL classification

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I. Introduction

The participants in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (United Nations, 1995) designed a global platform for action on gender equality and women's empowerment, at the same time reaffirming their commitment to fully developing women's potential within society. One of the goals laid down at the Conference was equitable participation by women in the economic activities of their respective countries. In 1994, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean approved the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean (1995-2001), whose guidelines remain in force thanks to a decision approved at the eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lima, 2000) and the ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 2004) (ECLAC, 2004). The region's commitment to the goals laid down for equitable participation by women in economic activities has been consolidated in the light of these programmes and platforms for action. Thus, each country has amended its legal framework and created institutions oriented towards the development and promotion of gender equity.

There have been major changes over recent decades in the way women participate in the public world and the labour market in particular, a shift that Kanter (1977) called the most important silent social revolution of the twentieth century. This has brought profound transformations in different areas, including changes in the labour market and educational attainments, declining female fertility rates, alterations in family relationships and improved access to decision-making (ECLAC, 2004). Challenges to the full incorporation of women into the labour market remain, however. Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos (1989) note that, while women make up about half the global population, in much of the world they contribute less than men to the value of production activity, both quantitatively (labour force participation) and qualitatively (educational attainments and skills). This has had a number of repercussions on well-being and economic growth.

Against this background, and more than 20 years on from the Beijing conference, it is important to establish the progress and evolution of indicators relating to women's participation in economic and production activity in order to appreciate the actual situation of women and contribute to decision-making on policies to bring about gender equity in the world of work. The purpose of this document is to present and analyse the progress and evolution of women's participation in production and business activities in South America. By reaching a full understanding of women's participation in the labour market, the aim is to provide information and tools that can support the generation of initiatives in pursuit of gender equity in the world of work.

The article is divided into five sections, including this introduction. The second analyses the situation of female employment in South America, its evolution over the last decade and how it differs from male employment. It presents indicators for women's participation in economic and production activity and analyses the characteristics of women's employment. It also includes an analysis of female and male time use in paid and unpaid activities, an issue connected to the sexual division of labour and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, something that affects the real potential for women to enter and remain in paid employment.

It is important to understand the characteristics and quality of female employment because this information can be used as a tool to promote high-quality employment for women. Accordingly, the third and fourth sections examine, respectively, women's participation in jobs with higher average pay (executive positions) and women's empowerment and economic autonomy (female entrepreneurs).

Besides the situation of women in high-level executive positions, the third section of the document presents different initiatives and proposals in various countries for promoting greater

participation by women in positions of this kind. It also analyses the main barriers to women taking up these roles, in the hope that an understanding of the factors limiting access can point the way to initiatives for fomenting female participation.

The fourth section presents data on the participation and characteristics of female entrepreneurs. It is important to stress that these women generate employment not only for themselves but also for others, with a direct impact on their countries' economic development. The fifth and last section formulates some closing reflections.

II. The employment situation and access to jobs

The last few decades have been characterized by a number of changes in the way women participate in economic activity, both globally and in the region. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2012) has estimated the female labour force at 1.3 billion, or about 39.9% of the total labour force of 3.3 billion.¹ Between 1980 and 2008, the female labour force participation rate rose from 50.2% to 51.7%, while the male rate dropped from 82.0% to 77.7% (ILO, 2010). This reflects a progressive narrowing of the gender gap in recent decades. ILO notes that the female participation rate was 50.3% in 2014, while the male rate was 76.7%, a gap of about 26 percentage points (ILO, 2014a). This decline in the participation rate from earlier years (for both men and women) was due to cyclical factors, such as the recession and slow recovery from the recent financial crisis, and to structural factors, such as population ageing and more years of education (ILO, 2016).

Women's labour market participation in the Latin America and Caribbean region has increased substantially, rising from 43.5% in 1992 to 52.6% in 2012 (ILO, 2012). According to ECLAC (2004), there are still differences between men and women despite this progress. In 2002, about half of all women aged over 15 had no income of their own, while just 20% or so of men were in this situation. This figure still obtains for women at the global level, with about 50% being economically inactive (ILO, 2014a).

This section presents the evolution of indicators reflecting the working situation and access to employment of men and women in South America. Indicators on employment access and quality are used to analyse their working situation. Lastly, indicators of time spent on paid and unpaid work and the differences between men and women are analysed. According to ECLAC (2004), the benefits of gender equality have been paid for mainly by women, who have developed strategies to optimize time use because of men's low level of participation in domestic tasks.

1. Labour force participation rates²

Women's participation in the labour market varies from one country to another, reflecting differences in economic development, social norms, education levels and access to childcare services (Verick, 2014). The female labour force participation rate is a driver of growth, so that analysing this indicator can provide clues to a country's growth potential. Pagés and Piras (2010) argue that promoting female employment has a direct impact on economic growth, not only for women but for their families, by enhancing incomes and financial security.

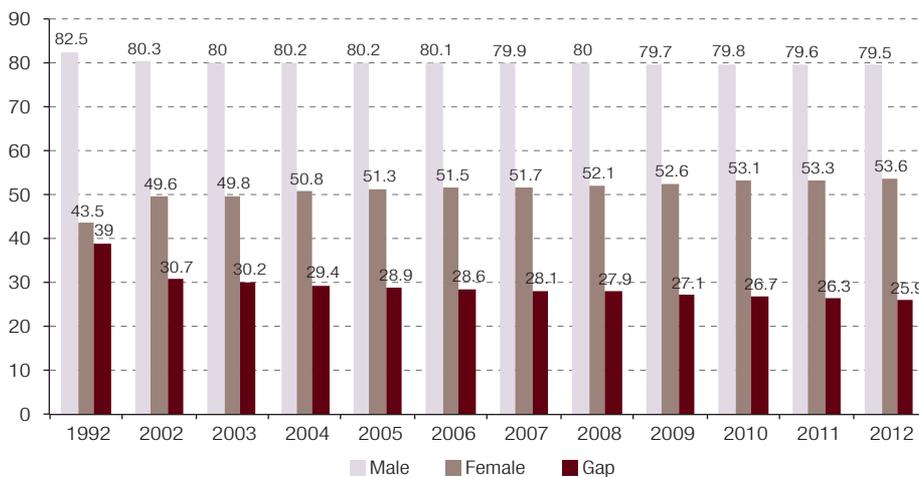
¹ The term "labour force" refers to people of working age who are currently in work and those seeking employment (unemployed) (INSEE, 2016).

² This is the economically active population (those in or seeking employment) as a share of the working-age population (ILO, 2014a).

Thus, participation by women in the labour force produces macroeconomic effects by increasing the human potential available and contributing to a country's economic growth, and microeconomic effects by directly generating income that contributes to women's own well-being and their families' (Pagés and Piras, 2010). According to ILO (2012), the labour force participation gap between men and women has narrowed globally, mainly because female employment has risen and the male participation rate has dropped. Nonetheless, there are still significant differences between men and women.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the female labour force participation rate rose by 10.1 percentage points between 1992 and 2012, while the male rate dropped by 3.0 percentage points in the same period (ILO, 2014b). The difference in participation rates between men and women dropped from 39.0 percentage points in 1992 to 25.9 percentage points in 2012 (see figure 1). Despite this reduction in the disparity between men and women, though, the female participation rate is only 71.2% of the male rate (ILO, 2013a). This trend could be seen between 2002 and 2010 in the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Suriname and Uruguay (ILO, 2014c).

Figure 1
Latin America and the Caribbean: gender gap in labour force participation rates, 1992-2012
(Percentages)



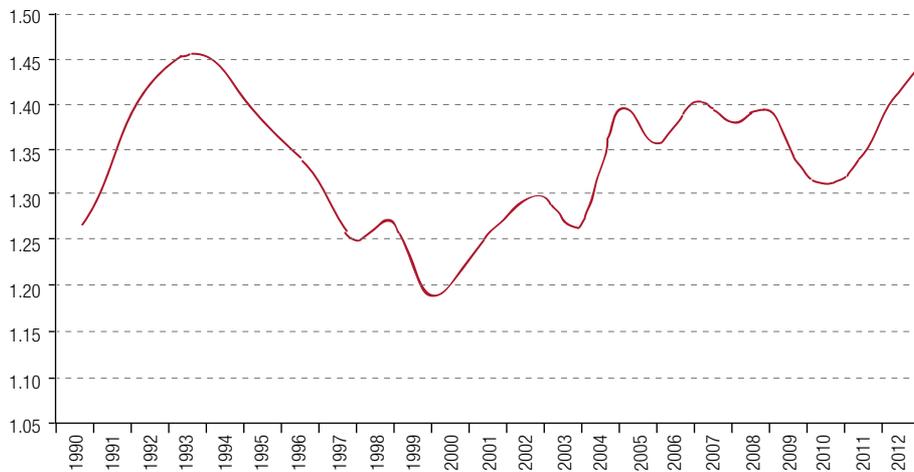
Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), "Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)", 2014 [online] http://www.ilo.org/empelm/what/WCMS_114240/lang--en/index.htm.

According to ILO (2010), the determinants of the rise in the female labour force participation rate have been as follows: (i) religious, cultural and social norms, (ii) access to education and income level, (iii) fertility, (iv) institutions (legal framework, enterprises), (v) sectoral base of the economy (agricultural, industrial or service-based) and (vi) political regimes, wars and conflicts. After analysing the effect of fluctuations in the economic context because of the financial crisis, Pagés and Piras (2010) conclude that the rise in female labour force participation has been the result of long-term factors such as higher levels of female education and lower fertility. The growth in women's labour force participation has repercussions for a country's economic development. Klasen and Lamanna (2009) found that gender inequity in employment had a negative impact on economic growth. There is likewise evidence from a number of countries that a rise in incomes controlled by women has a strong effect on their families, as their spending is largely for their children's benefit (World Bank, 2012).

2. Unemployment

The unemployment rate is the proportion of the working-age population seeking work but unable to find it (Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 2014).³ The global unemployment rate tended to decrease until 2007, but rose in 2008 because of the international financial crisis (ILO, 2014b). This crisis affected the unemployment rate worldwide, but especially in regions where the gender gap in unemployment was almost nil or the rate was actually lower for women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ILO (2013a) indicates that the female unemployment rate is higher than the male rate by an average factor of 1.35. The female unemployment rate has consistently been higher than the male rate for the last two decades (see figure 2). Although this is a substantial disparity, it has diminished in recent years.

Figure 2
Latin America and the Caribbean (16 countries): ratio between the female and male unemployment rates, 1990-2012



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), *2013 Labour Overview. Latin America and the Caribbean*, Lima, ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013.

Between 2002 and 2012, the female unemployment rate in South America fell by more than the male unemployment rate (see table 1). This trend has translated into greater female participation in employment and access to the economic benefits that active participation in paid work entails. Despite this progress, though, the female unemployment rate remains higher than the male rate. According to ILO (2012), the factors that might explain this gap include the greater prevalence of temporary employment among women, differences in education levels, labour market segregation and the tendency for women to leave the workforce for family reasons (such as childcare), which may make them less employable if they then return.

³ The working-age population includes everyone old enough to perform productive functions, covering all those aged over 14 (Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 2014).

Table 1
South America (selected countries): male and female urban unemployment rates,
2002, 2003, 2011 and 2012
(Percentages)

Country	Gender	2002	2003	2011	2012
Argentina	Male	18.0	14.1	6.2	6.1
	Female	17.6	18.7	8.5	8.8
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Male	4.2	...	...	...
	Female	6.8	...	...	...
Brazil	Male	7.3	7.8	...	4.4
	Female	11.5	12.3	...	6.8
Chile	Male	8.6	7.9	6.1	5.4
	Female	9.6	9.7	8.7	7.9
Colombia	Male	11.6	9.2	...	9.4
	Female	18.8	15.8	...	13.2
Ecuador	Male	5.8	9.0	...	4.5
	Female	13.9	15.0	...	5.5
Guyana	Male	20.9	21.2	17.2	...
	Female	29.2	28.5	25.7	...
Paraguay	Male	8.9	6.6	4.4	6.7
	Female	13.6	10.0	7.4	9.9
Peru	Male	8.3	9.0	5.8	5.4
	Female	11.6	11.9	10.1	8.5
Suriname	Male	9.9	...	...	...
	Female	20.4	...	...	...
Uruguay	Male	13.5	13.5	4.5	5.3
	Female	21.2	20.8	7.7	8.1
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Male	14.4	14.4	7.7	7.4
	Female	18.8	20.3	9.3	9.0

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), "Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)", 2014 [online] http://www.ilo.org/empelm/what/WCMS_114240/lang--en/index.htm.

3. The employment rate

A higher employment rate means greater participation in paid production activities, which have a greater impact on economic development than unpaid ones (ILO, 2014c).⁴ However, this indicator does not distinguish the quality of the work done, so the analysis of the distribution of the employed population needs to be extended by considering job characteristics.

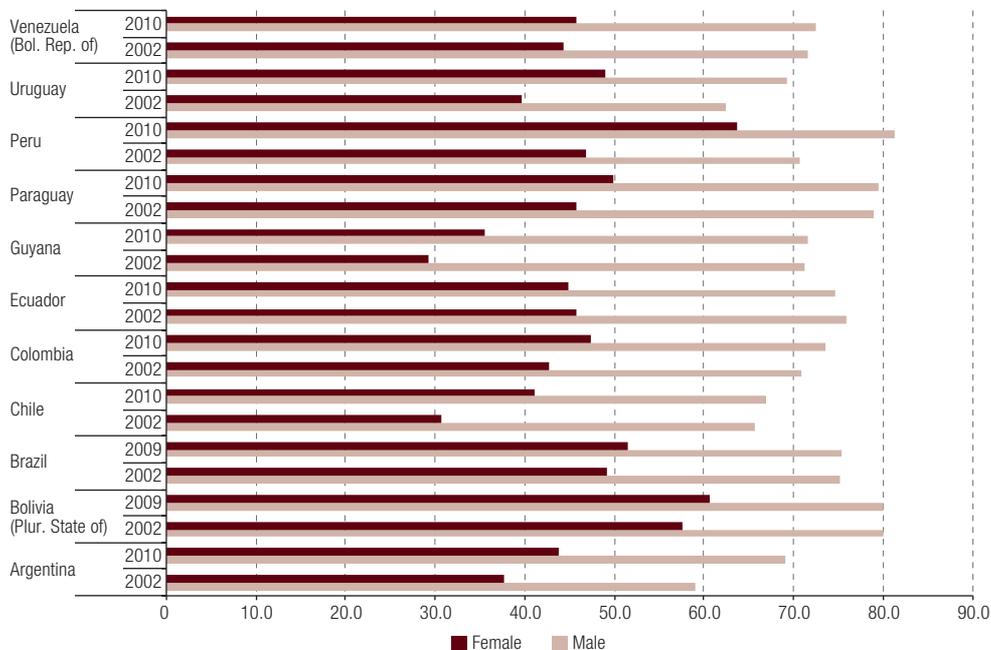
The gap between men and women held steady at the global level until 2008, when it widened because of the international financial crisis. This was due to the contraction of the labour market and slower growth in the female employment rate across all regions (ILO, 2012). In South America, the female employment rate stagnated in 2009, probably because of the financial crisis. It began to recover in 2010, however, and there has been a continuing tendency for the gap between men and women to narrow, with the male employment rate growing by less than the female one (ILO, 2013a).

Although a rise in the employment rate signifies improvements in terms of opportunities to obtain work, there needs to be closer analysis of the type and quality of jobs available to women, as many of those newly in work may be underemployed (whether in terms of hours or income) or in jobs deemed vulnerable, a category that includes unpaid family workers and self-employed workers (whose earnings depend directly on their profits from the goods and services produced) (United Nations

⁴ The employment rate is the proportion of people employed in some economic activity relative to the whole population (Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, 2014).

Statistics Division/ECLAC, 2001).⁵ According to ILO (2012), over half of all female employment in 2012 was in vulnerable jobs (self-employment or family work), characterized by long working hours and poor conditions. Again according to ILO (2010), the proportion of workers in wage employment does not differ significantly between men and women at the global level. Female participation is greater in countries such as Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname and Uruguay (see figure 3). It is important to stress that the wage employment category includes both the fully employed and those who are underemployed in terms of income, so that this indicator covers all those with a fixed monthly income but does not distinguish whether this income is above or below the minimum living wage.

Figure 3
South America (selected countries): female and male employment rates, 2002 and 2010
(Percentages)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), "Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)", 2014 [online] http://www.ilo.org/empelm/what/WCMS_114240/lang--en/index.htm.

In Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the female self-employment rate is higher than the male rate. When the composition of self-employment is analysed, most women are found to be in the family worker and own-account worker categories (vulnerable employment). According to Otobe (2011), vulnerable employment is a feature of the informal urban economy and the rural economy and is characterized by low productivity, low pay and a lack of legal and social protection. Again, the ability of people in family jobs to negotiate their working conditions depends on power relations within the family, so that most women are in a subordinate position (ILO, 2012).

Thus, the increase in female labour market participation does not necessarily imply equity in terms of employment quality. Women are found to be more likely to go into jobs classified as vulnerable, as own-account workers or family workers. Workers in vulnerable jobs are less likely than others to have formal employment contracts, meaning they lack access to any social security system.

⁵ The International Standard Classification of Occupations distinguishes the following categories: employees, self-employed workers and unpaid family workers. The self-employed category includes employers, own-account workers and members of cooperatives. Vulnerable employment encompasses own-account workers and family workers (ILO, 2013b; United Nations Statistics Division/ECLAC, 2001).

Vulnerable employment is also characterized by inadequate incomes, low productivity and difficult working conditions. According to data from ILO (2012), over half of all working women in the world have a vulnerable job (50.4%). This entails a greater risk of poverty and injustice at work for women because the employer-worker relationship is unbalanced (TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment, 2008).

4. The pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference in the average earnings of men and women. The World Economic Forum (2014) has estimated incomes in dollars at purchasing power parity (PPP) (see table 2).⁶ The South American countries presenting the greatest inequality in the average ratio of women's incomes to men's are Guyana (0.43), Suriname (0.46) and Argentina (0.49). Conversely, the ratio of women's incomes to men's is 0.82 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, meaning the gap between their average incomes is smaller.

Table 2
South America (selected countries): average incomes and female to male ratios, 2013
(Purchasing power parity dollars)

	2006			2013		
	Female	Male	Female to male ratio	Female	Male	Female to male ratio
Argentina	6 635	17 800	0.70	7 987	16 258	0.49
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	1 615	3 573	0.45	4 750	5 814	0.82
Brazil	4 704	10 963	0.43	9 055	14 857	0.61
Chile	5 753	14 872	0.39	14 965	30 513	0.49
Colombia	4 557	8 892	0.51	8 163	13 092	0.62
Ecuador	1 696	5 569	0.30	6 579	12 895	0.51
Guyana	...	...	...	2 047	4 708	0.43
Paraguay	2 316	7 000	0.33	4 725	7 526	0.63
Peru	2 231	8 256	0.27	8 337	13 532	0.62
Suriname	...	...	...	5 540	12 159	0.46
Uruguay	5 763	10 950	0.53	11 734	20 644	0.57
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2 890	6 929	0.42	9 025	17 896	0.5

Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, Geneva, 2013.

Ñopo (2012) found that women in Latin America had just 33% of the best-paid jobs, and that even in these there was an average pay gap of 58%. Despite progress in recent years, the divide is narrowing only slowly, probably because most women have different labour market opportunities to men, generally involving jobs classed as vulnerable or entailing hourly or wage underemployment and paying less than the average. A specific example is the high female underemployment rate, something that could be interpreted as women opting for time flexibility so that they can attend to family responsibilities.

5. Time use

Time-use surveys provide information on the way people distribute their time and provide data on inequality in the distribution of unpaid work (Aguirre and Ferrari, 2014). Different international and regional organizations and institutions, as well as the governments of the Latin American countries themselves, recognize the need to enhance the statistical measurement of time use in paid and

⁶ The purchasing power parity dollar is a measure used to compare living standards across countries and uses special exchange rates that capture differences in each country's product prices.

unpaid work within the region. According to ECLAC (2004), one of the most important explanations for the persistence of inequalities is that family life has not changed, meaning that there has not been movement towards equality in the family, care work and time distribution. Although women may enter the public world, they have not been freed from the tasks of the private world, and have accordingly developed strategies to optimize time use. This inequality of time use is not voluntary, then, but something women accept as an imposition of their own social context, owing (among other things) to a number of cultural aspects that are part of the Latin American idiosyncrasy (ECLAC, 2010).

6. Gender differences in participation in paid and unpaid work

The sexual division of labour highlights how closely unpaid activities are associated with women, something that heightens the social and economic disequilibrium of Latin American societies and limits their development in the market (Villamizar, 2011). Consequently, valuing and bringing to light unpaid work is essential to the construction of better social inclusion policies, taking gender and intra-gender differences into account.

Table 3 highlights the imbalance between the male and female populations in terms of participation in and time spent on paid and unpaid work. The diversity of measurement indicators makes it impossible to establish an accurate regional picture. In general terms, however, the percentage of women engaged in unpaid work is invariably greater than the percentage of men and, analogously, women always spend more time on non-income-generating activities. Similarly, total workloads are less for the male population, although the difference is much smaller in Brazil than elsewhere, with women working for only 21 minutes longer than men each day. The countries where the difference in relative workloads is greatest, conversely, include Ecuador (20.3 percentage points), Colombia (10.8 percentage points) and Peru (9 hours and 22 minutes per week).

Table 3
South America (selected countries): time spent on paid and unpaid work, by sex
(Hours and minutes and percentages of time)

Country	Year	Period	Time spent					
			Female			Male		
			Paid work	Unpaid work	Total workload	Paid work	Unpaid work	Total workload
Argentina	2005	Day	02:45	04:17	07:02	05:14	01:33	06:47
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2001	Day	06:42	05:06 ^a	11:48	07:30	03:18 ^a	10:48
Brazil	2009	Day	02:45 ^b	04:14 ^c	06:59	05:12 ^b	01:26 ^c	06:38
Chile	2008	Day	07:42	04:48	12:36	09:00	02:48	11:48
Colombia	2008	Week	42:24	33:18	75:42	50:24	13:30	63:54
Ecuador	2007	Week	52.5%	47.5% ^a	77:03	78.6%	21.4%	61:56
Paraguay	2009 2010	Day	06:43	06:20	13:03	07:55	04:42	12:37
Peru	2010	Week	36:25	39:28	75:53	50:38	15:53	66:31
Uruguay	2007	Week	18:42	34:48	53:30	34:36	13:24	48:00

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of data from national surveys and statistical information.

Note: Time use is distributed into three groups of activities: paid production activities, unpaid production activities and personal or non-production activities. Unpaid production activities include housework, care of persons, care of under-fifteens, care of household members aged over 60, unpaid services for other households, unpaid procedures to obtain public services and unpaid voluntary health-care work. Personal activities include study and learning, socializing, hobbies, games and pastimes, sports and physical exercise, eating, sleeping, personal care and the use of mass media. The table presents only statistics on paid and unpaid production activities.

^a Unpaid work does not include voluntary or community work.

^b Paid work is combined with voluntary work and job-seeking.

^c Voluntary or community work is not included, only domestic activities and care of family members.

As regards unpaid activities, the data show that the ones women devote most time to are domestic activities, followed by childcare and care of dependant persons. Considerable time is also spent on voluntary or community work. The most marked difference in time spent on unpaid activities by gender is for domestic activities. The largest gap is in Peru, where women spend 16 hours and 38 minutes longer on these activities every week than men. Nonetheless, men spend more time than women on voluntary or community work in both Chile and Peru (see table 4).

Table 4

South America (selected countries): time spent on activities classified as unpaid work, by sex
(Hours and minutes)

Country	Survey period	Female			Male		
		Childcare	Care of dependant persons	Domestic activities ^a	Childcare	Care of dependant persons	Domestic activities ^a
Argentina	Day	00:58		03:03	00:22		01:06
Brazil	Day	02:13		04:10	01:39		02:22
Chile	Day	02:36		03:54	01:30		02:36
Colombia	Week	26:18	22:06	24:00	14:30	13:42	09:30
Paraguay	Day	04:29			02:32		
Peru	Week	12:14	16:47	37:28	05:49	08:55	20:50
Uruguay	Week	17:48		28:36	10:06		12:30

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of data from national surveys and statistical information.

^a By domestic activities is strictly meant work done for the benefit of the household.

III. Women's participation in managerial and executive positions

Women account for about 1.3 billion of the 3.3 billion people (39.9%) making up the global labour force (ILO, 2012). Global labour force participation rates are 76.7% for men and 50.3% for women (ILO, 2014a). In Latin America and the Caribbean, female participation in the labour force has increased progressively and steadily, rising from 43.5% in 1992 to 49.6% in 2002 and 52.6% in 2012, while male participation dropped from 82.5% in 1992 to 80.3% in 2002 and 79.5% in 2012 (ILO, 2012). This increase in female labour force participation can be explained by the combined effect of economic development, higher levels of education, lower fertility rates, technological development (which means less time has to be spent on housework) and structural shifts that have permitted a reduction in transaction costs and time use (Goldin, 2006). However, time-use inequities are still a critical factor for female labour force participation (ILO, 2012).

Despite this increase in their labour force participation, women are considerably less likely than men to hold upper management jobs and other positions of responsibility. Although statistics are few, information provided by Grant Thornton (2016) indicates that women's share of managerial posts worldwide is 24%. Regionally, Eastern Europe is in first place (35%), followed by Africa (27%), emerging countries in the Asia and the Pacific region (26%), the European Union (24%), North America (23%) and Latin America (18%).

In Latin America, women's share of managerial posts ranges from 23% in Mexico down to 16% in Argentina. Furthermore, 53% of firms in the region have no women at all in their management teams, a proportion that is well above the global average of 32% (Grant Thornton, 2015b). The country in the region where the largest share of firms has women in upper management positions is the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (31%), while such firms make up just 5% of the total in Chile (World Economic Forum, 2014) (see table 5).

Table 5
South America (selected countries): women's share of managerial positions
(Percentages)

	Firms with women in executive positions	Women on the boards of listed companies	Firms whose owners include women
Argentina	9	8	38
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	22	...	41
Brazil	18	9	59
Chile	5	5	30
Colombia	12	...	35
Ecuador	17	...	24
Guyana	18	...	58
Paraguay	23	...	52
Peru	14	6	29
Suriname	15	...	18
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	31	...	31

Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, Geneva, 2013.

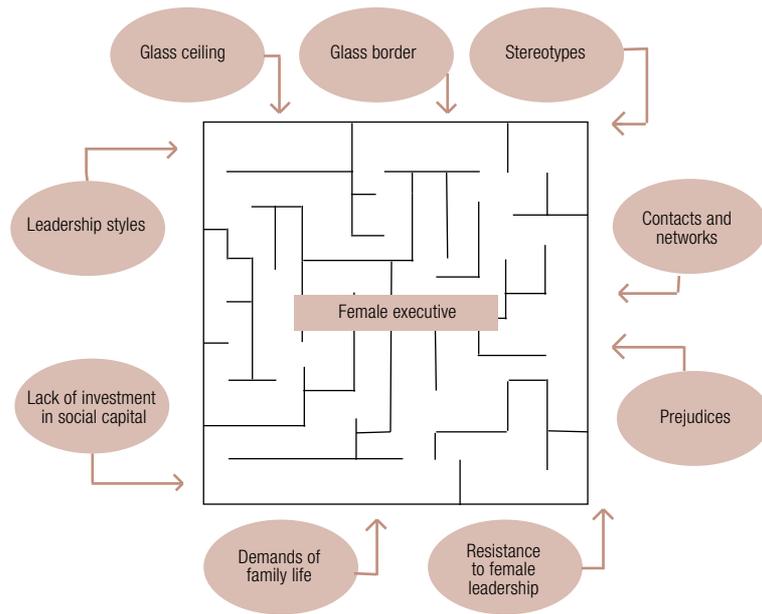
A number of factors make it difficult for more women to participate in high-level management posts in Latin America: (i) cultural aspects related to the idea that “the man’s the boss”; (ii) the strict working hours and frequent travel these positions entail, as such demands can only be coped with when there is strong support at home with childcare and domestic responsibilities; (iii) the excessive expectations surrounding women, who are judged not only on their working performance but also on their appearance, the way they dress and their ability to balance their work and personal lives. The lack of women in executive positions could also be due to the economic slowdown of recent years having reduced the opportunities for women to move ahead, to the difficulty women with responsibility for children or older persons may have in undertaking the long journeys these positions involve, to the rising cost of childcare services and to a culture of machismo (Grant Thornton, 2013).

1. The main barriers to women entering high-level management positions

A number of studies have looked at the barriers and obstacles that stand between women and high-level management positions. Eagly and Carli (2007) summed up what the literature has identified as the main barriers to women rising up in firms, namely: (i) the glass ceiling, (ii) the glass border, (iii) personal style and stereotypes and (iv) contacts and networks. These authors also summed up the main obstacles to women exercising corporate leadership that they found in the literature: (i) prejudice, (ii) resistance to female leadership, (iii) the demands of family life, (iv) lack of investment in social capital and (v) leadership styles.

The glass ceiling concept refers to the idea that there is an invisible barrier impeding women’s progress through organizations, be this because of cultural factors, stereotypes or attitudes to the female gender. The glass border concept suggests that women are not promoted to top positions in organizations because of their lack of international experience, since it is often assumed that married women are not looking to internationalize their careers, with the result that their development is not invested in. The glass ceiling metaphor is now considered obsolete as a way of describing the way women move up through organizations, and has accordingly been replaced by the metaphor of the labyrinth, introduced by Eagly and Carli (2007). A labyrinth may be defined as a place of intersecting and branching paths that has been made deliberately convoluted to confuse anyone entering it. This image better illustrates the situation of women executives in the world of work, for although men and women theoretically have equal access to executive positions, in practice the latter have a more complex journey to their goal (see figure 4).

Figure 4
The labyrinth facing female executives



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Where personal style and stereotypes are concerned, it is much harder for women in managerial positions to find a personal management style than it is for men, as women may be perceived as aggressive if they behave like male colleagues but feminine if they take the opposite approach. Contacts and networks are a potential source of employment opportunities. However, women in high-level management positions often feel alone at the top of organizations (because they are the only women), and this makes it difficult for them to forge and maintain contacts.

Prejudices about women playing a leadership role still persist among a section of the population who see this as breaking with the tradition of male leadership. These prejudices directly affect women trying to make their way to executive positions within a firm, as they are paid less or rise up more slowly than male peers at a similar level, despite having equivalent professional qualifications. Resistance to female leadership comes about because of a long-standing tradition that associates the characteristics expected of a leader more with men than with women. The features attributed to women include being friendly, sensitive, kind, charitable and compassionate, while men tend to be considered assertive, ambitious, aggressive and self-assured. Thus, women are associated with communal qualities and men with agentic ones, it being with the latter that people usually associate leaders.

As for the demands of family life, family responsibilities are indeed one of the greatest barriers for most women, as household tasks are not shared out equitably. Because women bear the bulk of family responsibilities, they continue to be the ones who take career breaks, have more days off or work part-time. As a result, they have less experience and accumulate fewer hours of work per year, so that their careers develop more slowly and they earn less. As for the lack of investment in social capital, it has been observed that the managers whose careers progress most rapidly invest more time and effort in socializing, politicking and interacting with others, while those who take longer to rise concentrate on the traditional management activities of planning, organization, direction and oversight. The various statistics on time use in paid and unpaid activities bear this out.

2. How can female participation in executive positions be increased?

A variety of studies have proposed ways in which society, the State, organizations and women themselves can increase female participation in managerial positions. Some proposals call on the State to legislate for gender equity or female quotas in executive positions (Grant Thornton, 2015a). Society at large is asked to alter its stereotypes regarding corporate leadership, change its culture and with it the idea that women ought to be solely responsible for looking after the home and children, and place fewer demands on women leaders (Grant Thornton, 2015a).

The main proposals for firms are for them to: (i) identify prejudices against women leaders and strive to eliminate them; (ii) make changes to working days, with flexible hours; (iii) make performance evaluation less subjective; (iv) open up selection processes rather than relying on referrals; (v) reserve a representative number of positions for women in upper management; (vi) maintain balance in the numbers of men and women in working teams; (vii) help shore up social capital; (viii) give women demanding assignments to prepare them for line management; (ix) establish family-friendly human resources policies; (x) give people with significant family responsibilities more time to prove themselves worthy of promotion; (xi) give women who have left the world of work the opportunity to join the organization; (xii) encourage male participation in family-friendly benefits (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Likewise, Wirth (2012) argues that organizations should provide examples of good practices in respect of measures and strategies to advance women, formulate strategies to promote more women to management positions, design equal opportunities policies and lay down guidelines for human resource management systems with a gender dimension. Lastly, women themselves are called upon to go outside their comfort zone, set themselves major professional challenges and challenge their organizations to avoid gender bias (Grant Thornton, 2015a).

3. Women on boards

It is widely recognized that boards of directors, as the governing bodies in firms where strategic decisions are taken, perform better when they include members with a variety of perspectives, capabilities and professional experience. Some studies have shown that European firms' market value increases more when there is a larger proportion of women in upper management teams (McKinsey & Company, 2007). Returns on sales are 42% higher in the firms with most women on their boards than in those with least, while returns on invested capital are 66% higher (Joy and others, 2007). Rather than gender as such, the reason given for this positive effect is that the combined contribution of people with different capabilities and perspectives, different experiences and lifestyles, allows problems to be viewed more holistically.

According to figures prepared by Governance Metrics International (2009), women's board representation is still very low. The data available show that participation rates in some South American countries are lower than those in Europe and North America and similar to those of Asia (see table 6), with shares of 11.3% in Colombia, 4.1% in Argentina, 3.9% in Brazil, 3.5% in Peru and 2.4% in Chile. Norway stands out here, having pioneered compulsory quotas for women on boards in 2005 (boards with over nine members must be at least 40% female and 40% male), with women currently accounting for 35.6% of board members (Governance Metrics International, 2009).

Table 6
Selected countries: percentages of board members who are women
(Percentages)

	Female board members
Industrialized countries - Asia-Pacific	3.6
Industrialized countries - Europe	9.6
North America	11.4
Emerging countries - Asia	4.7
Emerging countries - Europe	7.8
Emerging countries - Middle East and Africa	12.4
Emerging countries - Latin America	4.7
Argentina	4.1
Brazil	3.9
Chile	2.4
Colombia	11.3
Peru	3.6

Source: Governance Metrics International, "Women on boards: A statistical review by country, region, sector and market index", 2009 [online] <http://www.boardgender.org/stats-reports/global/243-governance-metrics-international-women-on-boards-a-statistical-review-by-country-region-sector-and-market-index-2009>.

There is worldwide interest in increasing female involvement in company management. Table 7 sums up different measures being taken in various countries that can provide a benchmark for implementation in South America. Some countries have government-mandated quotas for the number of women on boards, on the basis that this is the only way of increasing participation. Others have judged that the quota system is not appropriate and that initiatives of some other type are required. Examples of such initiatives include a requirement for listed firms to publish a board diversity policy, the creation of processes for recruiting women with managerial skills, increased training, education and mentoring for women, and advertising and promotion of these positions (Deloitte, 2011).

Table 7
Initiatives to promote female board membership

Country	Female gender quotas	Other initiatives
France	Yes, compulsory for listed and unlisted firms	Effective from 2017, there must be at least a 40% representation of women and men on the boards of companies traded on the stock market or large companies (with revenues or assets of over 50 million euros or employing at least 500 people). If the board comprises eight directors or fewer, the difference between the number of directors of each gender should not be greater than two. Listed firms are required to reach a preliminary objective of 20% minimum male and female participation.
Belgium	Effective 2011, at least a third of directors must be women and a third men	In May 2009, the Ministry of Equal Opportunities of the Flemish Region, together with chambers of commerce and the Belgian Institute of Directors, established a programme to increase the representation of women on boards and in management positions. The programme includes coaching initiatives and establishes a public database of male and female candidates for directorships.
Norway	Yes	In 2005, Norway became the first country in the world to introduce quotas, which became binding in 2008. If a board has nine members, there must be four directors of each gender. If it has more than nine, each sex must be represented by at least 40% of the directors (since 2008 for public limited companies). Persistent non-compliance can lead to the dissolution of the company.
Spain	Yes	In 2007, the Spanish parliament approved an equality law requiring publicly listed firms to ensure that between 40% and 60% of board members were women. Firms were given until 2015 to comply with the measure, but there are no penalties for non-compliance.
Malaysia	Yes	On 27 June 2011, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Razak, announced that the government had passed a law to promote gender equality requiring companies in the private sector to achieve at least 30% female representation in decision-making positions. Firms had five years to become compliant.
Netherlands	Yes	In December 2009, the government approved a legislative amendment setting gender quotas for executive and supervisory board members. Under the amendment, which was enshrined in law and came into force on 1 January 2012 [nota del traductor: parece que fue en 2013], at least 30% of board members must be women and 30% men. The deadline for compliance was 2015 for listed and large firms.
Colombia	Quotas for public entities	At least 30% of positions at the highest decision-making level and other decision-making levels in the different branches and entities of the public administration must be held by women.

Source: Deloitte, "Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective", 2011 [online] <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Risk/gx-ccg-women-in-the-boardroom-a-global-perspective4.pdf>.

Although South American governments have not set legal quotas for female participation in company boards, some countries have electoral quotas. These may be for applicants (potential election candidates, usually set voluntarily by political parties), candidates (legally mandated minimum requirements for the representation of certain groups on the ballot) or reserved seats (a legally mandated set number in parliament) (Dahlerup, 2006). Table 8 shows gender quotas in South America. It can be seen that there are none for reserved seats, but that there are for the number of female candidates. Columbia has gone furthest, establishing that at least 30% of posts at the highest decision-making level and at other decision-making levels in the public administration must be held by women (Law 581 of 2000).

Table 8
South America (selected countries): electoral gender quotas

Country	Quotas adopted voluntarily by political parties	Legal quotas for female candidates	Reserved seats	Women in the legislature (percentages)
Argentina	X	X	...	37 (2013)
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	X	X	...	53 (2014)
Brazil	...	X	...	10 (2014)
Chile	X	...	...	16 (2013)
Colombia	...	X	...	20 (2014)
Ecuador	...	X	...	39 (2013)
Paraguay	X	X	...	18 (2013)
Peru	...	X	...	22 (2011)
Uruguay	X	X	...	16 (2014)
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	...	...	...	17 (2010)

Source: International IDEA/Stockholm University/Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Quota Database", n/d [online] <http://www.quotaproject.org/>.

IV. Towards a society of women entrepreneurs

Promoting business is a public policy priority because of its bearing on a country's economic growth, job creation and market development. Why should there be a particular interest in studying and understanding female enterprise, though? Among other things, promoting female entrepreneurship has become particularly important because of women's growing role in economic activity (Weeks and Seiler, 2001) and because their organizational processes and styles are different from men's and need to be understood for enterprise to be promoted (Neider, 1987). Furthermore, while men's and women's attitudes to business are influenced by a number of the same variables, the decision to start a firm is of another order of complexity for women than for men (Minniti, Arenius and Langowitz, 2005). Female entrepreneurs have been identified as the leading force for innovation and job creation (OECD, cited in Orhan and Scott, 2011, p. 232).

1. What is known about women entrepreneurs

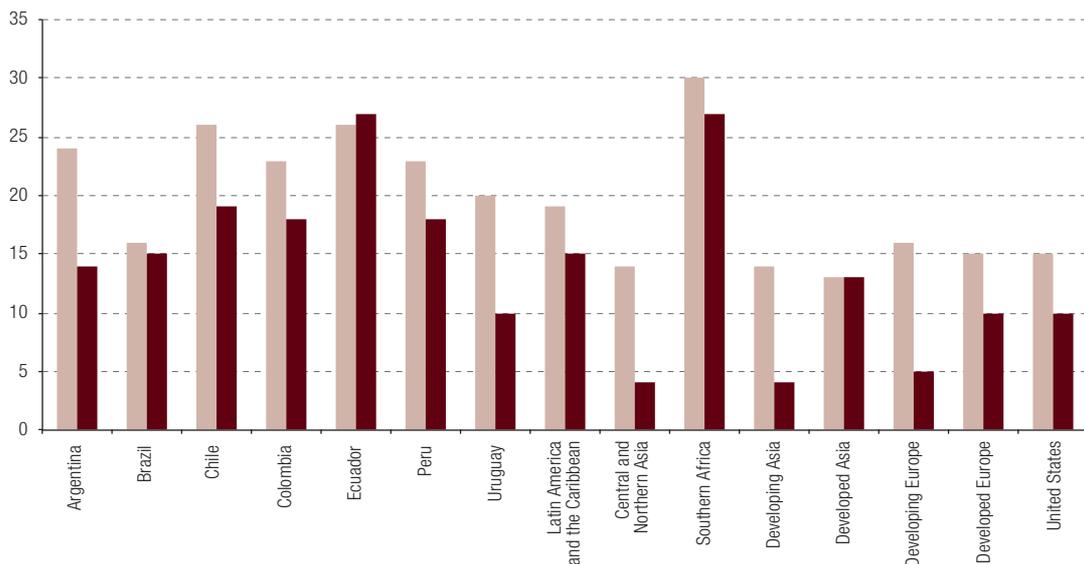
Little is currently known about female entrepreneurship. Studies carried out by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in the United States provide the fullest information available about the entrepreneurial activity of women around the world. GEM presents statistics for the female total entrepreneurial activity

(TEA) rate and defines enterprise as “any attempt of new businesses or creation of new enterprises, such as self-employment, reorganization of a business, or the expansion of an already existing business by an individual, group of individuals or an already established enterprise” (Serida and others, 2005, p. 13).⁷ According to the Global Report (Roland, Kelley and Kew, 2012), TEA rates tend to be higher in countries with lower gross output per capita, where more enterprise is driven by economic need. Countries with higher gross output present lower levels of enterprise but a higher proportion of opportunity-driven entrepreneurial initiatives.

The findings indicate that the female TEA rate varies significantly across the 61 countries studied, from 41% in Zambia to 1% in Suriname. In Latin America, the highest female TEA rate is found in Ecuador (33%), followed by Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Chile (see figure 5). The male TEA rate is higher than the female one in all cases (Kelley and others, 2015).

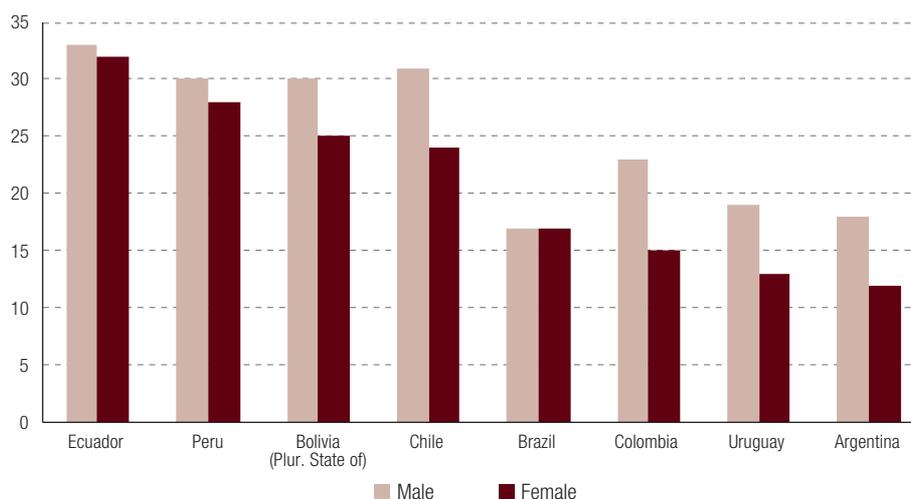
The same study analyses women’s motives for becoming entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is considered opportunity-driven when people decide to start their own venture or firm as a desirable career development option and it reflects a desire to take advantage of a business opportunity. Entrepreneurship is considered necessity-driven when people start ventures or firms because they have no other work options, or the ones they do have are unsatisfactory. The results for Latin America are very interesting, as there prove to be more opportunity-driven than necessity-driven female entrepreneurs in all the countries examined. The opportunity-driven TEA rate is 78% in Uruguay, 71% in Chile and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 69% in Peru, 68% in Ecuador, 61% in Brazil and 59% in Colombia and Argentina (Kelley and others, 2015).

Figure 5
Entrepreneurial activity rate
(Percentages)



⁷ The TEA rate measures the percentage of adults aged between 18 and 64 who are full or part owners of a business that has been in existence for less than 42 months, including both start-ups and new firms. A firm is considered to be a start-up if the women owning all or part of the business state that they have been paying remuneration for less than 3 months or have taken concrete steps to bring a business into operation. A firm is considered new if the women owning all or part of it and actively running it have been paying remuneration for more than 3 but less than 42 months.

Figure 5 (concluded)



Source: D. Kelley and others, *Special Report. Women's Entrepreneurship*, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2015.

According to the information available on occupational categories in South America in 2014, 2.7% of women and 6.0% of men were employers (see table 9). The data by country indicate that the workforce share of women employers ranged from a low of between 1.7% and 2.3% in Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and Uruguay to a high of 4.9% in Paraguay. Although these employers are a heterogeneous group operating firms of different sizes, composition and origin, the great majority of female entrepreneurs' firms employ fewer than five workers (ILO, 2014d).

Table 9
South America (selected countries): urban population working as employers, 2014
(Percentages)

	Female			Male		
	Establishments with a maximum of five workers	Establishments with six or more workers	Total	Establishments with a maximum of five workers	Establishments with six or more workers	Total
Argentina	1.8	0.4	2.2	3.3	1.2	4.5
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	3	0.8	3.8	6.3	2.6	8.9
Brazil	1.9	0.9	2.8	3.4	1.8	5.2
Chile	1.8	0.7	2.5	3.3	2.1	5.4
Colombia	2.5	0.5	3.0	4.9	1.2	6.1
Ecuador	1.7	0.4	2.1	3.3	1.5	4.8
Paraguay	4	0.9	4.9	8.6	1.2	9.8
Peru	2.9	0.3	3.2	5.3	1.2	6.5
Uruguay	1.6	0.7	2.3	3.7	1.7	5.4
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	1.3	0.4	1.7	3.5	1.2	4.7
Average			1.7			4.7

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), *2014 Labour Overview. Latin America and the Caribbean*, Lima, ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014.

Although the information is incomplete, these data show the importance of women in business in South America. As yet, though, very little is known about them. To be able to design support programmes and policies aimed at women, it is vital for female entrepreneurship to be properly understood.

2. The profile of women entrepreneurs

Because entrepreneurship requires people capable of identifying opportunities and willing to take more risks than others, it is very important to analyse the motives and inducements leading them to take this path. These motives have traditionally been characterized using the economic necessity or vocation model. However, Avolio (2008) argues that this model is too simple to characterize women entrepreneurs in Latin America.

In a study of women entrepreneurs in Peru, Avolio (2008) found that they presented a variety of demographic, educational and working profiles and were not a homogeneous group, which meant that they ought not to be treated as a single category, as is usually done in business support programmes aimed at them. According to Avolio (2008), programmes to support female entrepreneurship should start with a diagnosis that recognizes the diversity of their backgrounds. The author puts forward a conceptual framework that explains the profile of women entrepreneurs by the stage of their working and personal lives at which they opt for entrepreneurship (since women start businesses at different points in their lives and this affects the type of business and their particular approach to owning firms) and the factors leading them to do so. Her study identifies six profiles of women entrepreneurs, reflecting the different paths to entrepreneurship, which she calls: young women with working opportunities, rising women with external constraints, consolidated women with curtailed careers, natural young women, developing rising women, and consolidated women in late career.

Avolio (2008) also found that women entrepreneurs had a variety of educational backgrounds and that the type of educational experience they had prior to becoming entrepreneurs did not seem to be a determining factor in the nature of the firm they owned. As regards their employment background, the same study found that women entrepreneurs tended to have had a variety of work experience in different sectors before starting their businesses, and that the decision to set up a firm was apparently influenced by this prior experience or by personal interests. As regards family background, the study indicates that the parents' work seems to be a factor in the decision to start a business, as women entrepreneurs often come from families in which the parents have been entrepreneurs or self-employed.

The same study establishes that women set store by the financial and emotional support they receive to develop their businesses, mainly from their spouses or partners and from family members. The main obstacles that women generally face are intrinsic to their businesses and not peculiar to their gender. However, the major gender obstacle for women entrepreneurs is the traditional division of roles in the home, which assigns women the main responsibility for childcare and housework even as they carry out economically productive work, owing to the strength of cultural patterns where women's role in society is concerned. This requires women entrepreneurs to devote themselves more than men to the demands of the home and simultaneously carry out a variety of tasks, something that can create strains in terms of time use or conflicts between their roles as mother and entrepreneur.

Heller (2010) found that women entrepreneurs in Latin America tended to be concentrated in urban areas in most of the region's countries, were married or cohabiting, and had high levels of education. Almost half (46%) were aged between 30 and 45, while the involvement of young women aged under 30 (16%) suggested a potential for future enterprise. The great majority (70%) were owners or partners of microenterprises (establishments with up to six workers), with a smaller proportion being owners or partners of small and medium-sized enterprises. They were concentrated primarily in service sectors, commerce and the hotel and restaurant trade. The main difficulties they encountered were: lack of experience of business and trading, inadequate specific business training (administration and marketing), barriers in access to credit and financing, obstacles in access to sales networks, and excessive bureaucracy and paperwork when setting up a firm.

According to Daeren (2000), female entrepreneurs in Latin America spend over 48 hours a week on their businesses, and the great majority are owners or partners of micro, small and (to a lesser extent) medium-sized firms. Their business strategy is characterized by openness to innovation, although less so where technological innovations are concerned. They get great satisfaction from their work, and encouragement from their family and spouse is crucial to their development as entrepreneurs. Their main difficulties are: lack of business experience, inadequate specific business training, a lack of modern knowledge and information about economic and financial matters, barriers to fund-raising, barriers in access to sales networks, lack of self-confidence, and family responsibilities as a constant source of worry and stress.

3. Women's business development programmes

Although there are a number of governmental and private initiatives to promote female entrepreneurship in the region, their effects have often not been systematically evaluated (see table 10). Some major initiatives include the *Mujer Emprende* programme implemented by the National Women's Service (SERNAM), an agency set up by the Government of Chile in 1991 to promote equal opportunities for women and men and contribute to female entrepreneurship by creating networks and partnerships to enhance and develop women's entrepreneurial capabilities; the Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Chile, a collaborative community of women supported by professionals who help them develop their businesses over time; and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE), a Brazilian organization whose aim is to promote enterprise and understand the economic and demographic characteristics of women entrepreneurs.

Table 10

South America (selected countries): programmes to promote female entrepreneurship

Country	Programme	Description and goals	Website
Argentina	Community of Women Entrepreneurs (CRIAR)	Women's organization whose mission is to provide women in the city of Rosario and its region with training and development tools so that they can optimize their personal and professional resources and successfully develop their careers as entrepreneurs and the social and commercial projects they lead.	emprendedorascrriar.org
	Argentine Organization of Businesswomen (OAME)	Organization that supports women in business via interaction between its members, ongoing training and the development of organizational plans.	oame.org.ar
	Ibero-American Association of Businesswomen (AIME)	Pluralist non-governmental organization (NGO) aiming to support and promote the full development of women in business in response to the demand from these for opportunities to make a greater contribution, as women, to the world of business.	aime.org.ar
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	National Network of Women Entrepreneurs	Network of single-person or family businesses and partnerships composed of and headed by women. These businesses are in production, processing and service industries. Aims include strengthening the organizational network in each department of the country by providing technical consultancy and training in business-related issues, offering ways into markets and increasing the political repercussions of initiatives.	
Brazil	Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Brazil (AMEBRAS)	Association of women aiming to use technical training to promote women's business projects in Rio de Janeiro.	amebras.org.br
	Brazilian Organization of Women Executives	NGO that is an offshoot of the World Association of Women Executives (FCEM) and provides support with the planning and execution of social business and philanthropy. Its goal is the creation of greater resources to set benchmarks for value creation and sustainable development.	obme.org.br

Table 10 (concluded)

Country	Programme	Description and goals	Website
Chile	Mujeres Emprendedoras	Association formed for the purpose of helping women who are already entrepreneurs or wish to become entrepreneurs and receive training to put their ideas into practice. To this end they are given guidance, advice and support with the necessary intangibles and incorporated into a substantial network.	mujeresempendedoras.cl
	Mujeres Empresarias	Organization with a membership of over 3,000 businesswomen and female entrepreneurs and executives who support women's business, providing leadership to their fellow businesswomen, entrepreneurs and executives by means of a large and innovative network of contacts that facilitates their inclusion in the world of business and the economy.	me.cl
	Professional Association of Women Owners of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EmpreMujer)	An offshoot of the National Confederation of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Industry, Services and Artisans of Chile (CONUPIA), representing entrepreneurs from Arica to Punta Arenas.	empremujer.cl
	SERNAM Enterprise Programme	The Enterprise Programme comprises a variety of intervention strategies serving to improve the conditions for the successful development of ventures headed by women. It combines a national coordinating office charged with generating entrepreneurial actions throughout the country with proactive local institutional management to contribute to the development of a favourable setting for the inclusion of women in the world of self-employment.	portal.sernam.cl/?m=programa&i=6
Colombia	National Association of Businesswomen and Women Entrepreneurs of Colombia (ColEmpresarias)	NGO representing businesswomen in Colombia who carry out a variety of economic and social activities in different regions of the country. Its aim is to help develop Colombian women's enterprises or businesses.	colempresarias.org
	Women for Colombia Foundation	Organization helping professional women lead Colombia's transformation towards peace, justice, equity and development through empowerment and participation in the country's political, economic and social decision-making bodies.	fundacionmujeresporcolombia.org
Ecuador	Ibero-American Association of Businesswomen (AIME-Loja)	NGO with a membership of women executives, business owners and entrepreneurs seeking to advise, train and integrate women business owners or entrepreneurs looking to develop personally and professionally.	No information
Paraguay	Paraguayan Association of Women Business Owners, Executives and Professionals (APEP)	Association of women business owners, executives and entrepreneurs working to help Paraguayan women get on in business.	apep.org.py
Peru	Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT Peru)	Association bringing together women professionals, entrepreneurs, executives and business owners whose goal is to promote women's development in the world of work, striving to move Peruvian society towards a culture of success and social responsibility.	owitperu.org
	Mujeres Batalla Association (AMUBA)	NGO with a membership of women executives, business owners and social entrepreneurs from different areas whose goal is to help disadvantaged women and young people attain self-realization by developing business plans.	amubaperu.com
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Venezuelan Women's Association (AVM)	Association that invites economically disadvantaged women to train as entrepreneurs. The goal is to give Venezuelan women the tools they need to improve their own and their families' quality of life.	asociacionvenezolanademujeres.com.ve

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Some countries in the region also have ministries or departments responsible for promoting gender equity and female employment. In March 2014, Chile issued a decree creating the Ministry for Women and Gender Equality, while there is a Ministry for Women's Affairs in Paraguay, a Ministry for Women and Vulnerable Populations in Peru, a Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality (formerly the Ministry of Family Affairs) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and a Secretariat

on Policies for Women in Brazil, where a Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights was also created in October 2015 as a provisional measure. There have not been initiatives of this kind in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, the Plurinational State of Bolivia or Uruguay.

4. Some proposals for developing women's businesses

Following a review of the literature, we can now set out some practical recommendations for stimulating women's capabilities, reducing the obstacles they face and thus increasing the chances that their business ventures will succeed:

- (i) Create national business statistics that include information about gender aspects.
- (ii) Develop specific support programmes for businesswomen that take account of their particular needs.
- (iii) Develop a formal programme of female business mentors, with businesswomen providing mentoring to women who are just starting out in business.
- (iv) Drawing on the experience of programmes implemented in other countries, include the following areas in programmes aimed at encouraging female entrepreneurship: advice and consultancy, training in company management, financing, information access and networking.
- (v) Improve women's business management capabilities by training them in specific subjects and developing their ability to find and attract the human capital they need to advance their businesses.
- (vi) Train women to recognize their own shortcomings and recruit the people they need in areas they are unfamiliar with.
- (vii) Facilitate access to credit through financing programmes, simplify the system of collateral and, most importantly, reduce the cost of loans for businesswomen.
- (viii) Implement specific programmes to facilitate access to information about markets, new products, business development and management with a view to expanding women's business opportunities.
- (ix) Establish networks of contacts that enable women to share experiences with business people and professional organizations and increase their chances of successfully setting up businesses and going on to inspire others in turn. Networks of contacts and access to information expose women to a wider business environment and give them opportunities to increase their own business potential.

V. Final reflections

In recent years, the situation of women's labour market participation in South America has undergone major shifts that have translated into greater female participation in economic and production activities. There has also been recognition of the importance of supporting women's participation in the global economy as agents of development, benefiting not just their families but the wider community.

The purpose of this document is to examine the current situation and evolution of South American women's participation in economic and production activities. Three areas of analysis are distinguished: women in the labour market, i.e., the type and quality of employment available to women; women's participation in top executive positions, for example as managers or board members; and the characteristics of women business owners and their firms.

Analysis of the different aspects of female employment, such as participation, supply and quality, is necessary for the design of effective public policies or development programmes in this area. There is general agreement about the importance of job creation, especially for the most vulnerable sections of society, on the grounds that participating in the labour market should help alleviate the vulnerability of poor and extremely poor women.

Progress for women in the labour market has included higher female labour force participation, a rising employment rate and even a drop in unemployment, while the gender gap has narrowed for these indicators. However, women remain disadvantaged in certain areas of economic participation. Although lower, their unemployment rate remains high. They earn less than men on average for the same work and are concentrated in low-paid occupations. Lastly, labour market participation does not necessarily mean women are fully employed, and in fact they are particularly likely to be underemployed, a situation that limits their economic and professional development.

Efforts should be made not only to create and stimulate employment, but to improve its quality and reduce vulnerable employment, for example through the formalization of family workers and the establishment of social and legal protections for people in vulnerable working situations. To reduce the segregation of female employment into lower-paid occupations, efforts are needed to do away with gender stereotypes and roles. This is essential to bring about equity in the labour market, as is investment in early programmes to interest women in science and mathematics and encourage them to participate in sectors such as mining and industry, among other areas traditionally considered male preserves.

Average income is another area in which there is a large divide favouring men. Although this divide has narrowed in recent years, greater efforts are needed to close it completely. One likely cause of this difference in income is the smaller number of hours women spend on paid work as they seek to balance this with family responsibilities and domestic tasks, among other things. Thus, although women engage less in paid work than men, their total workload is greater, mainly because of the time they spend on unpaid activities. There is a need to promote greater equity in the distribution of unpaid activities to increase women's participation in paid ones. The introduction of care policies and the elimination of the gender stereotypes that facilitate the sexual division of labour are two options for this.

Women's access to top executive positions is very limited, while they are almost absent from major boards of directors in South America. Proposals for boosting women's access to these positions include combating prejudices about women leaders, making working hours more flexible, making performance evaluations less subjective, opening up selection processes, guaranteeing women a representative number of top executive positions, maintaining a balance between the numbers of men and women in working teams and establishing family-friendly human resources policies, among other things. Another important aspect for consideration is the need to provide women who have left the labour market with opportunities to rejoin it, as they are at a disadvantage and probably need to refresh their knowledge.

This document presents initiatives undertaken in some countries to promote women's access to top executive positions, including quotas and the implementation of gender equity policies at private-sector firms. Colombia was the first country in South America to legislate for a system of gender quotas in high-level decision-making positions at public-sector organizations. In view of different countries' experience, it is proposed that the establishment of quotas should be progressive and be matched by the introduction of high-quality gender policies at private-sector firms.

Lastly, the situation of women employers is analysed. The number of women owning their own firms is small compared to the number of men. Again, women's firms are mostly small and do less well on average than their male-owned counterparts in profitability and performance terms. Among other factors, this is because women's greater participation in unpaid activities prevents them from

devoting themselves so fully to their businesses. This again shows the need to promote an equitable division of domestic tasks and family care work, so that women can increase their participation in paid activities.

Female labour market participation would make a greater contribution to poverty eradication and the economic empowerment of women were it not for the persistent employment quality differences, wage gap, sexual division of domestic work and barriers to access to top executive positions. Legislation to increase women's labour market participation worked by bringing about higher levels of education and greater control of fertility. Now it is important to establish policies and initiatives for narrowing the gender gap in employment quality and combating the prejudices and stereotypes that encourage people to assign particular roles to men and women and that limit women's full participation in economic and production activities.

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