POST 2015
GENDER EQUALITY
IN THE FUTURE WE WANT

Inter-agency Group on Gender Equality and
Women´s Empowerment for Latin America and the Caribbean

- Inequality and Gender in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Population Dynamics and Gender
- Education and Gender
- Employment, growth and gender equality
- Democratic Governance and Gender Equality
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Gender
- Health and Gender

Democratic Governance and Gender Equality

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

A. REGIONAL TRENDS

In recent decades, most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries completed their transition toward democracy. At the same time, important political, economic, social, and cultural processes were implemented and reflected (with different intensity and orientation) mostly in State reform projects[1]. Along with this, the strong presence of emerging groups (Afro-descendants, indigenous people, youth, and LGBTTI groups, etc.) is posing multiple demands to build a citizen democracy in various countries of the region.

Regarding gender equality, very important democratic advances have been made in the last 15 years. Worth mentioning is the expansion of the gender institutionality through the creation and strengthening of national mechanisms for the advancement of women (called main mechanisms) and a wide network of institutions and secondary mechanisms in the three branches of the State, as well as consistent legal frameworks for gender equality. However, gender inequalities continue to be addressed as one more development problem, and not as a structural cause, whose analysis is a determining factor in the search for solutions.

In general, the number of women occupying decision-making positions seems to be growing slowly. However, the UN objective of reaching 30% of women participation (to eventually become 50%)[2] has only been achieved in few countries. According to recent IPU data for 2012, the percentage of women in Latin American parliaments has reached 22% and in the Caribbean only 13%. The percentage of women occupying ministerial positions in the region reached 23% and in the Caribbean 14%. In 2012, the average number of women councillors in Latin America was 22% and 10% for women mayors.

[1] Actors who start to participate in a country's political, ideological, and/or social arena.
[2] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

B. MAIN CHALLENGES

• Currently, only 40% of the region's states are granting gender equality mechanisms the rank of Ministries or naming the women in charge as Minister with the right to participate in the cabinet. This drastically reduces the mechanisms' capacity to have influence on and articulate with other institutions.

•The financial resources are insufficient to guide equality policies and that, in turn, they be effective. The equality mechanisms' budget represents approximately 1% of the national budgets.

•There are still obstacles that make it difficult for women to participate in politics: electoral systems where women are not elected due to structural barriers such as limitations to form women's groups and nominate women candidates, difficulty in the access to financing for campaigns and training, and unequal and stereotyped media coverage about women politicians; violence against women in politics and lack of legislation to control and penalize it; lack of measures and norms directed at promoting the political representation of the ethnic-racial diversity of the citizens, etc.

• In 2007, 1% of the legislators in Latin America were Afro-descendants, while Afro-descendant women only represented 0.3%. Even though the average hides significant variations among the countries, in no country of the region their presence in politics is proportional to their presence in the total population.

• The quotas have proven to be an important mechanism to increase the number of women who access national parliaments. In many cases, quotas have a restricted effectiveness because they are framed in electoral systems that don't have mandates regarding position or taking turns in office, nor sanctions for non-compliance.

•People do not suffer nor perceive violence and insecurity equally in our countries. It is related to their age, sex, ethnic-racial origin, and sexual orientation, among others. There are population groups especially exposed to greater risk to certain crimes and greater lack of legal and social protection since the institutions and community do not act as quickly when crimes are committed against this population group[3]. A recent UN Women report reveals that between 2000 and 2010, 30% of the women in Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, and the Dominican Republic suffered gender violence at one time. And in Mexico, 90% of women between the ages of 24-35, of low socio-economic level, admitted having suffered sexually harassment in the workplace[4].

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[3] UNDP (2009): Human Development Report for Central America 2009-2010: Open spaces to Citizen Security and Human Development.

[4] UN Women (2011): Progress of the World's Women 2011 – 2012; In pursuitof justice. [Online]: http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/SP-Report-Progress.pdf

C. IN 2015

1 Gender equality is a central aspect of all public policies. All state institutions are more capable of developing policies that eliminate gender inequality.

2 Parity is consolidated as the guiding principle of democracy; and women and men, who represent 50%, respectively, of the citizens, equally and effectively participate in decision-making and in all spheres of power and political and social representation.

3 Men and women of all ages and origin live and feel safe in the home, the workplace, the community and the streets.

D. RESOURCES

Brasilia Consensus
http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/paginas/6/40236/ConsensoBrasilia_ING.pdf

Quito Consensus
http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/xml/5/29555/dsc1i.pdf

Inter-Parliamentary Union; Women in Parliaments,
http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean
http://www.cepal.org/oig/default.asp?idioma=IN

UN Women (2011): Progress of the World's Women 2011 – 2012;In pursuitof justice.
http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/EN-Report-Progress.pdf