

# **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**

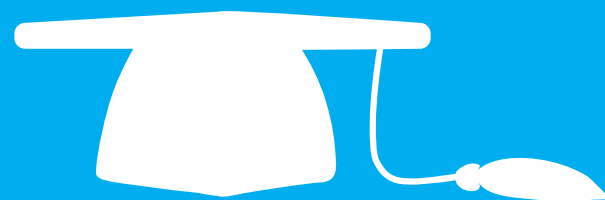
**Disaster Risk  
Reduction and Gender**

**Health and Gender**

# Education and Gender

UNICEF

## A REGIONAL TRENDS



In the last decades, the access to and completion rates of primary education have increased in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially among women. Most of the countries in the region have reached the gender parity goal, and in the region, 94% of the boys and girls already attend elementary school.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the completion of primary education, in general the existing disparities slightly favor the girls; for every 100 boys who finish elementary school, 102 girls finish.<sup>2</sup> At the high school level, the disparity grows between the presence of males and females in school, with a greater presence of women. In general, at this level, there are very marked differences between urban and rural zones, indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and other discriminating factors. However, independently of the condition of poverty, a higher proportion of women finish secondary education. This can be explained in part because of the higher tendency for males to enter the labor market when they are young.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding higher level education, in the last four decades women have been the main beneficiaries of increased enrollment in Latin America and the Caribbean. They have gone from being at a disadvantage to being a majority; in 2010 they accounted for 56% of the region's enrollment.<sup>4</sup> One can note that there is an overrepresentation of women in the humanities and social sciences and an underrepresentation of women in the hard sciences and engineering.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNESCO (2010): "UIS Statistics in Brief. Primary education profile: Latin America and the Caribbean." [http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=134&IF\\_Language=eng&BR\\_Region=40520](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=134&IF_Language=eng&BR_Region=40520)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2010): The Progress in Latin America and the Caribbean toward the Millennium Development Goals. Challenges to achieve them with equality. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Papadopoulos, J. y R. Radakovich. (2007). "Higher Education and Gender in Latin America." In UNESCO-IESALC Report on Higher Education in LAC 2000-2005: The metamorphosis of higher education. Caracas: IESALC, pp. 117-128.

<sup>4</sup> Idem footnote n° 1

<sup>5</sup> De Wit, H; I.C. Jaramillo; J. Gacel-Ávila; y J. Knight, eds. (2005): Higher Education in Latin America: The international dimension. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

## **B. MAIN CHALLENGES**

It is clear that all the educational inequalities have not been overcome in the region; there is a lack of quality education, and higher education, in particular, is not adequate for the new challenges of the labor market.

In spite of the achievements in primary education, disparities persist in the countries with a strong presence of indigenous people, where the differences favor the boys. In Guatemala<sup>6</sup>, for example, in 2007 only 26% of the non-Spanish speaking indigenous girls finished elementary school, compared to 45% of the indigenous boys and 62% of the Spanish-speaking girls.

Regarding secondary education, in the countries with a large indigenous population, like Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru, there are fewer achievements recorded among the indigenous population, and in the entire region, it's the indigenous girls in rural zones who are least likely to finish high school.

It is worth mentioning that women's increased access to education has not equaled their access to paid labor. For women, there is a higher correlation between the number of school years and participation in economic activity than for men; but even with more than 13 years of schooling - when the feminine rate reaches its peak and the gap with respect to male participation is at its minimum - the participation of women in paid labor is 12 percentage points below that of the men.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Hallman, K. y S. Peracca (2007): "Indigenous Girls in Guatemala: Poverty and Location", en M. Lewis y M. Lockheed, eds. Exclusion, Gender and Schooling: Case Studies from the Developing World. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development.

<sup>7</sup> Idem footnote No. 2.

## C. IN 2015

There are still three years left until the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is everyone's responsibility, but especially that of those who are in decision-making positions, to do something to make a substantive difference. If we take this seriously, if we take the necessary measures to face the challenges associated with gender equality and education, we can imagine a future where...

1. Universal access to quality education for all boys and girls, and men and women, is the objective of public policies without distinction of race, sex, ethnic group, economic condition, or place of birth.

2. Gender parity and equality are consolidated as the guiding principles of education.



## **D. RESOURCES**

ECLAC (2010): *Social Panorama of Latin America*. Santiago: ECLAC.

Naciones Unidas (2007): *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.  
New York, United Nations