

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

Inequality and Gender in Latin America and the Caribbean

UN Women

A REGIONAL TRENDS

It's well known that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have contributed toward closing the gender gaps in Latin America. Sustained results have been recorded for the education goals where the indicators show that women access and stay longer in the educational system. In terms of political participation, the region shows advances as a result of affirmative action policies, such as quota laws, that have opened channels for the admission of women into the political system. Clearly, in those parliaments where these laws have been applied, women have a larger presence.

Women have also reached the highest leadership positions in these countries and today, in the region, five female presidents have been elected. Another advance related to the higher participation of women in decision making bodies is the recognition of topics in which they are directly affected such as sexual and reproductive health rights (maternal mortality, teen pregnancy), the economy of care and violence against women, among others.

In general, in most countries in the region, there is sustained progress in the institutional reforms oriented towards achieving gender equality, in accordance with the Beijing platform and the signing of international agreements like the CEDAW. Although there have been setbacks and general obstacles to the effective implementation of the laws (such as impunity and the lack of financing, evaluation and compliance), these reforms represent an opportunity to strengthen women's rights. First and foremost, these reforms include constitutional changes, the approval of laws to protect women, the creation of ministries or institutions for women's affairs, civil code modifications and the adoption of policies aimed toward gender equality.



However, despite the advances and achievements of the MDGs, there are still many challenges to face regarding inequality in the region. In spite of the advances and achievements of these goals, Latin America continues to be the region with the highest level of inequality in the world. Looking deeper into the analysis of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, it becomes evident that inequality directly affects advances in education, health, access to employment, political participation and other indicators. Gender inequalities cross-cut across any existing inequality based on income level, place of origin, any type of disability, ethnicity, and age, among others. This is reflected in the fact that being a woman increases the impact of these inequalities on a person. In addition, the interrelation between gender inequalities and their crossing with other inequalities such as those produced by ethnicity, age, migratory status, place of birth or disability among others, increases the barriers to the access to and enjoyment of rights.

This is why one of the most important challenges for the region is to address the inequality gaps and their inter-generational replication.

Today, three years before reaching the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the region needs to accelerate and strengthen its efforts working with specific groups that have been left behind because of unequal conditions. Additionally, it's important to work towards a post 2015 agenda taking into account:

We would like to see a transforming post 2015 development framework that addresses inequality and discrimination in a structural manner. Recognizing that gender inequality and discrimination occur around the world. The development framework needs to be universal, applying to all countries regardless of their level of development.

Gender equality and respect for women's human rights should be central to the post 2015 development framework based on the recognition that gender equality is an essential pillar for development, peace, security, and human rights. The best way to ensure this is to have a specific objective on gender equality and the empowerment of women and mainstream gender equality in the goals and indicators of all the other objectives.

The post 2015 development agenda should include clear accountability frameworks, including mechanisms and incentives so that the decision makers work together with the civil society, integrating the women's organizations in order to define priorities and monitor advances.

Both the development process and the framework of the post-2015 agenda should follow a rights-based approach, inclusive and participative. As key change agents, it is very important that women's voices are taken into account in this process.

B. MAIN CHALLENGES

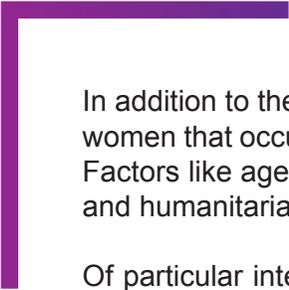
At the present time, many women can't participate in political affairs because they are faced with barriers such as violence, poverty, lack of access to a quality education or medical assistance, and the double burden of paid and unpaid work. Proof of this is that the percentage of women in parliaments in Latin America is only 22%. This percentage is even smaller when talking about local governments.

The entrance en *masse* of women with higher education levels into the workforce, which was the most important change of the 20th century, has led to significant changes in the family. In this framework, women have assumed the main burden of care since the cultural norms in the region tend to designate them as the primary caregivers of the home, such that they're facing a triple burden: work, household tasks, and the care of children and dependents.

Still today, one of every three women in the region does not earn her own income, while only 11.7% of men find themselves in this situation. These inequalities are even greater in rural areas, where for every 110 men, 118 women live in poverty. In fact, despite the improvements in education, these gaps remain.

Unemployment significantly affects more young women than young men, and, additionally, women tend to be overrepresented in the informal economy (58% compared to 50% for men). On the other hand, women continue to be employed in traditional occupations with lower pay such as domestic help, secretary or teacher. When they become entrepreneurs, they tend to create smaller businesses than do men in terms of sales, costs, capital, and number of employees. This lower income situation affects health, nutrition, access to healthcare and drinking water, education, the development of professional skills, technology, and child development.

As the most visible manifestation of discrimination against women, violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread human rights violations, constituting a threat to democracy. It is a barrier to achieving peace, a public health and social justice problem, as well as a burden on national economies. It is violence based on gender inequalities and discrimination.



In addition to the violence inflicted by a partner, there are many other forms of violence against women that occur in the home, at school, in the workplace, in the street, and other public areas. Factors like age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, migration, living with HIV or AIDS, and humanitarian crises intensify women's vulnerability to gender-based violence.

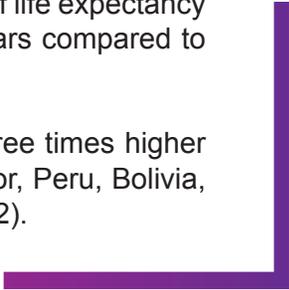
Of particular interest in this region is the increase in cases of femicide (the murder of women based on gender), especially in Mexico and Central America. It is estimated that two out of three women murdered in Central America died for gender-based reasons. This type of violence has devastating costs and strong consequences for the lives of the individuals, the communities, and the countries.

Inequality based on ethnic group is an issue of special concern in Latin America and the Caribbean, where a high percentage of indigenous and Afro-descendant population live together (33% of the region's population, or 50 million indigenous people and 120 million Afro-descendants). In addition to that, 58 million women in the region live in rural areas. In some Latin American countries, indigenous and Afro-descendant women have to deal with a triple discrimination: that based on their ethnic origin, their gender, and poverty.

The majority of indigenous women don't speak the predominant languages (Spanish and Portuguese) and the availability of translation and other culturally pertinent services are limited or non-existent (for example, the regular judicial system). Although the rate of school attendance for girls at the primary, secondary, and university levels has improved in the region, there is still an important gap to overcome regarding indigenous girls.

The life expectancy of an indigenous woman in Panama is 12 years less than that of a non-indigenous woman (64 years compared to 72 years), while the difference of life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous men in Panama is 9 years (63.2 years compared to 77.3 years, respectively).

On the other hand, the maternal mortality rates for indigenous women are three times higher than the regional average of 130 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala have maternal mortality rates between 210 and 290 (BID, 2012).



C. IN 2015

There are three years left until the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is everyone's responsibility, but especially that of those in decision-making positions, to put into effect initiatives that make a substantive difference. If we take the necessary measures to face the challenges related to inequality, we can imagine a future where...

1. The differences between groups including gender, ethnic group, territory, age, and disability are taken into account when collecting data, assigning resources, and defining public policies, ensuring that the resources reach the most vulnerable groups and thus breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. The development agenda is redefined from that of equal opportunities to that of equal results.

2. The eradication of violence against women is a goal on the Post 2015 agenda.

3. The increase in the political participation of women and their economic empowerment is consolidated as fundamental conditions in order to achieve a reduction in poverty, access to education, a reduction in maternal and child mortality, environmental conservation, economic growth, peace, and security, among other priority development goals.

4. Domestic activities and care are valued as part of the social and economic wellbeing of our countries; influencing the implementation of public policies reconciling family and work life that make accountable and involve the families as well as the state, the market, and society in general.

