

ADVANCING TOWARDS A GENDER FCI IN LATIN AMERICA¹

Commitments related to gender in Latin America were monitored by means of a survey of civil society organisations. The survey gathered information on a variety of aspects, including existence of information discriminated by sex, feminisation of poverty, existence of policies specifically geared to women, women's participation in the job market, and women's political participation. It also gathered information on the existence of Beijing follow-up commissions at government level, as well as the degree of effective coordination between government agencies in charge of follow-up and civil society organisations. Eight countries responded to the questionnaire,² and on the basis of those responses some general assessments have been made regarding the condition of women in Latin America. For the next edition of Social Watch we expect to include all Latin American and Caribbean countries in the Fulfilled Commitments Index (FCI) regarding the implementation of the Action Platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Information broken down by gender is fairly complete in those Latin American countries where it is available, with the exception of Guatemala, as seen in Table 1. This information shows, however, that little progress has been made on some gender issues. Limited

information is available in Latin America on the magnitude and characteristics of poverty among the female population. In the majority of countries, including Brazil, Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala, this information is not available. Considering the crucial importance of the issues, this lack of break-down is particularly significant. Little progress has been made in generating information on the economic weight of non-remunerated domestic work performed by women, which was a key commitment in Beijing. Only Venezuela seems to be taking some initiative in this direction.

Latin American prospects for reducing female poverty are likewise discouraging. For those countries where information does exist, Venezuela and Guatemala show a very high percentage of households headed by women without spouses living in a situation of poverty; in Uruguay and Chile, the percentage is lower. Female poverty increased in Brazil, Venezuela and Guatemala. This increased incidence is linked to the absence, in most countries, of anti-poverty plans. In the only countries with such plans, Paraguay and Chile, female poverty has dropped.

As regards the existence of policies and plans with a gender perspective, civil society organisations report that there are such plans in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Guatemala. In Bolivia, which has created a National Gender Affairs Office, and Guatemala, with an Equity Plan for the Year 2000, these plans and policies are more ambitious. They are more specific and limited in the case of Brazil. In Uruguay, Venezuela and Peru such initiatives have not

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- 1 The information furnished by civil society organizations in the questionnaire on the condition of women was very rich and permitted extensive specification on each point. Since this information could not be included here due to reasons of space, we want to remind the reader that it is available on our web pages: <http://www.socwatch.org.uy/>
 - 2 Venezuela: Juntas por Venezuela (national meeting point that bring together the Political Coalition of Andean Women), CONG de Mujeres, CEM-UCV, CISFEM, Frente Continental de Mujeres, Unión de Mujeres Negras (states of Portuguesa, Lara, Yaracuy y Sucre); Peru: Grupo Impulsor Nacional Mujeres por la Igualdad Real; Paraguay: Coordinación de Mujeres de Paraguay; Bolivia: CIDEM; Chile: FLACSO, Iniciativa Chile; Brasil: Comité Impulsor de Articulacao de Mulheres Brasileiras; Uruguay: Comisión Nacional de Seguimiento de Beijing; Guatemala: Voces de Mujeres. Gathering of information was supported by Articulación de ONG Feministas de América Latina y el Caribe.

TABLE 1.

Existence of information broken down by gender in Latin America									
Access to education services (by education level)									
Schooling									
Female enrollment in tertiary studies									
Job market: female employment and unemployment rates									
Female EAP by sectors and branches of activity									
Female population in the informal sector									
Number of single-parent homes (women heads of household with no spouse)									
Incidence of poverty on female population									
Women's access to health									

been implemented, although there were some isolated initiatives in Peru. In the same countries that show political will in this area—Brazil, Paraguay, Chile and Bolivia—we should note the existence of equal opportunities plans, at different stages of design and implementation. These countries, along with Venezuela, also have plans for combating gender discrimination in education. Finally, all countries have specific policies and institutions geared to eliminating violence against women.

In the employment area, the panorama is not very encouraging for Latin American women. Only Brazil, Chile and Bolivia indicated that they have plans that address better and broader incorporation of women in the job market. Female employment rates are extremely high, exceeding 40%, with the exception of Chile. Female employment has decreased in Brazil (1% between 1995 and 1996) and Venezuela (1% between 1995 and 1998). It has increased in Paraguay (3% between 1972 and 1992), Bolivia (2% between 1995 and 1996) and Peru (12% between 1994 and 1996). It is stagnated in Guatemala, Chile and Uruguay. Female unemployment rates are extremely high in Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay, exceeding 14%. In the rest of the countries they are in the area of 8% to 10%. Female unemployment tends to be increasing in all the countries.

The data on under-employment is meager. In the three countries for which we have data, it is alarming. Under-

employment reaches 18.9% of women in Paraguay, 39% of women in Uruguay, and 49.9% of women in Peru. Only Paraguay reports the existence of initiatives geared to combating female under-employment. No plans for job training for (re)insertion of women in the job market were reported. Latin American women continue to earn less than 70% of what men earn for the same job. The percentages of wage discrimination are shown in Table 3.

Women's political participation continues to be very low in Latin America. Participation in the executive branch of government of Brazilian, Bolivian, Venezuelan, Uruguayan, Peruvian and Guatemalan women is less than 10%. Worse still, in the case of Brazil and Peru, it has decreased between 1995 and 1998. The same thing is happening with the participation of women in the legislature, although participation in parliament has increased in Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile (in the latter case, the number of women in the house of representatives increased, but there was a slight drop in the already low percentage of senators). Only Paraguay maintains high participation, close to 20% in both branches of government.

The situation of women in the judiciary is quite different, exceeding 20% in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Guatemala, and over 50% in Venezuela and Uruguay. Additionally,

TABLE 2.

Policies toward women in Latin America								
	BRAZIL	PARAGUAY	BOLIVIA	VENEZUEL	URUGUAY	PERÚ	GUATEMAL	CHILE
Countries having plans to combat female poverty								
Countries where there is Govt./Civil Society cooperation on gender programmes								
Countries whose policies include gender perspective								
Countries with equal opportunities plan								
Countries with initiatives geared to formulating an equal opportunities plan								
Countries with plans to combat gender discrimination in education								
Countries with plans to improve quality and coverage of reproductive health plans								
Countries with policies to combat violence against women								
Countries with plans to incorporate women in the job market								
Countries with plans to combat female unemployment								
Countries with plans to combat								

all the countries reporting at least two types of data show a positive evolution of the participation of women in the judiciary.

The participation of women in municipal governments continues to be exceptionally low, even lower than in the legislative and executive branches. Women's participation on party ballots is under 20% in Brazil and Paraguay. It is more positive in Bolivia and Venezuela with percentages of over 30%, and more negative in Guatemala with 9.6%. The rest of the countries did not provide information on this aspect.

The majority of countries, with the exception of Uruguay and Peru, have implemented positive discrimination mechanisms (such as quotas). Finally, we note that half the countries report the existence of official follow-up commissions. There are no such commissions in the other half, including Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Chile and Venezuela. ●

TABLE 3.

Data on women in Latin America: employment, poverty and political participation ³								
	Increase	Decreased	n/d	Increased	n/d	n/d	Increased	Decreased
Evolution of poverty								
% homes with female heads of household in situation of poverty	n/d	n/d	n/d	65%	22%	n/d	43%	19.3%
% wage discrimination	54%	62.5%	68.29%	70%	62.5%	68.1%	n/d	60%
% women in Executive Branch	5%	18.2%	10%	8.7%	7.7%	7%	10%	15.7%
% women in Legislature	Representatives: 9.1% Senate: 7.1%	18.9%	9%	6.5%	Representatives: 7% Senadoras: 6.7%	11%	13.8%	Representatives: 10.8% Senate: 4.1%
% women in Judiciary	25.1%	20.32%	20.77%	59.0%	55%	19.9%	18.6%	Supreme court: 0% Court of appeals: 19.1%
% women in municipal government	Prefects 5.9% Governor 3.7%	Governors: 2.73%	Mayors: 6% City Council: 6.7%	6.7%	0%	Mayors and City Council members: 3.5%	1.7%	Governors: 9.8% Mayors: 7.2%

TABLE 4.

Follow-up on Beijing agreements								
Seguimiento de Beijing	BRASIL	PARAGUAY	BOLIVIA	VENEZUEL	URUGUAY	PERÚ	GUATEMAL	CHILE
PAÍSES donde existe una Comisión de Seguimiento de la CMM								
PAÍSES donde existen mecanismos de coordinación y coparticipación gubernamental-OSCs								

³ This is the most recent data available after 1995.