

## THE CREATION OF THE GENDER IFC IN LATIN AMERICA

The Gender Index of Fulfilled Commitments (IFC) is an instrument that allows us to measure the level of fulfilment of the commitments that the governments of Latin America have made for the achievement of gender equity. In this article, we present the results of this measurement for a group of Latin American countries, offering some results on the regional level which may allow us to evaluate the impact of this instrument when applied to other regions.

The idea of creating an instrument for observing the action of the governments in favour of equality and equity between men and women, arose from the necessity of women's organisations to supervise the fulfilment of the national and international agreements signed by the governments, so as to provide transparency to the public and avoid that the actions proposed be ignored or implemented halfway.

The monitoring of the Beijing Conference was performed through a survey answered by citizens' organisations. This questionnaire intended to reveal various aspects: the availability of information, the feminisation of poverty, the existence of specific policies oriented towards women, the participation of women in different areas. It also revealed the existence or non existence of institutional mechanisms in charge of the WAP follow up, and the level of collaboration with the civil society organisations.

In the preparation of the current report, we gathered information from 13 countries, based on the data submitted by the organizations dealing with the gender issues.<sup>1</sup>

### ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

The availability and access to current and sufficient information comparing the realities of men and women is fundamental, not

only to the WAP<sup>2</sup> follow up and to analyse the impact of different policies and programmes, but also to be able to identify the areas and topics in which gender differences are manifested more clearly than in others.

The availability of information on large areas is relatively extended on a Latin American level, nevertheless, there are still important gaps in information which must be filled. Obviously, education is one of the areas with the greatest coverage; it is possible to discover the levels of women and men, in primary as well as tertiary education. Except in the case of Argentina, the disposition of data appears satisfactory.

In relation to the insertion of men and women in the labour force, however, there are information deficits for some countries. Guatemala is the one with the greatest lack of data, there is none available and accessible on female employment and unemployment, on the insertion of women in the informal sector of the economy, or on salary discrimination. In Colombia, there is a lack of data on the economically active female population by sectors and areas of activity, and on the informal sector. The data regarding the insertion of women in the informal sector is also unavailable in Chile. It must be underlined that the informal sector has been one of the areas which women have joined in important numbers in the last years in Latin America. There is no data in Venezuela about salary discrimination, and the organisation responsible for Peru, as well as that of Colombia, do not know if such figures are available.

The economic weight and the contribution of non remunerated domestic work to the GDP is a relevant figure, which helps to visualise the daily work of women and integrates it into the national accounts. Nevertheless, there is practically no such data, even though in various countries of the region (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela), there are initiatives which tend to begin such an evaluation.

<sup>1</sup> **Argentina:** ESIPP – Equipo de Seguimiento, Investigación y Propuestas Políticas; **Bolivia:** Comité Nacional de ONG de Seguimiento a Beijing; **Brazil:** Comitê Impulsor da Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras; **Chile:** FLACSO, Iniciativa Chile; **Colombia:** Socorro Corrales; **Ecuador:** Colectivo Mujeres por una Nueva Economía; **Guatemala:** Voces de Mujeres; **Mexico:** Milenio Feminista; **Nicaragua:** Iniciativa de Mujeres por el Seguimiento de Beijing; **Paraguay:** Coordinación de Mujeres de Paraguay; **Peru:** Grupo Impulsor Nacional Mujeres por la Igualdad Real; **Uruguay:** Comisión Nacional de Seguimiento de Beijing; **Venezuela:** Juntas por Venezuela. Para relevar la información, se contó con el apoyo de la Articulación de ONG Feministas de América Latina y el Caribe.

<sup>2</sup> Women's Action Platform (WAP).

In spite of the importance acquired by the feminisation of poverty in the last decade, in the majority of countries for which there exists information, there is no data dealing with the magnitude of the phenomenon, except in Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru. It is probable that in many cases this lack of information mirror other significant problem: the access

to and availability of data. ECLAC has carried out research on this issue.

Finally, regarding access to health services, in 6 of the 13 countries considered there is available data about the access of women to these services. The lack of this type of data obviously reveals a very important deficiency when creating policy in this sector.

Existence of available information discriminated by gender													
Type of information	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Colombia	Chile	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Nicaragua	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Access to educational services (by educational level)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Schooling (by educational level)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female enrolment in secondary studies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour force: employment and unemployment rates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female EAP by sectors and areas of activity	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female population in the informal sector	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Salary discrimination	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/d	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/d	Yes	No
Initiatives tending to evaluate the economic weight of domestic and non-remunerated women's work	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	n/d	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Incidence of poverty in the female population	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Number of mono-parental households (unmarried female head)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Women's access to health services	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

## INCIDENCE OF FEMALE POVERTY AND PLANS IMPLEMENTED FOR ITS ERADICATION

In the majority of the countries considered, there is data for the percentage of households living in poverty that are led by women. Only in Brazil and Mexico is this data not available. While it is true that to perform the analysis it is necessary to include the total amount of female headed households in the country, the data available demonstrates the incidence of poverty in these types of households, which have been focalised in many countries as the beneficiaries of programmes. It is noteworthy, however, that of the 8 countries where there are at least two figures with which to compare the evolution of female poverty, in 5 of them it seems to have diminished (Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru) in the period considered. This data is consistent with the drop in relative poverty in Latin America in the post lost decade (even though poverty, in absolute terms, has increased). In Guatemala and Venezuela, on the other hand, female poverty seems to have increased. Obviously, the reliability of the indicators for the measurement of poverty may be questioned and discussed, as well as their ability to measure the multidimensionality of the phenomenon. But all of the data in next table seems to indicate a certain progress in this sense.

Regarding the specific programmes and plans in the fight against poverty, in the case of Brazil there are no specific plans, even though the plans being implemented affect women. The programmes seem oriented basically along three general lines: health; credit, income and employment; and support for rural women. In the case of Argentina and Bolivia there are plans linked to health that, even though they do not imply a direct blow against the conditions of poverty, they do affect its consequences. In Chile and Mexico, the programmes are oriented towards women workers, while Argentina and Ecuador seem to be focused mainly on women in vulnerable situations. In Venezuela, Colombia, and Guatemala, there are support programmes for rural women. Finally, in Nicaragua, gender was included as one of the central aspects to consider in the Plan to Combat Poverty. The results of the plans, nevertheless, are still not clear, because their implementation is recent, because of insufficient data, or because the impacts are not of the magnitude required. In the case of Paraguay, the plans are not specifically sectoral; they are more often transversal mechanisms.

The coordination with women's and civil society organisations for the implementation of the diverse plans is another aspect which appears to present difficulties: the organisations which responded to the questionnaire answered,

except in the case of Peru, that this coordination was not working in a satisfactory manner, and in 3 of the 13 cases considered, there is not any coordination at all.

## LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

Even though the rate of female participation still does not reach the level of the male participation rate (though in Brazil and Ecuador, for example, it already surpasses 45%), it tends to increase in almost all the countries considered, with the exceptions of Nicaragua and Peru (and even in these cases, there is only a very slight decrease).

Female unemployment appears to represent an important portion of unemployment, as demonstrated in the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru. In some countries, the percentage reaches two digits: Argentina and Venezuela show high indexes in this sense. Since 1995, for the countries in which there is available data, unemployment has increased in Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela, and has decreased in Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

In relation to salary discrimination, it continues to be high in the majority of Latin American countries, especially Chile and Ecuador. Even though in many countries there are legal and constitutional instruments destined to assure equity between men and women in terms of positions available (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela), it appears that discrimination tends to worsen.

The lack of specific initiatives regarding women, employment and income, is very notorious. With the exception of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Peru, the rest of the countries included in the table do not possess measures destined to improve the incorporation of women into the labour force. In two of these cases (Argentina and Mexico), the measures are being carried out with the support of international organisms (ILO, IDB). The situation of support initiatives in agriculture, credit and productive resources in general has improved relatively. In Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, there are efforts being made in this sense.

## INITIATIVES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PLAN

The idea and the initiative of the Equal Opportunity Plan seem to have set root in Latin America. With the exception of Peru, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Brazil, in the rest of the countries there are plans being implemented at the national level (Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay), state level (Mexico), and projects or initiatives in process (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil). In the majority of cases, these plans correspond to dates close to or after the WSSD and the WWC. Even though the impact is still limited in the countries where the Plan is already being implemented, it is important to keep in mind the evaluation received from Chile, where

the Plan has basically helped to institutionalise certain issues and has achieved some legal reforms.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The political participation of women in Latin America is still limited and restricted. In terms of positions within the Executive Branch (presumably, the ones with the greatest level of decision), the participation percentages, with the exception of Chile and Paraguay, do not surpass 10%. Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, Chile, Nicaragua and Peru all have at least one female Minister. Uruguay and Venezuela are the most deficient cases, where there are currently no women occupying ministerial positions. But the most worrying situation is that, except for Argentina, in the rest of the countries with two comparable figures for the period, this percentage –already small– decreased or remained the same.

The situation of women in Parliament improves relatively. With the exception of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Peru, in the rest of the countries, the participation percentages have increased and the average participation in the highest parliamentary organ of the country reaches 12.3%. The participation of women in municipal positions also shows improvement; there is more female representation, with the exceptions of Mexico (which experimented a decrease in the level of participation in municipalities) and Paraguay, and the countries for which there is no comparable information available (Nicaragua, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia). This data is consistent with the idea that women invade the political system from the base, but they encounter greater obstacles (a glass ceiling which in some cases is quite visible) as they get closer to the more powerful positions (such as those of the Executive Branch).

Finally, in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela there are measures of different types. Those falling behind in this sense are Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay and Nicaragua.

## POLICIES OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Of the 13 countries, 7 possess initiatives tending to include gender in educational policy: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru. But the group of countries where measures of this type have not been implemented is important: Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela are among the most delayed countries in this sense. Regarding the elaboration of plans to combat gender discrimination in education, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Guatemala and Bolivia have plans. Argentina had them, but only between 1992 and 1995, and Mexico has them, but they are insufficient, according to the evaluation conducted. In the cases of Nicaragua, Chile and Ecuador, the lack of measures in both dimensions considered, makes apparent that there has been another serious problem: a weakness in the evaluation of the plans. Generally those surveyed answered

## Incidence of female poverty and plans implemented for its eradication

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Nicaragua	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Incidence of poverty in households headed by unmarried women.	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 45% of poor households (1997).	Total households with incidence of poverty: 46.5%. In households with male heads: 43.5%. In households with female heads: 58.4%. <sup>3</sup>	No official data, but there are studies that show the impoverishment of female-headed households (1990 data)	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 17.8% of poor households.	Women represent 54.8% of the poor. 25% of them are heads of household. <sup>4</sup>	53.7% of female-headed households in 1995; male-headed households is 55.3%. <sup>5</sup>	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 43% of poor households. <sup>6</sup>	The data as such does not exist, it could be calculated based on the number of women who earn less than the minimum wage.	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 32.5% of poor households. <sup>7</sup>	No data	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 12% of poor households. <sup>8</sup>	22% (1st. decile)	Female-headed households living in poverty represent 65% of poor households (1999).
Evolution of female poverty since 1995.	No data	Decreased	No data	Decreased	No data	No data	Increased	Decreased	No data	Decreased	Decreased	No data	Increased
Existence of programmes and specific plans to combat poverty.	Maternal Infant Health Programme gives support to vulnerable groups, with a component directed towards women.	In health (Basic Health Insurance)	No specific programmes, though those implemented affect women.	Yes (Female heads of Household, Seasonal Women Workers).	Yes. Urban Employment Plan. Rural Employment Plan.	Yes (Solidary Health Bond, whose beneficiaries are poor "mothers" and senior citizens).	Credit programme for women of rural areas (PROMUJER).	Yes (progresses, more and better jobs for women, and initiatives which include women).	Included in the poverty relief plan, <sup>9</sup> the consideration of gender equity as a central, transversal axis.	National Equal Opportunity Plan and Strategic Social development Plan.	Yes. PRONAA and FONCADES are the two most important ones.	Training programme for rural women and teenagers.	Yes. Credimujer and Rural Funds in various states which reach women in 70% and men in 30%.
Evaluation of the impact of the plans.	Have impact, but not enough.	Still in process of implementation.	No data	There have been no official evaluations of impact, only of results.	Have impact, but not enough.	No impact	Not possible to evaluate because of insufficient data.	Being evaluated (by NGOs and World Bank).	Very recent.	No data	Have impact, but not enough.	No data	Have impact, but not enough.
The programmes are made in cooperation and with the participation on NGOs.	No	Yes	Indirectly	No	No	No	No data	Yes	Yes	No data	Yes	No data	Yes
Evaluation of the mechanisms of cooperation.	No cooperation.	Of recent implementation.	No data	No cooperation.	No cooperation.	No cooperation.	No data	Not enough.	Functions irregularly.	No data	Functions adequately.	No data	Mechanisms are not enough.

3 UDAPE Data, 1997

4 To this percentage, we must add the 41,675 families displaced violently between 1995 and 1997. 53% of this population is composed of women, of which 36% are heads of household. 80% of female heads of household have paid work as their permanent activity, but only 30% have an affiliation to social security. The great majority works between 45 and 60 hours a week, and 30% work Sunday to Sunday, as an extra activity besides their domestic jobs.

5 There is no exact data for *unmarried* female heads of household, but it is very approximate, since the absolute majority of female heads of household are in this condition (94.44% in 1998) (*National Institute of Statistics and Census INEC/World Bank Survey of Living Conditions 1995*)

6 Non-official data, 1997

7 Source: Women's Survey, FIDEG, Pyto NORAD, 1999

8 Source: Peru in Numbers 1999-2000

9 This inclusion was a victory of the women's movement.

**Initiatives for the implementation of an Equal Opportunity Plan**

	<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>Paraguay</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>	<b>Venezuela</b>
Existence of an Equal Opportunity Plan	Yes, but not implemented yet.	It exists, but it was not approved.	No. The National Commission of Population and Development created "Strategies for Equality."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No on the national level, yes on the state level	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Existence of initiatives	There is a Legislative Project for Equal Opportunity. <sup>10</sup>	Does not apply	There are 56 legislative projects being discussed. <sup>11</sup>	In the development stage. <sup>12</sup>	Does not apply	Does not apply	Does not apply	No data	Not data	Does not apply	No data	Yes, but only on the level of employment and still in development.	Does not apply
Date of the Plan	1993-1995	1997	Does not apply	Does not apply	1994	1996	1999	No data	Does not apply	No data	Does not apply	Does not apply	End of 1998
Impact of the Plan	No. Some impact in areas of Labour and Education, weakened through time.	Not yet approved	Does not apply	Does not apply	Helped to institutionalise the issue and achieved some legal reforms.	Very limited. Since its approval, it is just "on paper."	The Plan was still not presented "officially." <sup>13</sup>	No data	Does not apply	No data	Does not apply	Does not apply	Just beginning to be implemented

<sup>10</sup> This is currently happening in Buenos Aires, with the participation of NGOs and experts.

<sup>11</sup> Linked to women's work and benefits, but they are also being slowly processed by the National Congress.

<sup>12</sup> The Equal Opportunity Plan for Men and Women is defined by the present government programme ( Change to Build Peace ) as the instrument to fulfill the constitutional principles and international agreements in gender equity and the fight against discrimination. The Equal Opportunity Plan will be presented to Conpes, establishing concrete goals for equal opportunity for women in the areas of Peace and Human Rights, Work and Income Generation, Participation in the Administration of Power and Decision-Taking, Education and Training, Health Services, Domestic Violence & Violence against Women, Housing & Habitat and Rural Women.

<sup>13</sup> A process carried out by the Ministry of Social Work, of the Wife of the President, and the National Women's Office.

## Policies in Education, Health and Violence against Women

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Colombia	Chile	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Nicaragua	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Inclusion of the gender perspective in educational policy goals	Yes. In few areas.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No data	Yes	No	No
Elaboration of plans to combat gender discrimination in education	Yes. Only between 1992 and 1995.	Yes	Yes	No data	No	No	Yes	Yes, but insufficient.	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Evaluation of educational plans	No data	Have impact, but not enough.	No data	Have impact, but not enough.	Does not apply	Does not apply	Have impact, but not enough.	Have impact, but not enough.	Does not apply	No data	It is not possible to evaluate them because the preliminary results are unknown.	Does not apply	Have impact, but not enough.
Improvements in access and quality of reproductive health plans from 1995 on	No on the national level. Implemented in 14 provinces, but are weak and with small budgets.	Yes	Yes. 1995 to 1997: the number of pregnancy clinics doubled, deliveries attended by health officials and preventive exams.	Yes	Yes. Improved in terms of access, but not in quality.	No	National Maternal Health Survey. Maternal mortality rates and fertility remain high. Increase of contraceptive use.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes. On the national level: Maternity Programme and Voluntary Paternity. On the municipal level: Integral Attention Programme for Women.	No
Adoption of legislative measures and institutional instances to combat violence against women from 1995 on	Yes, on the national and regional level, and regulations.	Yes	Yes. National Programme for the Prevention and Combat of Domestic Violence. <sup>14</sup>	Yes	Yes. Law of Domestic Violence, programmes and attention centres. <sup>15</sup>	Yes	Yes. Programme of Domestic Violence Prevention.	Yes, in a limited form (on the state level).	Yes	Yes. There is no special law for violence against women, but a pre-law has been presented.	Yes	Yes <sup>16</sup>	Yes
Sufficiency of assigned budget resources	The Programme of the Ministry of Justice has low resources and impact.	The % of public spending that represents women's programmes is unknown.	Scarcity of resources in specialised commissions and debts in legal procedures.	No. There is no information about the amount of budget resources.	There are resources, though it is unknown what % of total public spending they represent.	They are not enough. it is unknown the % of the total they represent.	No	No. There is no data about the % of total public spending they represent.	No. There is no data about the % of total public spending they represent.	No data	No. There is no data about the % of total public spending they represent.	No data	No. There is no data regarding what % of total public spending they represent.

<sup>14</sup> There are approximately 38 legislative projects being processed in Congress. Since 1995, there is a National Programme for the Prevention and Combat of Domestic Violence.

<sup>15</sup> It must be mentioned, however, that the focus is directed more towards the family than towards women.

<sup>16</sup> Interministerial Commission for the elaboration of a National Plan of Prevention, Detection and Attention for Domestic Violence; 9 Commissariats in the interior; Attention Center for adolescent victims of violence; Attention Centers in Communal Centers of Montevideo which include information workshops on the topic, courses for Montevideo employees of the State, and the Institute of the Family and Women.

that the impact of the plans is insufficient, or difficult to evaluate for the moment.

In the area of health, there has been progress in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia, in the first two in terms of access to health services. But in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Mexico and Ecuador, there appear to be no initiatives in this sense.

The adoption of legislative measures and institutional instances for the combat of violence against women seems to have become widespread, and can be considered an advance in terms of the commitments agreed upon. Even though the resources assigned are limited, insufficient, or difficult to find, all the countries have institutional measures of this kind.

### FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING THE BEIJING COMMITMENTS

Finally, in terms of the follow up and monitoring of the commitments made at the WWC in Beijing, there are more or less institutionalised programmes at the governmental level, with the exception of Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay and Peru. In some cases these instances are found at the ministerial level; in others, in institutes of different magnitude; and in the cases of Colombia and Brazil, there are initiatives and follow up processes with no specific foundation.

In many cases there are tables of coordination between citizens' organisations and governmental organisms, with the exception of Chile and Guatemala. The initiatives range from Tripartite Coordination Committees, as in Peru and Paraguay, to joint initiatives between NGOs and the State, without too much specific institutionality, as in the cases of Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico or Nicaragua. The progress made effective in this respect ranges from an electoral campaign (Brazil), the realisation of propaganda actions (Bolivia) or the creation of a network (Mexico). In less than half of the surveyed countries, there are progress reports which document the activities and evaluate the process.

The organisms dealing with the gender issues in the countries, are divided between those of national level, within ministries' orbit (Argentina, Bolivia), or Commissions and Councils of different type and reach (Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Colombia and Venezuela), and those on the departmental, provincial, or state level (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia and Uruguay). Even though, in general, the evaluation is critical in relation to the performance and functioning of these organisms (few resources, scarce institutionalisation and legal jurisdiction), their mere existence demonstrates a positive path in that direction.

### GENERAL BALANCE OF PROGRESS AND DELAYS

The revision of what has or has not been done in the different countries in the region regarding the implementation of the WAP and the changes which the integration and participation of women have undergone in different areas, reveals a prism of different realities. While the progress in various aspects has been important, the delays in other areas must also be considered.

Today, the majority of countries has more information classified by gender, almost all of them have implemented institutional mechanisms of diverse status which deal with these matters; in many areas (labour, health, education, poverty, political participation) specific plans and programmes with affirmative policies have been elaborated.

Nevertheless, the general results are still poor. In most cases, the organisations answering the questionnaire have concluded that the impact of the plans and programmes implemented is not sufficient; they have manifested that the different government organisms in charge of the gender topic do not possess the financial and/or human resources indispensable for an efficient performance and a significant impact; that many laws are approved but not applied as they should be; that the coordination with NGOs is weak. All this shows that the path ahead is a long one, in spite of the fact that 6 out of the 13 countries have an Equal Opportunity Plan, and that 7 out of the 13 countries have approved affirmative measures tending to increase the participation of women in the political realm.

When we observe some figures linked to female unemployment, to their percentage within the poor, to the important gap which exists between female and male salaries, and to their very scarce political participation, it becomes apparent that the delays are still notorious and that more than 50% of the Latin American population begins the new millennium facing, day after day, situations of discrimination which should have been left in prehistory.

As the NGOs attending the VIII CEPAL<sup>17</sup> Conference recently stated, ***the XXI Century will be the century of women only if it is also the century of democracy, politically, economically, and socially, but also culturally, privately and intimately. With democratic governments that fulfil their political and legal commitments, and with strong civil societies with the ability to monitor the public sphere and create proposals, we shall be able to assume the challenges of the new millennium.*** ●

<sup>17</sup> Political Declaration of the Women's and Feminist Movements of Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the implementation of the Women's World Action Platform. Lima, February 7, 2000.