



The Equity Diamond: National values in terracotta compared to regional ones in blue.
Source: **Infant mortality:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*; **Adult literacy:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*; **GDI** (Gender Development index): UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*; **GINI:** World Bank, *World Development indicators 1998*. (The regional average for this indicator was calculated by *Social Watch*).

MEASURING POLITICAL WILL

The government has not approved a national equality plan, as have other countries of the region such as Chile and Brazil. **The absence of an equality plan has made it difficult to assess fulfilment of the Beijing commitments. Because various programmes and activities are being implemented in a dispersed fashion by different institutions or agencies, they have had to be traced or identified. Information was difficult to obtain because it has not been systematised and/or updated, and no mechanisms have been established to facilitate its centralisation. Hence the two main obstacles to monitoring progress on gender relationships are the lack of coordination of activities and the fragmented nature of information.**

The monitoring process concentrated on five areas: employment, education, health, violence and political participation. Indicators of political will are built on the Beijing conference commitments in each area and the assessment of the situation of women in Uruguay that was carried out for the Beijing conference by the Beijing Initiative Group.

LABOUR

Progress was observed recently in the ministry of labour regarding concern over the insertion of women in the labour market. A programme for equal job opportunities (not yet implemented) and the establishment of a Tripartite Commission for Equal Opportunities are highlighted, together with impact assessments by sex. A programme to support business management by women was set up for rural women living in poverty.

There are no cross-cutting programmes that formulate the gender perspective in the whole set of programmes being implemented by various governmental bodies to promote small and medium-sized enterprises. Positive action policies at the level of State and private enterprises are also lacking.

On the basis of information from interviews with pertinent officials, it may be seen that, generally speaking, concern for improving the situation of women depends more on decision-makers and the influence of international organisations than on government policies.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, Uruguay committed itself to implementing «institutional mechanisms for equality». These mechanisms were meant to coordinate public policies geared to incorporating gender equality into all spheres of politics and of government. The government has yet to fulfil these commitments, as well as those assumed at the World Summit for Social Development.

EDUCATION

Two major gaps are apparent in this area. Few institutional actions aimed specifically at incorporating the gender perspective in teacher training programmes and in primary and secondary curricula were identified. Also, the lack of sex education in primary and secondary schools and the demands for such programmes by teachers, parents and young people reflect a deficit in the educational system. Teachers have some training on the subject in health education, but this is an optional extra-curricular area. **At the beginning of the present administration, a sex education programme was eliminated and it has not yet been reformulated.**

The Women's Commission of the Municipality of Montevideo has a programme for teachers aimed at developing thinking and teaching from a gender perspective. The Commission liaises with schools in an extra-curricular way and through seminars, publications and competitions.

At university level, gender studies are concentrated in the sociology department, through a specialised unit, and in seminars and research of various types.

HEALTH

New government action on reproductive health has been noted since 1996. The ministry of health's programme, Maternity and Paternity by Choice, is more developed in Montevideo, but is also starting to be implemented in three other Departments outside the capital. The strategy is basically to provide assistance for family planning together with some education. **The programme has support from UNFPA and a ministerial commitment to cover all costs when international support ends.**

The Municipality of Montevideo set up the Programme for Comprehensive Care for Women (Programa de Atención Integral a la Mujer – PIAM) in 1996. This programme is implemented in 13 municipal outpatient clinics and covers three areas: pregnancy controls; prevention of genital and breast cancer; and informed and voluntary maternity associated with family planning. Its strategy is to change the present model of health care toward an integrated model that includes a gender perspective and a component for training of health teams and neighbourhood commissions. This programme is also supported by UNFPA.

The actions mentioned above show progress in the development of sexual and reproductive health policies, but they should be extended outside the capital in terms of resources and overall coverage. The lack of statistical information on the various topics of women's sexual and reproductive health needs urgent consideration.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Attention given to this subject by government has increased.

There are now more specialised police stations outside the capital city. An inter-ministerial commission has been established to prepare a Plan for Prevention, Detection and Care that is mandated to include provisions for studies, legislation, and care. There are also various governmental agencies that provide training to various stakeholders. It is important to note both the individual will of women in positions of responsibility who are motivated by these issues, and the position of international organisations that, in accordance with the new parameters of international conferences, demand that the issue be dealt with.

There are very few studies on violence against women, and records and data processing at police and legal levels are lacking. This in turn has a bearing on the limited data available on the «status» of domestic and sexual violence in the country. Systematic information on violence against women should be considered of strategic value for policy preparation. It is expected that the inter-ministerial commission will achieve substantial changes in this respect.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Instead of following the Beijing recommendation to establish a national plan for equal opportunities, the government considered carrying out «focused actions». The Women and Family Institute is supposed to be a governing body for women's policies, but the Institute has no «status» within the government's organisational chart regarding proposal, design, implementation and assessment of national policies on women and the family. **The Institute reports to the ministry of education and culture. The position of director of the Institute does not exist within the ministry and is not remunerated, and the annual budget is very limited.**

It is perhaps for these reasons that the Institute has not become a governing body for women's policies. Rather than propose, coordinate and make cross-cutting policies, the Institute sits on some commissions in other ministries and implements some specific actions.

No policies have been detected that encourage women to participate in politics, and the political parties and government have done little in this direction. Only the Municipality of Montevideo has a programme for training in political participation for local and municipal representatives. The Municipality is the only body to have a programme for promoting organisational development of women. Only two political parties have quota policies to encourage the inclusion of women on their ballots.

There are a few positive developments regarding citizen participation in policy preparation for women, including the Neighbourhood Councils in Montevideo and the Honorary Commission for Rural Women in the ministry of livestock and agriculture. Also, the ministry of the interior has invited non-governmental organisations to participate in the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Violence.

THE HANDICAPPED

Two bills have been approved and three are being studied on the subject of the handicapped. It is important to note, however, failure by the executive to implement the existing law (No. 16,095) that foresees a broad field of action geared to providing comprehensive protection of persons with disabilities. Therefore, omission on the part of the executive has contributed to the lack of effective compliance with those provisions.

The Latin American Union for the Blind, through its Human Rights and Legislation Commission, has denounced arbitrary measures adopted by the Directors of Banco Hipotecario del Uruguay [the government mortgage bank] that suspended as of August 1st 1995 the special line of credit covering blind people and shelved the applications submitted prior to this resolution. The Union also stress that once again, the rights of the handicapped have been attacked and they have been discriminated against because the Directors of the Banco Hipotecario have approved a line of credit from which the handicapped and the blind are expressly excluded.

The Inter-Social Commission on Disability, Labour Insertion and Social Security (Comisión Intersocial sobre Discapacidad, Inserción Laboral y Seguridad Social – COMINT) was set up in 1997. Its members are delegates from organisations of handicapped people and representatives of official workers' organisations. In June 1997, COMINT held a seminar that prepared a document containing 32 proposals regarding a wide range of the problems that handicapped people face.

SEXUAL «MINORITIES»

Uruguayan society has strong homophobic traits. This contrasts with the liberal and progressive image that the country has projected since the beginning of the century, thanks to legislation considered to be «front line» in its day.

In 1998, a «Pride of Being Week» gathered many voices of discriminated social groups and representatives from nearly all the political parties in the country. The Week, which included artistic activities and debates at the Municipal Council of Montevideo, ended with a march along Montevideo's main avenue. Previously, groups made a presentation to the Uruguayan Sexology Society at its invitation, and workshops for discussion and therapeutic art were held in conjunction with Meetings of Family Members and/or Friends. In July, Diversity (an organisation of lesbians, gays, transvestites, transsexuals and bisexuals) and the Ecumenical Gathering for the Liberation of Sex Minorities were invited by the Municipality of Montevideo to coordinate a panel at the Town Meeting on Human Rights.

Uruguayan society continues to repeat the same discriminatory patterns, however. The majority of lesbian, gay, transvestite, trans-sexual and bi-sexual communities live under cover, harassed by an environment that hurts them in ways ranging from the brutal (insults, blackmail, beatings), to the subtle

(jokes, systematic denial of information, repetition of obsolete classifications, etc.). On the job harassment, and some times cloaked dismissals, continue to accompany voluntary or involuntary «detection» of homosexual workers.

Parliament has indicated its intention to include transvestites in health regulations and obligatory sanitary controls. **Although public health authorities promote a liberal image of the country regarding HIV/AIDS, the National Blood Bank continues to reject voluntary blood donations from individuals who declare themselves to be homosexual.**

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

This year for the first time the National Statistics Institute made a study of household survey data, analysing socio-demographic differences according to racial groups.

Regarding the level of schooling, the black population shows a greater dropout rate at all levels of schooling. It was also observed that black people average a year and a half less schooling than white people.

Black people have higher economic activity indexes, that is to say, more black people over 14 years of age are employed or seeking employment. Employment and unemployment rates among blacks are also higher. In particular, black and indigenous women in general show higher rates of employment and unemployment than do women of the other two races (yellow and white).

As shown by the National Statistics Institute, black people proportionally predominate in jobs requiring skilled or unskilled manual labour. They also predominate in personal services. Women's participation is greater in domestic and cleaning services than in any other job. **Over 40% of economically active women who have declared that they belong to the black race hold jobs in domestic services.**

In all the major groups of activities, unemployment rates are higher for black people. This difference is more pronounced as job skill requirements become higher. Particularly high rates are observed for women.

Incomes of black people are lower than those of other groups. Incomes of white people are 65% higher than those of black people. In all the races, men receive higher incomes than do women of the same race.

These disparities are attenuated in younger generations. **Among older adults, white people's income is over 82% higher than black people's income.** For adults aged 30 to 49, this difference drops to 62%, and it drops even lower, to 40%, for young adults in the 18 to 29 age group.

Looking at the main economic activity (the activity that produces the most income for a given population), the level of income for whites is 85% higher than that of blacks aged 50 to 60, but drops to 42% in the 30 to 49 age group and to 17%, in the young adult group. The lower salary level for youths may explain this drop in inequality of remuneration at lower ages.

● National Women's Commission to Follow-up on the Beijing Commitments.

● Peace and Justice Service-Uruguay (SERPAJ). Human Rights Report. 1998.