



Latin American countries are reducing gender gaps by adopting innovative measures to strengthen women's autonomy while also tackling the structural causes of inequality.

## GENDER EQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA: A REGIONAL COMMITMENT TO REDUCING GENDER GAPS

### SUMMARY

Gender equality is a human right and a cornerstone of social and economic development. It refers to the equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both men and women in all spheres of public and private life. Although women continue to face many barriers to the full realisation of their rights in Latin America, countries across the region have been taking important steps to overcome the multidimensional, structural and cultural causes of inequality. These experiences are generating a range of useful lessons for other regions on issues as diverse as legal and institutional reform, budgeting tools, and independent mechanisms for tracking public policy. Illustrated with case studies from across the region, this Guide provides an overview of Latin American progress to date, with a focus on health, education, political and economic sectors. The Guide then describes the main enabling factors behind progress in Latin America and summarises key lessons. Links to further reading and key organisations are also provided to guide readers to additional information.



### LATIN AMERICAN PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUITY

Although states around the world have shown their political commitment towards gender equality by ratifying international treaties on the protection and promotion of women's rights, such as the 1979 United Nations [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), the unequal treatment of women still persists throughout every region of the world. Figure 1 shows that according to the Global Gender Gap Index 2013, gender inequality is more prevalent in the Middle East and Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. As explained in this report, while the Middle East and North Africa are yet to

### KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Effective strategies for reducing gender gaps must focus on eliminating the structural conditions that produce inequalities while at the same time strengthening women's autonomy.

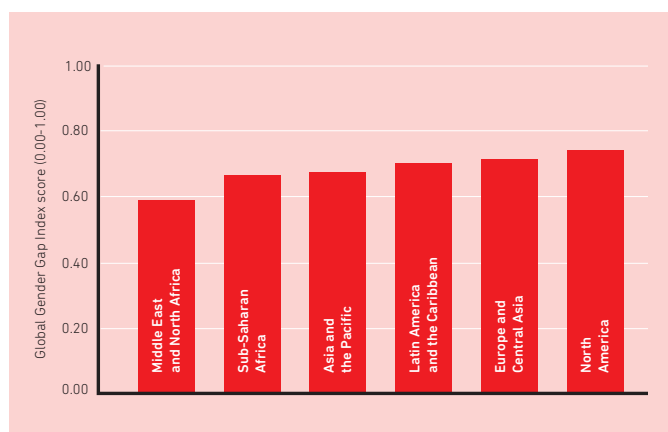
Civil society plays a crucial role in lobbying for women's rights, as well as providing independent oversight of public policy.

Practical tools for mainstreaming gender into policy and practice can produce positive impacts on women's opportunities and participation in public life in a relatively short time frame.



close gender gaps in educational attainment and economic participation, in Asia and the Pacific region women’s access to health and political empowerment are areas for significant improvement.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the 2013 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report indicates that women all over the world continue to face discrimination in access to education and work, as well as in terms of economic opportunities and political participation, which undermine efforts to reach the MDGs.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Global Gender Gap Index 2013 by Region**



Source: Hausmann *et al.* 2013, see n1.

Most Latin American countries have ratified the CEDAW and its [Optional Protocol](#).<sup>3</sup> In Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, CEDAW forms part of the national constitution, which officially recognises the state’s responsibilities to eliminate discrimination and promote women’s rights.<sup>4</sup> In other countries such as Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, principles of equality have been included into the constitutional text or specific legislation. Finally, a third group of countries, including Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay, have adopted Gender Equality Acts that promote equal rights in all areas of national development.<sup>5</sup>

In 1994, Latin America became the first region in the world to adopt a regional treaty, the [Inter-American Convention on](#)

[Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women](#) (known as the Belem Do Pará Convention), which acknowledges that gender violence persists due to structural discrimination against women and calls for the establishment of mechanisms for protecting and guaranteeing women’s rights. Inspired by [The Fourth World Conference on Women](#) held in Beijing in 1995,<sup>6</sup> Latin American countries subsequently developed a landmark regional agreement during the 8th Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Lima in 2000. Within this agreement, gender equality is understood as the recognition of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and as a precondition for sustainable development.<sup>7</sup> This is the first regional commitment in the world to coordinate efforts between governments, feminist organisations, and experts aimed at protecting women’s rights, eliminating barriers that reinforce structural inequality and fostering women’s participation in decision-making processes.<sup>8</sup>

But what has this meant in practice? In terms of the [Millennium Development Goals](#), Latin America has successfully reduced gender gaps in three specific areas:

1. In most Latin American countries, differences between girls and boys in terms of schooling years and enrollment rates have been reduced, especially in secondary and tertiary education, helping to improve women’s choices and decision-making capacity.<sup>9</sup>
2. Across Latin America, women are now playing a greater role in public life, including in labour markets and decision-making process, helping to transform the circumstances in which true equality between men and women is built.<sup>10</sup>
3. Life expectancy for girls and women is now higher due to investments in health care services. Fertility rates have dramatically declined due to improved access to information on sexual and reproductive health; between 1960 and 2009 fertility rates decreased from an average of six births per woman, to just two.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hausmann, R., Tyson, L., Bekhouche, Y. and Zahidi, S. 2013. [The Global Gender Gap Report 2013](#). World Economic Forum, Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. 2013. [Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women](#). United Nations, online publication.

<sup>3</sup> Out of the 20 countries in Latin American, only Chile, Cuba and El Salvador have not ratified the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW and only Honduras, Nicaragua and Puerto Rico have not ratified CEDAW or the Optional Protocol.

<sup>4</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2008. [Women’s Contribution to Equality In Latin America and the Caribbean](#). ECLAC, Santiago.

<sup>5</sup> ECLAC. 2010. [What Kind of State? What Kind of equality?](#) ECLAC, Santiago.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. No date. [The Fourth Global Women’s Conference 1975-1995: Historical Perspective](#). UN Division for the Advancement of Women, online Publication.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women. (No date). [Concepts and Definitions](#). UN Women, online publication.

<sup>8</sup> ECLAC. 2006. [Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean and Other Regional Consensus](#). ECLAC, Santiago.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> ECLAC. 2010, see above n5.

<sup>11</sup> Chioda, L. 2011. [Work and Family: Latin American and the Caribbean Women in Search of a New Balance](#). World Bank, Washington, DC.



Despite this progress, one persistent challenge faced by the region is the implementation of long-lasting public policy that is able to promote gender equality beyond political and cultural interests. In some Latin American countries, the influence of the Catholic Church and its alliances with conservative political parties are still blocking attempts to advance women’s rights, especially in relation to reproduction and sexual health.<sup>12</sup>

Drawing on examples from across the region, this Guide explores innovative policies being implemented by Latin American countries to improve gender equality. It has been compiled based on a review of available literature and published documents, including international and regional frameworks on human rights, academic articles on gender equality in the region and specialist legal journals. Additional research support was provided by Latin American experts in the identification of pioneering experiences from the region. As such, the Guide focuses on policies that demonstrate concrete impacts on improving gender equality across the region. In doing so, it provides useful lessons for policymakers, practitioners and researchers in Africa and Asia seeking to adopt long-term strategies to reduce gender gaps and empower women.

## LATIN AMERICAN STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING GENDER EQUITY

Inspired by the conclusions of the [Report of the Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), the Latin American approach to achieving gender equality generally aims to strengthen women’s autonomy, understood as “the degree of freedom to act at the individual, public and collective level, safeguarding their reproductive and sexual rights, putting an end to gender violence and adopting all of the measures needed for women to participate in decision-making on an equal basis”<sup>13</sup> (Table 1). This approach is making a demonstrable impact on gender equality in relation to three key areas.

Firstly, Latin American governments have made significant improvements in providing sexual and reproductive health services.<sup>14</sup> Based on a human rights approach, these initiatives represent an attempt to replace public policy based

on traditional stereotypes, which had failed to consider the importance of women’s freedom to decide on matters relating to their bodies.

Second, governments have been using the gender approach as a tool to design public policies that improve the capability of women to fully exercise their rights as equal citizens.<sup>15</sup> As well as reforming national constitutional and legal frameworks, Latin American governments have implemented a range of new actions to address discrimination and structural inequalities in labour markets, as well as in the political, and justice systems.

Finally, governments and civil society have created new institutional mechanisms for advancing women’s development in Latin America. These institutions have played a key role in advocating for gender equality as a public policy priority and are providing technical expertise to support this process.

The following sections of this Guide examine each of these areas in turn.

**Table 1: Three Key Latin American Approaches to Gender Equality**

GOAL	APPROACH	EXAMPLES
Individual Autonomy	Improve sexual and reproductive health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding access to high quality reproductive health and family planning services</li> <li>- Improving access to information on sexual and reproductive rights</li> </ul>
Public Autonomy	Gender mainstreaming in public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing inequality in labour markets</li> <li>- Increasing women’s political participation</li> <li>- Improving access to justice</li> <li>- Resource distribution</li> </ul>
Collective Autonomy	Creation of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of new institutions working on gender issues</li> <li>- Empowering women through gender observatories</li> </ul>

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on ECLAC. 2008. [Report of the Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). ECLAC, Santiago.

<sup>12</sup> Caivano, J., Marcus-Delgado, J. 2012. [The Public Debate Over Private Lives](#). In: *Gender Equality: Political Backrooms, Corporate Boardrooms and Classrooms*. Americas Quarterly, North Hollywood, CA.  
<sup>13</sup> ECLAC. 2010. [User Manual for the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean](#). ECLAC, Santiago.  
<sup>14</sup> Domike, A. (ed.) 2008. [Civil Society and Social Movements. Building Sustainable Democracies in Latin America](#). Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.  
<sup>15</sup> ECLAC. 2010, see n5 above.



## 1. IMPROVING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The Belem Do Pará Convention acknowledges the direct relationship between women's health and key issues for women's empowerment, access to opportunities and the realisation of other basic rights. In spite of opposition from conservative actors, feminist and human rights organisations in Latin America have advocated for the inclusion of a human rights approach in public health care services promoting women's participation.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the controversial nature of many reproductive and sexual issues in Latin America, this Guide will focus on successful policies relating to two particular issues. Firstly, progress towards providing health care services based on human rights standards and, secondly, how the right to sexual health has been promoted through the right to access to information.

### ***Access to High Quality Reproductive Health & Family Planning Services***

The Pan America Health Organization Health Report for the Americas shows that between 2007 and 2008, "95% of pregnant women received prenatal care and 93% of births were attended by skilled health staff."<sup>17</sup> Despite this incredible progress, a lack of adequate equipment and medical supplies are just some of the barriers that continue to limit access to adequate maternal services.<sup>18</sup> Regional differences in access to health care and women's health are stark. For example, in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Saint Lucia and Uruguay, under 50 women die per 100,000 births. In contrast, in nine Latin American countries - Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru and Suriname - maternal death rates are above the regional average (80 maternal deaths per 100,000 births).<sup>19</sup>

All over the region, a variety of policies have been implemented which seek to improve access to reproductive health services as a core strategy to improve women's health and autonomy. Common to the development of these policies has been support from international donors working with public institutions and local organisations to identify key elements of maternal services that need to be improved, providing technical assistance to public officers and actively

involving the community. Two noteworthy experiences from the region are:

### *Free Obstetric Care in Haiti*

In order to tackle high rates of maternal death in Haiti, the [Pan American Health Organization](#) and international stakeholders launched a programme in partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health to offer free quality health services to vulnerable pregnant women. The main aim of this programme is to provide free access to postnatal care, childbirth services, and postnatal follow-up in clinics and hospitals. The programme also refunds pregnant women any transport costs and pays traditional birth attendants to accompany pregnant women to the health institutions for birth. The community has been involved through the creation of maternal mortality committees connecting pregnant women to health institutions. These committees aim to encourage women to increase their use of public health services by promoting the benefits of childbirth at these facilities.<sup>20</sup>

Monitoring mechanisms have been key to the success of this programme. For instance, health centres and hospitals are only reimbursed if they demonstrate high standards of care provision by monitoring the performance of each employee. Initial evidence indicates that the programme has contributed to increasing antenatal care visits amongst the target population, with 30% of women who previously gave birth at home now choosing to give birth in a public institution. Almost 83% of women using public health services reported feeling satisfied with the quality of the service.

The programme in Haiti provides an example of how international investment focused on the improvement of health facilities and paired with a community engagement strategy can ensure that free obstetric care reaches the poorest and most vulnerable women. The involvement of pregnant women was a key element of this programme since it helped to build a new relationship of trust between vulnerable women and public institutions, and resulted in the delivery of health services that better responded to women's needs and priorities.

<sup>16</sup> Article 19. 2006. [Time for Change: Promoting and Protecting Access to Information and Reproductive and Sexual Health Rights in Peru](#). Article 19, London.

<sup>17</sup> Pan American Health Organization. 2012. [Health Determinants and Inequalities](#). In: *Health In the Americas*. PAHO, Washington, DC.

<sup>18</sup> Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women. 2010. [Access to Maternal Health Services from a Human Rights Perspective](#). Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC.

<sup>19</sup> WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Bank. 2012. [Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010](#). WHO, Geneva.

<sup>20</sup> WHO. 2010. [Free Obstetric Care in Haiti](#). WHO, online publication.



### *Improving Maternal Health in the Andean Region*

The international NGO CARE has been implementing its [Mothers Matter Signature Programme](#) across Latin America, Africa and Asia with the aim of identifying and scaling-up best practices in maternal health programming, including technical interventions, institutional capacity building, community mobilisation and promotion of women's participation in shaping health policy. By taking a regional approach to the initiative in the Andean region, CARE is promoting lesson sharing between its three country offices to support scale-up of successful, evidence-based and culturally appropriate strategies.

As part of this initiative in Peru, CARE is implementing the Foundations to Enhance Management of Maternal Emergencies (FEMME) project in partnership with the University of Columbia and the Ministry of Health. Working in the Andean province of Ayacucho, mostly populated by indigenous people and rural communities, the main aim of the programme is to protect women's lives during pregnancy by building skills in emergency obstetric care and by promoting a rights-based approach to health care, such as respecting a woman's decisions about giving birth according to her own cultural practices.<sup>21</sup> As a result, maternal mortality rates, which were higher than the national average of 240 deaths per 100,000 live births, have decreased by 50% and women with obstetric complications being treated in health facilities increased from 30% to 75%.<sup>22</sup> The Peruvian Ministry of Health has since adopted standard guidelines and protocols for obstetric and neonatal emergencies for use nationwide. Health Ministries in Bolivia and Ecuador are also working to develop and implement these guidelines based on the results of the programme.<sup>23</sup>

Initial outcomes from this programme show that building women's autonomy and capacity to make informed choices are key to strengthening maternal health care systems and reducing maternal mortality. This can be achieved by including women as programme participants, rather

than mere service users, promoting a culture of medical care during pregnancy and improving the commitment of health workers to protecting women's culture and views.

### ***Improving Access to Information on Sexual and Reproductive Health***

Research has shown that providing appropriate sexual health education and information is vital for women and girls to exercise their right to health.<sup>24</sup> In its [General Recommendations on Women and Health](#), CEDAW affirms that governments must promote equal access to health services, education and information for men and women in the area of sexual and reproductive health.<sup>25</sup> In Latin America, the [Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Speech of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) has also drawn attention to the importance of the right to information on sexual and reproductive health for vulnerable groups.<sup>26</sup>

Backed by existing legal frameworks that protect the right to information, Latin American civil society organisations (CSOs) in particular have played a key role in pushing for improvements in the availability and accessibility of information on sexual health for women. By demanding access to information and monitoring the use of public resources assigned to protect and guarantee women's sexual and reproductive rights, CSOs are helping to build public demand for adequate health services. Other organisations work exclusively to promote and disseminate reproductive and sexual health information that sometimes is not distributed for religious or cultural reasons. In both cases, activities focusing on building service users' capacities to demand access to reproductive and sexual information and services (Box 1).<sup>27</sup>

## **2. GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTO PUBLIC POLICY**

Gender mainstreaming is an analytical approach for understanding inequality in contexts that were once considered gender-neutral, such as the family, education or the labour market. As such, gender mainstreaming enables policymakers to understand different contexts that cause

<sup>21</sup> CARE. 2010. [The Impact of Maternal Health In Peru](#). CARE, Washington, DC.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Article 19. 2006, see n16 above. See also Hunt, P. 2004. [The Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health](#). UN Commission on Human Rights, New York; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. 2011. [Access to Information on Reproductive Health from a Human Rights Perspective](#). Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC.

<sup>25</sup> CEDAW. 1999. [General Recommendation 24. Article 12: Women and Health](#). UN, New York.

<sup>26</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. 2009. [Report of the Special Rapporteur for the Freedom of Expression](#). Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



### BOX 1: THE ROLE OF LATIN AMERICAN CSOs IN PROMOTING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Chile is one of the most conservative Latin American countries regarding sexual and reproductive rights. In this context, the CSO [Lesbians and Feminists Defending the Right to Decide](#) (*Lesbianas y Feministas por el Derecho a Decidir*) is providing information on reproductive health and family planning to women living in the provinces of Iquique, Santiago and Concepción via a free and confidential telephone line. The organisation also denounces abuses of women's reproductive rights through public demonstrations, street performances or by disseminating information among the mass media. Finally, the CSO runs capacity building for the general public on defending the right to free decisions on sexual matters. Since its foundation in 2009, this CSO has directly helped more than twelve thousand Chilean women.

Founded in 1991, the Mexican CSO [Information Group on Reproductive Choice](#) (*Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida - GIRE*) promotes and defends women's sexual rights by disseminating information on reproductive health, by advocating for legal reforms and changes in public policy that safeguard women's rights, and by using strategic litigation to defend the right to information on sexual and reproductive health. GIRE's advocacy work has helped to demonstrate that limiting or denying the right to information on reproductive and sexual health affects women's autonomy and their capacity to make free decisions.

discrimination and maintain structural inequalities in the public sphere, as well as how these impact on women's lives. In Latin American countries, this approach has been helpful for designing public policy aimed at reducing gender gaps and strengthening women's autonomy in four areas where women face discrimination: labour markets, political processes, access to justice and resource distribution.

### Labour Markets

Labour market conditions such as contracts, social benefits, salaries and jobs available to women are still largely based on stereotypical views of women as reproducers and homemakers. This means that for many women with housekeeping and child-raising responsibilities, the only available option is to accept a part-time job, sometimes in the informal sector, and generally with low wages.<sup>28</sup>

In all Latin American countries, except Bolivia and Guatemala, the proportion of women participating in the urban labour force has risen significantly over the last three decades. While in 1980, 36% of women were participating in the labour market, by 2009 this has increased to 52%, representing some 70 million women in total.<sup>29</sup> Despite this, statistics show that in 2007, women earned on average 17% less than men in formal jobs and that in 33% of the better paid occupations, women earned less than men doing the same job.<sup>30</sup>

The [Inter-American Commission of Women](#), the main institution that provides technical support to gender mainstreaming policies within the [Organization of American States](#), has organised the Inter-American Conferences of Ministers of Labour to discuss the issue of equality between women and men in the economy and labour market, and to establish a strategy to address social and cultural gender gaps.<sup>31</sup> At national level, a new generation of public policies is emerging in Latin America, especially in the Southern Cone and Central America, which promote women's participation in labour markets. This section will explore three of the most innovative policies to date.

### Creating Special Agencies in Labour Ministries

With the support of the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO), special agencies have been created within the Labour Ministries in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay known as the Tripartite Commissions. Representatives of the Labour Ministries, Women's Bureau, workers and employees meet together in these commissions to work on the practical implementation of gender issues within national labour markets.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

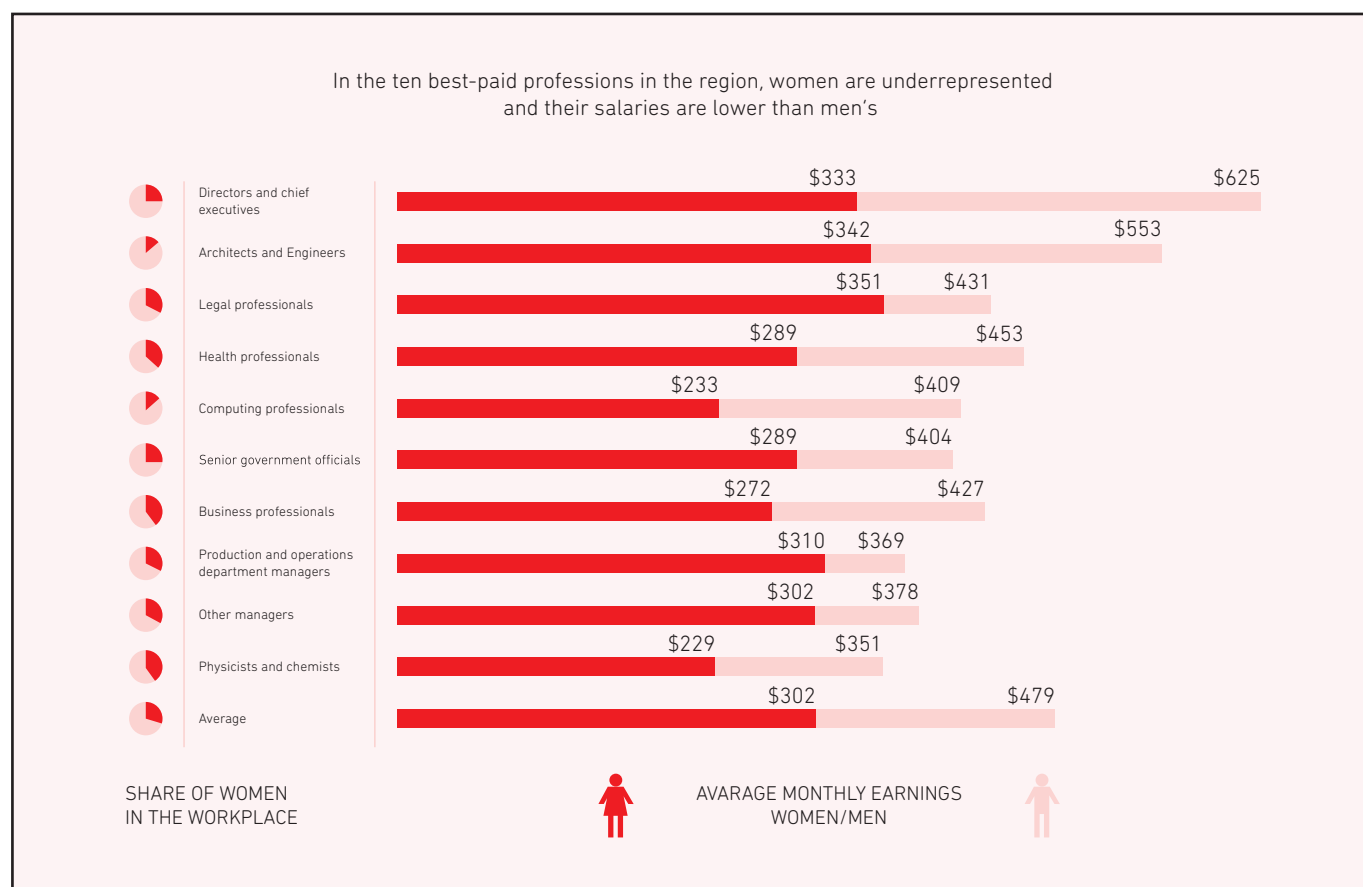
<sup>29</sup> Chioda. 2011, see above n11.

<sup>30</sup> Ñopo, H. 2011. [New Centuries, Old Disparities. Gender and Ethnic Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>31</sup> Inter-American Commission of Women. 2001. [Incorporating the Gender Perspective in Regional Labour Policies. Progress and Proposals](#). Inter-American Commission of Women, Washington, DC; ECLAC. 2010, above n5.

<sup>32</sup> Organization of American States. 2009. [The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas](#). OAS, Washington, DC.

**Figure 2: 10 Top-paying Occupations in Latin America, 2007**



Source: Ñopo. 2011, see n30 above.

In Uruguay, the Tripartite Commission managed to reform several laws in 2005 relating to discrimination of women in labour markets.<sup>33</sup> The Commission has also set regulations on full payment during maternity leave for workers from the public and private sectors<sup>34</sup> and has increased the length of maternity leave to 13 weeks,<sup>35</sup> including 3 days of paternity leave.<sup>36</sup> In Argentina, the Tripartite Commission on Equal Treatment and Opportunity for Men and Women in the Workplace was created in 2003 to coordinate gender mainstreaming into the design and management of labour market policy and programmes.<sup>37</sup> Made up of representatives from the Labour Ministry, the Bureau of Women, labour unions, employees and workers, the Tripartite Commission carries out work in three areas: i) Assessment of women's experiences in the labour market; ii) Professional training; and iii) Dissemination of experiences.

The Tripartite Commission's active role promoting gender equality has led to the identification of critical areas requiring special measures to address discrimination against women. The adoption of laws against violence and sexual harassment and the creation of the Special Unit for Violence in Labour within the government are just two of the key achievements that have resulted from the Commission's advocacy work. Recently, it has supported a legal amendment within labour unions establishing that 30% of the spaces in decision-making process have to be occupied by women.<sup>38</sup> This measure is having a direct impact on women's participation and influence when negotiating collective contracts protecting motherhood rights, demanding equal payment and professional training, and promoting social rights for pregnant women.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Such as Law 16,045 prohibiting all discrimination that violates the principle of equality of treatment and opportunities for both sexes in all sectors of labour activity.

<sup>34</sup> Articles 11 and 12 of Law 15,084.

<sup>35</sup> Law 16,104. Before 2005, national law provided for only six weeks of maternity leave. Since 2008, Law 18,345 has benefitted workers in the private sector.

<sup>36</sup> Article 7 of Law 18,345 on special leave.

<sup>37</sup> ILO. 2007. *Diálogo Social y Género Experiencia de la Comisión Tripartita de Igualdad de Trato y Oportunidades entre Varones y Mujeres en el Mundo Laboral de Argentina (Social Dialogue and Gender Experience of the Tripartite Commission on Equal Treatment and Opportunity for Men and Women in the Labour Market in Argentina)*. ILO, Geneva.

<sup>38</sup> Law 25,674 for gender quotas in labour unions.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



### Regional Projects Addressing Discrimination

The regional project *Cumple y Gana: Strengthening Women’s Labour Rights in Central America*<sup>40</sup> is funded and sponsored by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and executed by the Foundation for Peace and Democracy (FUNPADEM by its acronym in Spanish), a CSO from Costa Rica. The main objective of these organisations is to help each of the labour ministries to implement this project.<sup>41</sup>

The implementation of the project has been crucial in addressing discrimination against women working in the *maquila* industry in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic. The *maquila* industry extends across Central America and Mexico, and is made up of foreign-owned assembly plants mostly producing textiles, clothing, metalwork, electronics and footwear. Subjected to exploitative working conditions, including low wages and long working hours, women represent the majority of the workforce in these factories. In many cases, the women accept these poor working conditions in order to overcome conditions of poverty and vulnerability that result from a lack of economic opportunities and social exclusion in their countries.<sup>42</sup>

The general objective of the project is to improve workers’ and employers’ knowledge of their country’s labour laws and standards, increasing the effectiveness and reliability of the Labour Ministries’ inspection systems and adopting the gender perspective as a long-standing practice to end discrimination in the *maquila*.<sup>43</sup> A key outcome of this regional project has been the promotion and protection of women’s labour rights in the *maquila* industry. Inspection systems were strengthened to verify whether social rights had been violated, such as the denial of maternity leave, and to ensure that working condition met standards of decent work.<sup>44</sup> In Honduras, activities included training programmes for men and women working in the *maquila* industry, conferences on social rights and discrimination in the work place,

campaigns to stop and denounce sexual harassment and several legislative reforms aimed at protecting women’s labour rights.<sup>45</sup> Another successful outcome has been the joint work between national governments, employers and workers who have collectively designed gender-based policies in the *maquila* sector that helped poor women. As a result of this project, Women Offices were created within the labour ministries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama.<sup>46</sup>

### Promoting Equal Family Roles in Domestic Frameworks

Latin American countries have made reforms to legal frameworks aimed at improving the protection of working mothers. The areas addressed include labour rights during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum, and supporting parents to share responsibility for childcare and income generation.<sup>47</sup> In many Latin American countries, this has involved improving legislation on working conditions for women and extending social security benefits that were exclusively designed for women, to men.

More than thirteen countries in the region have adopted measures to guarantee parental leave to working mothers and fathers.<sup>48</sup> Brazil, Chile and Venezuela are the countries that provide the longest provisions for maternity leave, ranging from 18 weeks to 6 months, in the case of public employees in Brazil. Other countries like Colombia allow mothers to transfer up to 12 weeks of maternity leave to the father and in Brazil, Nicaragua and Peru maternity leave is also applicable as a benefit for unemployed women. Recently in 2011, the Chilean government enacted Law No. 20.545 to extend postnatal maternity leave up to 24 weeks full time, with the possibility of a further extension up to 30 weeks if women chose to go back to work on a part-time basis.<sup>49</sup> Extending the benefits of paternity leave to fathers has been found to generate positive results in terms of the sharing responsibility for household duties and childcare.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Organization of American States. 2009. *The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labour of the Americas*. Washington, DC.  
<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed description of the project, please visit the [FUNPADEM website](#).

<sup>42</sup> Giles, M. 2006. *An Understanding of the Relationship Between Maquiladoras and Women’s Rights in Central America*. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

<sup>43</sup> OAS. 2009, see n32 above.

<sup>44</sup> According to the ILO, the concept of decent work refers to the creation of working conditions that: i) promote high standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; ii) create better opportunities for women and men; iii) enhance the coverage for social protection and strengthen social dialogue. See ILO. 2006. *Decent Work in the Americas: An Agenda for the Hemisphere, 2006–2015*. ILO, Geneva.

<sup>45</sup> Proyecto Cumple y Gana. 2008. *Discriminación de Género y Derechos Laborales de las Mujeres (Gender Discrimination and Women’s Labour Rights)*. FUNPADEM, San José.

<sup>46</sup> The Government of El Salvador created the [Special Unit for Gender Cases and Prevention of Discrimination Acts \(Unidad Especial de Género y Prevención de Actos Laborales Discriminatorios\)](#); the Government of Guatemala, the Working Women’s Unit (*Unidad de la Mujer Trabajadora*); the Nicaraguan government, the Office for Equality and Non-discrimination (*Oficina de Igualdad y No Discriminación*) and in Panama, the government created the Gender and Labour Commission (*Comisión de Género y Trabajo*).

<sup>47</sup> ECLAC. 2011. *Challenges. Child Care and Parental Leave*. ECLAC, Santiago.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.





## BOX 2: GENDER AND MEN'S RIGHTS IN CUBA

Cuba stands out from the rest of the region since it began developing maternal health care policies back in the 60s. Among a variety of innovative measures adopted, the Ministry of Public Health enacted a law in 2003 granting fathers the right to enjoy six months' paid paternal leave and an optional three-month period of unpaid leave. This means that during the first year, either the mother or father can stay at home caring for their child. This period counts as contributory towards social security and is paid at 60% of regular maternity leave. Even if just 96 workers applied for paternity leave between 2006 and 2011, these efforts are contributing to reshaping the role of fathers and of men in Cuban society.

Sources: ECLAC. 2011. [Challenges. Child Care and Parental Leave](#). ECLAC, Santiago; Fariñas, L. 2012. [Responsible Motherhood and Fatherhood](#). Granma, Cuba.

### Increasing Political Participation

Since the 1990s, the majority of Latin American countries have implemented gender quota legislation in order to raise the proportion of women participating in political decision-making processes. In fact, with women holding 23% of legislative seats, the region is now moving ahead of the United States and some European countries.<sup>51</sup> Another clear sign that political culture is changing is that there are currently four women at the head of Latin American and Caribbean governments. They are:

- Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil since 2011
- Laura Chinchilla, President of Costa Rica since 2010
- Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of Argentina since 2007
- Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica since January 2013 <sup>52</sup>

These achievements have resulted from the implementation of affirmative action measures that seek to create opportunities for specific groups in society to access rights they have historically been denied due to racial, gender or social discrimination. In the political sphere, affirmative actions aim to make it easier for women to access political seats and therefore enjoy their right to participate in their country's decision-making processes and to be elected.<sup>53</sup> Although affirmative actions have been also implemented in Africa and Asia, Latin America has adopted a specific measure that has proven to be highly effective for helping women access elected positions: gender quota norms.<sup>54</sup>

Enacted for the first time in Argentina through a gender quota law applicable to all political parties in 1991,<sup>55</sup> gender quotas are measures that require political parties to include women in their electoral lists, seeking to reduce gender gaps between men and women in politics. In Latin America, gender quotas have been used in legislative elections to increase the number of female members of parliaments.<sup>56</sup> Another characteristic of gender quota laws is that they are temporary measures that seek to correct discrimination, ensure larger representation and improve democratisation processes, and once these objectives are reached, the norms are generally removed.<sup>57</sup>

The design and characteristics of Latin American quota norms varies between countries and, depending on the way they were drafted and implemented, have generated diverse outcomes. Critical factors for the effective implementation of gender norms include a solid legal basis; strong enforcement mechanisms; well-designed electoral systems; commitment from political parties; and the implementation of tools strengthening women's skills and leadership.

To learn more about the impacts of gender quota laws and the conditions that facilitated these innovative measures read the [ELLA Brief: Promoting Gender Equity in Politics Through Affirmative Action Measures: Latin American Gender Quotas](#).

<sup>51</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women. 2012. [Women in Politics: 2012](#). Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, Geneva.

<sup>52</sup> Lopez Torregrosa, L. 2012. [Latin America Opens up to Equality](#). New York Times, online publication.

<sup>53</sup> Archenti, N., Tula, M. 2007. [Los Límites Institucionales de las Cuotas de Género en América Latina \(Institutional Limits of Gender Quotas in Latin America\)](#). In: *Iberoamericana* 7 (27) 184–190.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Schwindt-Bayer, L. 2011. [Gender Quotas and Women's Political Participation In Latin America](#). Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

<sup>56</sup> Archenti & Tula. 2007, above n53.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



## Improving Access to Justice

Another successful component of gender mainstreaming in Latin America has been significant improvements to women's access to justice. Adopting a gender approach in legal processes enables cases to be understood in terms of the broader social context and often helps courts to make rulings that help reduce inequality and advance women's rights. Across Latin America, national courts are implementing a range of strategies to integrate gender perspectives into judicial processes such as i) using definitions inspired by gender and human rights frameworks; ii) using legal arguments based on international women's rights standards; iii) considering contextual and historical factors.<sup>58</sup>

Understanding how some of the highest tribunals in Latin America have incorporated human rights and gender paradigms into judicial processes serves different purposes. Firstly, it can facilitate replication in lower courts and secondly, it also serves to demonstrate that a gender approach to law can be used as a means of creating change and can therefore be adopted by other relevant actors such as lawyers and civil society organisations using litigation as a tool for bringing about social transformation in favour of human rights.

The cases of the Mexican Supreme Court and the Colombian Constitutional Court provide insightful lessons about how using a gender approach in resolutions can help guarantee equal access to social benefits, non-discrimination in labour markets and protect sexual self-determination. In these cases, progressive interpretations of women's rights by judges were critical to helping transform unequal gender relations. To learn more, read the [ELLA Brief: Latin American Advances in Incorporating a Gender Approach in National Court Rulings](#).

## Resource Distribution

In recent years, governments around the world have begun implementing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to analyse and account for gender differences in budgeting processes. In the Latin America region, legal

and administrative reforms have paved the way for the development of innovative budget analysis tools and participatory mechanisms that are helping to ensure that women's priorities and needs are incorporated into national and local budgets. Inspired by a rights-based approach, GRB is a tool that links government budget allocations and revenue to the legal obligations they are bound to in international treaties, national constitutions or secondary laws regarding women's rights. GRB initiatives analyse the entire public budget to determine whether public spending takes into account gender differences and whether budget allocations actually address gender inequalities or perpetuate them.<sup>59</sup>

Latin American governments in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela have implemented legal and administrative reforms making GRB a mandatory component of government planning and spending.<sup>60</sup> Reporting on the gender impacts of budget allocations by developing budgeting tools is a key element to ensuring their practical implementation and success.<sup>61</sup> Municipal governments in these, and other Latin American countries, are using participatory budgeting as an effective strategy for collecting and integrating women's needs and demands into local budgets. A final trend from the region relates the development of new budgeting tools, training and monitoring mechanisms, with significant inputs from civil society groups and academics. To learn more about Latin American experiences with GRB read the [ELLA Brief: Advancing Gender Equality Through the Budget: Latin American Experiences with Gender-Responsive Budgeting](#).

## 3. CREATING INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Since the 1990s, most Latin American countries have established new institutions to promote the advancement of women rights. The main national institutions are responsible for coordinating the implementation of a variety of actions to mainstream gender into public policy, reduce gender gaps and foster women's rights.<sup>62</sup> Numerous

<sup>58</sup> For a regional overview on gender violence, see Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. 2007. [Access to Justice for Women Victims of Violence in the Americas](#). Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC; Alda, F. M. 1992. *Cuando el Género Suena Cambios Trae. Una Metodología para el Análisis de Género del Fenómeno Legal (When Gender Dreams, Changes Come. A Methodology for Gender Analysis as a Legal Phenomenon)*. ILANUD, San José; Cook, R., Cusack, S. 2010. *Gender Stereotyping: Transitional Legal Perspectives*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

<sup>59</sup> For more information on the implementation of the rights-based approach in Latin America read the ELLA Briefs [Mexico City's Innovation: Budgeting with a Human Rights Approach](#) and [Making Human Rights Real: Two Latin American Experiences in the Rights Based Approach to Policymaking](#).

<sup>60</sup> The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID. 2008. *Programa Regional de Presupuestos Sensibles al Género en América Latina (Regional Programme for Gender Responsive Budgeting in Latin America)*. The Basque Government, UN Volunteers, UNIFEM and AECID.

<sup>61</sup> Hofbauer Balmori, H. 2003. *Gender and Budgets Overview Report*. Bridge Institute of Development Studies, London.

<sup>62</sup> Montaña, S., Guzmán, V. 2012. [Políticas Públicas e Institucionalidad de Género en América Latina \(1985-2010\) \(Public Policies and Mainstreaming Gender in Latin America \(1985-2010\)\)](#). In: *Serie Mujer y Desarrollo No. 118*. ECLAC, Santiago.



secondary mechanisms have also emerged, such as gender observatories. Often led by civil society, the main role of these mechanisms is to provide independent oversight of public policy concerning gender issues.<sup>63</sup>

### Principal National Institutions

Most principal national institutions for gender equality form part of the government (Figure 3).<sup>64</sup> Cuba is an exception, since its national mechanism – the Cuban Women’s Federation – is an independent CSO.

These institutions share common characteristics that have been key for mainstreaming gender equality within governments across the region. First, the legal rationale for these mechanisms is inspired by international women’s rights treaties and has been enshrined in national constitutions through amendments, specific laws or presidential decrees.<sup>65</sup> This legal backing has been key to strengthening the mandate of these new institutions, for fostering collaboration with other government agencies and for ensuring stability in times of political change.

### Secondary Mechanisms

A wide range of secondary mechanisms have been established throughout Latin America to advance women’s rights. One example is the [Gender Equity Commission](#) created by the Supreme Court in Mexico to define and run the Gender Equity Programme within the Court. In Panama, specialised units have been created within the judicial branch to deal with cases of domestic violence. Another important trend in the region is the creation of sub-regional networks for discussing the women’s rights agenda and sharing experiences. One example of this is the Network of National Mechanisms for Women for the Andean Region (*La Red de Mecanismos de la Mujer de la Región Andina* - REMMA) in which the national institutions of Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela all participate. Its main achievement has been the inclusion of a gender approach in every programme or project developed under the Integrated Plan for the Andean Region.<sup>66</sup> The Specialised Network for MERCOSUR includes the national mechanisms of the Southern

**Figure 3: Principal National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in Latin America**

COUNTRY	MECHANISM
Argentina	<a href="#">Consejo Nacional de la Mujer</a> (National Women’s Council)
Bolivia	<a href="#">Viceministerio de Asuntos de Género, Generacionales y Familia</a> (Vice-Minister of Gender, Generational and Family Affairs)
Brazil	<a href="#">Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres</a> (Special Minister for Women’s Policy)
Chile	<a href="#">Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM)</a> (Women’s National Service)
Colombia	<a href="#">Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer</a> (Office of the President for Gender Equality)
Costa Rica	<a href="#">Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INAMU)</a> (National Institute for Women)
Ecuador	<a href="#">Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (CONAMU)</a> (National Office for Women)
El Salvador	<a href="#">Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer</a> (Institute for Women’s Development)
Guatemala	<a href="#">Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer</a> (Office of the President for Women)
Honduras	<a href="#">Instituto Nacional de la Mujer</a> (National Institute for Women)
Mexico	<a href="#">Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres</a> (National Institute for Women)
Nicaragua	<a href="#">Instituto Nicaraguense de la Mujer (INIM)</a> (National Institute for Women)
Panama	<a href="#">Dirección Nacional de la Mujer (DINAMU)</a> (National Department for Women)
Paraguay	<a href="#">Secretaría de la Mujer</a> (Women’s Ministry)
Peru	<a href="#">Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social (MIMDES)</a> (Ministry of Women and Social Development)
Uruguay	<a href="#">Instituto Nacional de la Familia y la Mujer</a> (National Institute for Women and Family)
Venezuela	<a href="#">Instituto Nacional de la Mujer</a> (National Institute for Women)

Source: ECLAC. No date. [Organismos Nacionales para el adelanto de la Mujer \(National Organisms for Women’s Advancement\)](#). ECLAC, online publication.

<sup>63</sup> Fernós, M. D. 2010. [National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Region](#). ECLAC, Santiago.  
<sup>64</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>65</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



Cone and advocates for the incorporation of a gender approach to analyse the impacts of trade agreements on the realisation of women rights.<sup>67</sup>

Gender observatories have emerged as a new model throughout Latin America to track progress towards the realisation of women's rights and identify the persistent causes of inequality between men and women. Gender observatories are generally set up by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and/or by universities, with significant financial and technical support from external sources and donors. The broad range of activities carried out by these observatories includes monitoring public policy, developing and maintaining databases of relevant indicators, providing technical assistance and capacity building, and disseminating information among decision-makers and the general public. Latin American countries that have created national gender observatories include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.<sup>68</sup> In 2007, a [Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) was created by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at the request of member states and, since then, has been assessing fulfilment of international gender equality goals and targets at a national level on a yearly basis.

Based on this model, an innovative mechanism has been implemented in the Latin American region. The [Observatory of Maternal Mortality \(OMM\)](#) was formed in 2010 between different actors working on maternal health in Mexico and with technical and financial support from United Nations agencies and other donors. The main objective of the OMM is to contribute to reducing maternal mortality in Mexico by creating and maintaining a system of indicators in order to analyse, evaluate and monitor processes and outcomes of public policy, strategies, programmes and services aimed at reducing maternal mortality by assessing the effectiveness of public policy. Despite being in operation for just three years, this observatory is already making some important contributions to reducing maternal mortality in Mexico, including the creation and maintenance of open access databases on maternal mortality throughout the country and the monitoring of specific public policies. To learn more about some of the key ways the observatory is

making an impact read the [ELLA Brief: Observatory of Maternal Mortality in Mexico: A Civil Society-Led Initiative](#).

### BOX 3: THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL SERVICE IN CHILE

The [Women's National Service](#) (SERNAM) in Chile has served as the cornerstone of institutional transformation towards gender equality. Established by law as a new ministry in 1991, the SERNAM is a permanent part of Chile's state structure tasked with developing plans and measures to ensure that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities, while respecting the differences of women emanating from the natural diversity of the sexes. With a broader scope than most women's ministries across the Latin America region, SERNAM has worked directly with other sector ministries to mainstream gender into planning, budget analysis, design and implementation of policies and programmes.

Much of Chile's legislation concerning women's rights has been pushed by SERNAM; between 1992 and 2010, 64 legislative proposals to expand women's legal equality were introduced by the institution. Notable achievements include provisions for child care, pensions reform, breastfeeding laws, support to female heads of households, a programme for prevention of violence against women, and a network of information centres that focus on the issues of women's rights. In 2012, SERNAM's annual budget was about US\$68 million. Since then this has increased by 5%, higher than national inflation rates, demonstrating the government's commitment to gender issues.

Sources: Observatorio de Igualdad de Género en América Latina (Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean). 2011. [El Parlamento y la Incorporación de la Perspectiva de Género en sus Funciones: el Caso de los Presupuestos Sensibles al Género. \(Parliament and the Mainstreaming of Gender in its Functions: the Case of Gender-Responsive Budgets\)](#). Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, Santiago; Haas, L. 2010. *Feminist Policymaking in Chile*. Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> For information on national gender observatories in Latin America, please consult [The Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) online.



International and regional declarations and conventions on women’s rights, such as the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, have been crucial for developing regional and national agendas aimed at eliminating the barriers that create discrimination. Strong feminist movements advocating for women’s rights have provided significant internal pressure for Latin American governments to incorporate the commitments set out in these agreements into public policy and practice. Processes of gender institutionalisation and gender mainstreaming in particular have accelerated governments’ progress in meeting these obligations.

The technical capacity of CSOs has supported governments in this process through the development of new tools and approaches. Since the nineties, practitioners and academics - many Latin American - have developed theoretical and practical approaches and methodologies for incorporating a gender approach into government operations. Similarly, the capacity of CSOs to set up and maintain oversight mechanisms been invaluable to efforts to improve transparency, accountability and the impact of public policy.

At the same time, transition to democracy across Latin

America has made governments more responsive and open to demands for gender equality and decentralisation reforms have helped transfer this new vision to the local level. A common characteristic of new political structures in the region is establishing mechanisms to control human rights abuses perpetrated by government authorities and to advance institutional processes to safeguard human rights. Some countries have modified their constitutions in recognition of international human rights law, incorporated human rights in national legal frameworks, and established national human rights institutions with a mandate for protecting, defending and enforcing human rights. This has had important impacts on judicial resolutions that are moving away from traditional interpretations of the law towards arguments and resolutions that reflect human rights principles and gender perspectives.

Numerous international donors such as [UN Women](#), the [International Development Research Centre](#), the [Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development](#), the [United Nations Population Fund](#), the German Technical Cooperation, the Heinrich Boll Foundation and UKAid (formerly the [Department for International Development](#)) have all supported work on gender equity in Latin America.<sup>69</sup>

## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Effective strategies for reducing gender gaps must address the structural contexts that produce inequalities while at the same time strengthening women’s autonomy. In many countries, this will require a combination of reforms to existing legal and institutional frameworks, as well as efforts to modify social and cultural behaviours. Particularly influential agents in this change include new government departments and members of the judicial branch.
- 2 Civil society can drive forward the gender equality agenda in various valuable ways, from raising awareness of the issues, to training public servants, developing budget analysis tools, lobbying policymakers and tracking public policy.
- 3 New practical tools for mainstreaming gender into policy and practice – such as gender quotas and gender-responsive budgeting – can produce positive impacts on women’s opportunities and participation in public life in a relatively short time frame.
- 4 Independent mechanisms, such as gender observatories, play a crucial role in monitoring the progress and effectiveness of state actions and policies to improve gender equality and safeguard women’s rights.

<sup>69</sup> Martínez Medina, M. C., Méndez Narváez, A. 2006. *Construyendo Presupuestos Nacionales con Equidad de Género en El Salvador: El Camino Recorrido (Building National Budgets with a Gender Approach in El Salvador: Ground Covered)*, United Nations Development Programme, San Salvador.





## CONCLUSION

Promoting gender equality is pivotal to economic and social development in developing countries worldwide. Latin America has made some important advances towards achieving this goal, with strong political commitment leading to significant reforms to legislation, policy and practice. New institutions have been created to mainstream the gender approach across public policy, while at the same time civil society-led mechanisms have emerged to take on an important role monitoring the effectiveness of these new endeavours. Economics, political empowerment, education and health have received most attention, and Latin America should be praised for its innovation and positive results in these sectors. Interestingly, some of the countries with the lowest GDP in the region are leading the way, with Nicaragua, Cuba, Bolivia and Barbados all ranking within the top 30 on the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index (out of 135 countries).<sup>70</sup>

Much remains to be done, however, and women continue to face many barriers to the full realisation of their rights. Latin America is one of the most unequal regions in the world, with high levels of income disparity, widening social gaps between the rich and poor and growing poverty.<sup>71</sup> Regional research has also shown that Latin American women and girls belong to the poorest and most marginalised groups in the continent.<sup>72</sup> Nowadays, one in every three women in the region is economically dependent, women generally earn lower pay and unemployment significantly affects more young women than young men.<sup>73</sup> Overlapping with other forms of social, racial and ethnic discrimination, gender inequality remains a great challenge for Latin America as well as for other regions. Sharing good practices through gender networks is just one strategy for promoting the replication of successful experiences as part of a renewed commitment to reducing gender gaps and empowering women worldwide.

## KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

The following list highlights some of the key organisations working on issues related to gender in Latin America. For information on additional organisations, read the [ELLA Spotlight on Organisations: Gender Equity Policies in Latin America](#).

### *Regional Organisations*

The [Gender Affairs Division](#) of the [Economic Commission for Latin America](#) houses a multi-disciplinary team of experts responsible for carrying out research and producing knowledge aimed at promoting gender equity in public policy throughout the region. The Division provides financial and technical support to governments, while at the same time building links between civil society, women's movements and decision-makers. Main areas of operation are: gender statistics; economy and gender; social development; human rights and mainstreaming gender.

The [Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) was established in 2007 after the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in Quito, Ecuador, and is hosted by the Division of Gender Affairs in ECLAC. The Observatory's main role is to analyse the fulfilment of gender equality targets, provide technical support and analytical tools to decision-makers and produce annual reports on progress towards gender equality in the region.

The [Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights](#) (*Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer* - CLADEM) is a regional feminist network whose main objective is to strengthen democracy by promoting the full enjoyment and realisation of women's rights in Latin America. Since its creation in 1985, CLADEM has been running training programmes on women's rights, promoting better access to justice by women and lobbying governments to comply with

<sup>70</sup> Schwab, K. et al. 2013. [The Global Gender Gap Report 2013](#). World Economic Forum, Geneva.

<sup>71</sup> Lopez, H., Perry, G. 2008. [Inequality in Latin America: Determinants and Consequences](#). World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>72</sup> UN Women. No date, see n7 above.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



their obligations set out in treaties and conventions. CLADEM has Consultative Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Commission and participates in meetings of the Organization of American States that relate to gender issues.

### **National Organisations**

[The Flora Tristán Centre for the Peruvian Woman](#) (*Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán*) is one of the most important organisations working on women's rights in Peru. Based in Lima, its sphere of intervention reaches from the local to international level and includes provision of legal services for women who are victims of domestic violence, implementation of programmes on rural development, political participation and decentralisation, and participation in global campaigns against gender violence and inequality. The organisation also dedicates its resources to producing and sharing information via courses, conferences and national networks.

[The Feminist Research and Advisory Centre](#) (*Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria*) promotes feminism, human rights, democracy and racial equality in Brazil. Working with a gender approach, this CSO undertakes research aimed at improving political participation of women, promoting sexual and reproductive rights and ending gender-based violence. The organisation also lobbies the Brazilian Congress, and disseminates articles and publications on its areas of expertise.

[The Foundation for the Education and Study of Women](#) (*Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer – FEIM*) is an Argentinian CSO working to promote equality between men and women. Its main activities are research into women's rights and lobbying government agencies and international organisations. The organisation's partnerships with local, regional and international networks has strengthened its role in promoting gender equality in Argentina and the greater Latin America region.

[The Chilean Observatory for Gender Equality in Health](#) (*Observatorio de Equidad de Género en Salud Chile*) is a consortium of Chilean civil society organisations, health professionals and university academics, along with representatives of the World Health Organization and

the Pan American Health Organization. Since 2006, this observatory has been monitoring the Government of Chile's commitment to improving reproductive and sexual health amongst women. The observatory also provides access to sexual health information and carries out research.

[The Simon de Beauvoir Institute, Leadership and Training](#) (*Instituto Simon de Beauvoir, Liderazgo y Formación*) is a Mexican organisation that runs training programmes to empower indigenous women and women participating in decision-making processes at the local level. The Institute also provides technical support and consulting services to civil society organisations, as well as leadership workshops.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

Below is a list of some key publications providing an overview of gender equality in Latin America. For more information about these and other key documents, see the [ELLA Spotlight on Gender Equality Publications](#).

Chioda, L. 2011. [Work and Family: Latin American and the Caribbean Women in Search of a New Balance](#). World Bank, Washington, DC.

ECLAC. 2008. [Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). ECLAC, Santiago.

International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2000. [An IFAD Approach to Gender Mainstreaming. The Experience of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division](#). IFAD, Rome.

Inter-American Commission of Women. 2001. [Incorporating the Gender Perspective in Regional Labor Policies. Progress and Proposals](#). Inter-American Commission of Women, Washington, DC.

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific. 2009. [Equity or Equality for Women? Understanding CEDAW's Equality Principles](#). IWRAP, Kuala Lumpur.

Ñopo, H. 2011. [New Centuries, Old Disparities. Gender and Ethnic Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.



Organization of American States. 2009. [The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas](#). OAS, Washington, DC.

Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women. 2010. [Access to Maternal Health Services from a Human Rights Perspective](#). Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC.

Restrepo-Saldrriaga, E. 2010. [Advancing Sexual Health Through Human Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). International Council on Human Rights Policy, Geneva.

## LEARN MORE FROM THE ELLA BRIEFS

[Promoting Gender Equity in Politics Through Affirmative Action Measures: Latin American Gender Quotas](#)

Since 1991, fourteen Latin American countries have implemented gender quotas. These have enabled the region to establish one of the highest levels of women’s representation in political decision-making structures around the world.

[Latin American Advances in Incorporating a Gender Approach in National Court Rulings](#)

How is adopting a gender approach enabling national courts in Colombia and Mexico to drive forward important changes in legislation and practice to tackle root causes of sexual discrimination and inequality?

[Advancing Gender Equality Through the Budget: Latin American Experiences with Gender-Responsive Budgeting](#)

Latin America is leading the way in gender-responsive budgeting and is producing some insightful lessons for other regions of the world.

[Observatory of Maternal Mortality in Mexico: A Civil Society-Led Initiative](#)

Within just 3 years of its creation, the Observatory of Maternal Mortality in Mexico is already making some important contributions to reducing maternal mortality.

### CONTACT [FUNDAR](#)

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