



SPOTLIGHT ON GENDER EQUALITY PUBLICATIONS



Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue in Latin America where it is fundamental to ensuring the effective realisation of rights and to empowering women's development in the public and private spheres. The publications presented in this Spotlight provide an overview of some of the key issues related to gender equality in the region, including sexual and reproductive health, gender mainstreaming in the labour market and institutional mechanisms for promoting women's empowerment.

OVERVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA

► [Millennium Development Goals. 2006 Report: A Look at Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

International and regional agencies have reported the progress made by most Latin American countries towards meeting Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals aimed at improving gender equality and empowering women. However, as this report demonstrates, Latin America continues to face challenges in certain areas such as building gender parity in access to decision-making, acknowledging unwaged work, eliminating violence against women and safeguarding reproductive rights. These areas required immediate attention from governments across the region. The report also highlights the importance of creating reliable government databases on equality and empowerment which capture and analyse local experiences and other available evidence. In particular, gender statistics provide an effective tool for monitoring the impact of existing public policies and can also reveal the need for new approaches.

Full citation: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2006. *Millennium Development Goals. 2006 Report: A Look at Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*. ECLAC, Santiago.

► [What Kind of State? What Kind of Equality?](#)

This report was produced by the [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (ECLAC) and presented at the Eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in 2010 in Brasilia, Brazil. It provides an interesting analysis of the role of the state as a key actor in ensuring equality between men and women in different areas, with a particular focus on economic issues and the labour market. ECLAC argues that improving equality requires firm commitment from governments to ensure the full participation of women in decision-making and to support women's financial and physical empowerment. This requires taking measures to improve women's access to fairly paid work, assets and financial services, as well as improving childcare services and social protection measures, among others. To achieve this,



Latin American governments must design a new generation of public policies inspired by principles of shared responsibility and redistribution. Finally, the publication provides a range of data on common trends regarding gender equality in the region.

Full citation: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2010. *What Kind of State? What Kind of Equality?* ECLAC, Santiago.

► [Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, this report provides an analysis of the structural patterns of inequality between women and men in the region. The study provides evidence of successful measures for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the private and public spheres. These policies have been key to overcoming serious obstacles regarding the division of work in labour markets. At the same time, these policies have fostered new social relationships between men and women based on shared responsibilities relating to employment, the household and childcare. Although statistics show significant improvements in women's participation in the labour market and emerging female leaders in politics, women's role and involvement in decision-making processes and their contribution to the economy are still limited. Addressing these issues will strengthen democratic regimes and improve women's empowerment and independence across the region.

Full citation: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2008. *Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean*. ECLAC, Santiago.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

► [Access to Information on Reproductive Health from a Human Rights Perspective](#)

According to jurisprudence and legal rulings made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, states are mandated to guarantee the right to access information on reproductive health by eliminating social and cultural barriers that prevent women from fully exercising this right. In this report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights confirms that the right to access information on reproductive health has been successfully upheld in the Latin America region where it has been a key mechanism for building citizenship and strengthening democracy. The Commission also affirms that access to information is essential for guaranteeing gender equality because it helps women to make free and informed choices relating their private lives, family planning, treatment options and sexual education.

Full citation: 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.

► [Access to Maternal Health Services from a Human Rights Perspective](#)

This report developed by the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights affirms that in spite of advances made in the Latin America region towards ensuring reproductive rights, improving maternal mortality still remains a key challenge to gender equality. In reviewing any government's commitment to gender equality and women rights, it is therefore necessary to assess access to maternal health services and the status of reproductive rights. The report proposes some general recommendations for legal and policy measures to guarantee the right for all women to access maternal health services without discrimination, including special services related to pregnancy and the post-natal period.

Full citation: 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.



► [Advancing Sexual Health Through Human Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

The development of sexual and reproductive rights in Latin America over the past two decades has been due, in large part, to the commitment of governments to protecting and guaranteeing these rights with the aim of improving gender equality. Based on research conducted in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, and drawing on other important sources such as legal rulings made by the Inter-American System of Human Rights, this paper provides an analysis of progress towards the legal recognition of sexual and reproductive rights across the region. In particular, the report focuses on best practices in protecting, promoting and guaranteeing rights related to the following seven areas: equality and non-discrimination; criminalisation of sexuality and sexual activities; state regulation of marriage and family; violence; health services in relation to sex; information, education, and expression related to sex and sexuality; and sex work. The report concludes that whenever sexual and reproductive health standards are not met, this represents a violation of basic human rights.

Full citation: Restrepo-Saldarriaga, E. 2010. *Advancing Sexual Health Through Human Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean*. International Council on Human Rights Policy. Geneva.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE LABOUR MARKET

► [Advancing Gender Equality in the Context of Decent Work](#)

This report by the Inter-American Commission of Women argues that despite the increasing participation of women in the labour force, inadequate working conditions and a lack of social protection represent important obstacles to achieving gender equality in the Latin American region. In addition, women still dedicate more than 80% of their time to unremunerated activities which are characteristic of their traditional roles. Furthermore, an increasing number of women are participating in informal labour markets where they receive extremely low wages and are not provided with social support. In this context, Ministries of Labour and National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America have developed a regional commitment to formulate labour policies that ensure gender equality. At the core of these policies, the concept of decent work is crucial to eliminate inequalities and create opportunities for women in labour plans. This report presents some successful experiences towards achieving this commitment from across the region.

Full citation: Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and Organization of American States (OAS) 2011. *Advancing Gender Equality in the Context of Decent Work*. CIM, Washington, DC.

► [The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas](#)

In Latin America, women's participation in labour markets was not typically supported by measures to ensure equitable division of roles, fair distribution of wages or appropriate social security coverage. In this context, many Latin American countries have created special government units or offices in charge of implementing specific guidelines with a gender perspective and protecting women's rights within each public institution. This document provides a regional overview of progress made by Labour Ministries towards creating these special mechanisms to institutionalise gender perspectives and improve working conditions for women. Based on a review of information collected from 34 countries, this study shows that gender mainstreaming is an effective tool for developing gender equality programmes or plans and helps to build the capacity of public servants to adopt a different perspective in their daily work. The study also provides an in-depth analysis of the main features of the special gender units including operation, structure and functions, staffing and budget, main programmes and relevant actors involved in their work. Finally, successful experiences and best practices



are highlighted to show the importance of implementing a comprehensive strategy that protects, defends and guarantees women's right to work and to fair employment conditions.

Full citation: Organization of American States (OAS). 2009. *The Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas*. OAS, Washington, DC.

► [New Centuries, Old Disparities. Gender and Ethnic Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Gender inequality is a fundamental issue that has been affecting women's access to labour markets over the last two decades in the Latin America region. Despite women's increasing access to education and longer schooling periods, the author of this report argues that wage gaps based on gender and ethnic discrimination represent a significant obstacle to achieving equal access to wealth and income generation. The author also shows that gender, ethnicity and educational attainment are key determinants of employment position, sector and size of the organisation in which men and women may find work. Evidence analysed from eighteen countries in this paper will help decision-makers to reflect on the appropriateness of policies aiming to eradicate gender inequalities, especially in the case of indigenous women whose access to labour markets and higher education is still extremely limited.

Full citation: Ñopo, H. 2011. *New Centuries, Old Disparities. Gender and Ethnic Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.

► [Social Dialogue and Gender Equality in Uruguay](#)

By analysing a successful experience of bargaining between labour unions and the private sector, including, for the first time, gender equality issues, the main purpose of this document is to show that social dialogue is an effective mechanism for promoting fair and equal employment conditions for men and women in Uruguay. To do this, the document provides an overview of inequalities in the country's labour markets and the historical processes which led to the gradual inclusion of the gender perspective since 2005. It also describes the key role, structure and activities of the Tripartite Commission on Equal Opportunities and Treatment in Employment, an institutional mechanism created by public ministries, the private sector and labour unions which seeks to improve women's working conditions. The recognition of a male dominant vision in labour markets, the need to adopt policies to reduce wage gaps and include provisions related to family responsibilities are some of the main achievements of this social dialogue.

Full citation: Espino, A. and Pedetti, G. 2012. *Social Dialogue and Gender Equality in Uruguay*. International Labour Organization, Geneva.

► [Work and Family: Latin American and Caribbean Women in Search of a New Balance](#)

Over the last four decades, Latin American countries have made significant progress toward gender equality in terms of improving women's access to education and schooling, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights and increasing women's participation in the work force. The author of this report argues that these achievements can be explained by interactions between microeconomic and social factors that influence economic opportunities and affect women's decision-making power in the public sphere. These changes in traditional paradigms have enabled an increasing number of women to choose careers that were previously considered unacceptable according to social norms, and have also led to changes of roles in relation to family and household responsibilities.

The author argues that this social transformation has provoked new tensions for women in balancing work and family. In this context, it is important to revise the goals and expectations of gender policy and modify approaches from gender equality to gender 'consciousness' - meaning the recognition of differences and potentials of each person. Applied to the current situation of women in Latin America, this means that public policy must support the freedom of women to choose their own



identity without facing discrimination or disadvantage. In terms of legislation and public policy, this new perspective must be reflected in progressive measures that consider these new tensions and set out flexible options for working women.

Full citation: Chioda, L. 2011. *Work and Family: Latin American and Caribbean Women in Search of a New Balance*. World Bank, Washington DC.

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

► [National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Region](#)

This document provides a complete overview of the development of national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment in Latin America. During the last four Regional Conferences on Women, Latin American countries have shown a firm commitment to pushing forward a regional agenda to meet the challenges of gender inequality and women's rights. Processes of democratisation that took place across the region over the past decade have provided the required framework for setting up special national mechanisms for the advancement of women. However, a lack of political will and economic support has limited the ability of these mechanisms to overcome social and cultural barriers. In response, new secondary mechanisms are now being created to help drive forward the institutionalisation of gender perspectives and women's empowerment as key pillars of sustainable development and human rights.

Full citation: Fernós, M. D. 2010. *National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Region*. Division of Gender Affairs, ECLAC, Santiago.

► [User Manual for the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

This is a key document for learning more about the impacts of gender policies adopted in the Latin America region by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. This body was created as a mechanism for monitoring public policy and analyses empirical evidence based on publicly available information relating to gender equality issues. The manual provides analytical tools for understanding the conceptual framework from which gender is being studied and also provides a description of the history of the Observatory, its objectives and main achievements in promoting gender equality and fostering a research agenda. Finally, the manual provides access to some interesting indicators and evidence of women's empowerment relating to three key areas: physical autonomy and reproductive and sexual rights; decision-making and political participation; and economic independence.

Full citation: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. 2010. *User Manual for the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean*. ECLAC, Santiago.

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To learn more about these and other publications related to gender equality in Latin America, contact the author, Cecilia Toledo, ELLA Project Researcher, and an expert in human rights and gender studies, at cecilia@fundar.org.mx.

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