

15. Gender Equality

→ MANDATE

While there is an entire section devoted to Gender Equality in the Quebec City Plan of Action, there are in fact a total of 26 mandates on gender and women to be found in nine different areas of the Summit commitments. This is a clear indication of the importance the leaders gave to integrating a gender perspective into the Summit mandates.

The Quebec City Plan of Action calls for full participation of women in the development of our societies, and the elimination of inequalities. It also endorses the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP) as a new and comprehensive tool to integrate the gender perspective both within the inter-American system and in the member countries. It also supports the promotion of women's full and equal participation in political life in their countries, and in decision-making at all levels, as well as reinforces the role of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) as technical advisor to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG). Furthermore, it promotes the use of information and communication technologies to address inequality and calls for the strengthening of data and statistical information disaggregated by sex.

In fulfillment of the mandates of the Inter-American Program (IAP), the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) developed recommendations on gender mainstreaming and presented them at 3 ministerials. To date, working with civil society experts and other international organizations, the CIM has presented recommendations to the Ministerial Meetings of Labor (2001), Justice (2002) and Education (2003). CIM established a process, known as SEPIA, to present and follow-up on these recommendations.

In the area of Labor, CIM, worked in partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Department of Labor of the United States, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), and the OAS Unit for Social Development and Education (USDE). Recommendations were considered by the Ministers at the Twelfth Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (CIMT 2001). Subsequently, the CIM convened a meeting of experts with representatives of



Recommendations on gender mainstreaming were presented to the Ministers of Education at their Ministerial meeting in August 2003.



governments, civil society, and specialized agencies, to examine the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the Ministerial meeting and to make recommendations for implementation of the gender-mainstreaming component. The recommendations from this meeting were forwarded to the Ministers of Labor, and all other participants in the meeting, and were also presented to the ILO Meeting of the Ministers of Labor of the Caribbean at the invitation of CARICOM. To follow up, the CIM is participating in the working group meetings established by the Ministerial and has presented a paper on best-practices in gender and labor.

A similar process was used to present recommendations on gender mainstreaming to the IV Meeting of Ministers of Justice or Attorneys General of the Americas (REMJA IV 2002). The CIM worked on the initial recommendations with ILANUD, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, the American University Law School, the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), the International Association of Women Judges, and the Inter-American Human Rights Institute (IIDH).

The follow up meeting took place in July 2002, in Washington D.C.

The ensuing recommendations and lines of action were forwarded to the Ministers of Justice, CIM delegates, and all other participants in the meeting. The CIM has asked to be included as technical advisor on gender issues in the activities of the Technical Secretariat of the Juridical Cooperation Mechanism for the follow up process to the Justice Ministerial.

Finally, recommendations on gender mainstreaming were presented to the Ministers of Education at their Ministerial meeting in August 2003. The first meeting on Gender and Education to follow-up on the Inter-American Program (SEPIA III) was held December 9-10, 2003, in Washington D.C. Recommendations from each of these ministerials on incorporating gender issues will be tracked for implementation progress by the CIM.

Other Ministerial Declarations that have incorporated a gender perspective include:

- The 2001 *Declaration of La Paz on Decentralization and on Strengthening Regional and Municipal Administrations and Par-*

ticipation of Civil Society incorporates a gender perspective for strengthening decentralization, regional and municipal administrations, citizens' participation, and civil society

- The 2002 *Declaration of the V Conference of Defence Ministers* in the Americas—in keeping with the spirit of the Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Americas—advances the incorporation of women into the armed forces and security forces in the Americas, thereby allowing a growing degree of equal opportunities
- The 2002 *Declaration of Cartagena de Indias on Culture* refers to “the promotion of gender equality to achieve full participation of all persons in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our countries”
- The 2003 *Special Conference on Security*.

Within the OAS, serious progress has been made in incorporating a gender perspective into the institutional life of the organization. In June 2001, the General Secretariat signed a contract with the Government of Canada to provide training for OAS professional staff to mainstream gender in all aspects of OAS programs and policies. Eight courses in English and Spanish on gender mainstreaming were held for OAS staff at its headquarters, and for staff away from headquarters. Around 240 officials—whose work is connected with project design, execution or evaluation—received training. The CIM is actively involved in the continuation of the program and is responsible for its follow-up. A gender analysis module will be developed for the OAS Orientation Course for new staff members, and a follow-up plan will be presented to the Secretary General.

Summit mandates call for the promotion of women's full and equal participation in political life in their countries and in decision-making at all levels. This commitment is reflected in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted in 2001, which declares that States shall promote the full and equal participation of women in the political structures of their countries as a fundamental ele-

ment in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture. This is starting to take effect. As of October 2003, political leadership in the Hemisphere includes one female President (Panama), two Vice-Presidents (Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic), one Prime Minister (Peru), and 31 out of the 34 member States have at least one female Minister in their government. Women are reaching higher positions of responsibility in government, but they are still under-represented. According to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) progress on this issue has been slow and uneven. However the countries that have made the most progress are those with affirmative-action legislation establishing quotas and other mechanisms to promote equity.

Despite recent changes, in most countries women are almost exclusively responsible for reproductive and care giving tasks within the home. According to ECLAC, this cultural mandate overburdens women with work that is not socially recognized, and leaves them little or no time for training and recreation, thus limiting their opportunities to enter the labour force, increase income, or participate in social and political activity. Unfortunately, when women exercise their rights and citizenship, it often heightens their vulnerability and insecurity, which is epitomized by the phenomenon of violence against women.

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Two important mandates on gender equality are strengthening systems for collecting and processing statistical data disaggregated by sex, and adopting the use of gender indicators. For example, when ECLAC conducts per capita income surveys, the data tends to show a situation of equality within the household that obscures the fact that the majority of women have less income than men. A gender analysis reveals that this indicator is based on the assumption that income is distributed equitably among the

members of the household and that it does not consider at least three types of inequality within the household: the fact that women have less bargaining power, less free time, and less mobility. The results are essential for public policy planning by governments. (ECLAC, Social Panorama 2003)

In the response to the growing demand for technical assistance from countries in the region, ECLAC proposed to define a basic set of gender indicators, and to harmonize the methodology for technical assistance for gender indicators used by the different organizations within the United Nations and Inter-American systems. An Inter-Agency meeting on Gender Statistics was organized in Santiago, Chile on October 7-10, 2002, to review the preliminary version of the *Technical Assistance Guide for the Pro-*

duction of and the Use of Gender Indicators, prepared by ECLAC for integrating the lessons learned and the knowledge acquired by the different organizations in building indicators on the issues of the population, family and households, education, health, labour and economics, poverty, political participation and violence against women. (ECLAC, Report of the Joint Summit Working Group)

SUCCESS STORIES

The countries of the region have made some progress in addressing their Summit mandates. In 2003, Mexico conducted an extensive review of its national legislation with a view to promoting equality of rights among the sexes. Costa Rica implemented an innovative reform in the area of family law: the Law of Responsible Paternity. The law guarantees the fundamental right for all children to know their parents, and that they provide spiritual, emotional, and material support to their children. According to the

law, the mother has a right to register the father's name, most notably in cases of births out of wedlock. The named father may contest the claim, but must submit to a DNA test in order to determine paternity. In Costa Rica, of the total number of registered births in 2001, 29.3% of them had no declared father. 30.8% of mothers registered the father's name under the Law of Responsible Paternity. In the first year of its enactment, the law resulted in 91.8% of the fathers named in the cases voluntarily accepting their paternity, and in only 8.2% of cases did the fathers submit to the DNA test. The positive social impacts of this law on the lives of women—including increased emotional and financial support to families—are a concrete example of a country's commitment to the Summit mandates.

CHALLENGES

Many initiatives to implement the Quebec City mandates are under way at the national level. However information regarding such successes is not being transmitted at

the regional and hemispheric level in a systematic way. This disconnect can be addressed through more frequent inter-departmental and inter-agency consultation and coordination at the national level in order to ensure that success in implementing Summit mandates on gender are being recognized.

According to the World Bank, gender inequalities have proven to be an obstacle to the socioeconomic development of countries in the region. Some of the main gender problems that challenge the region's ability to fully progress, and that tend to hit the poor the hardest are: the unrealized potential of women's full integration in the economy, the social and economic cost of violence against women, and the loss of human capital from maternal mortality. This is why improving policies and programs aimed at redressing gender inequalities and changing gender roles will benefit women, their families, and Latin America and Caribbean societies as a whole. (World Bank, Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean)

RATIO OF FEMALE TO MALE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Source: LAC Gender Unit Database, World Bank

