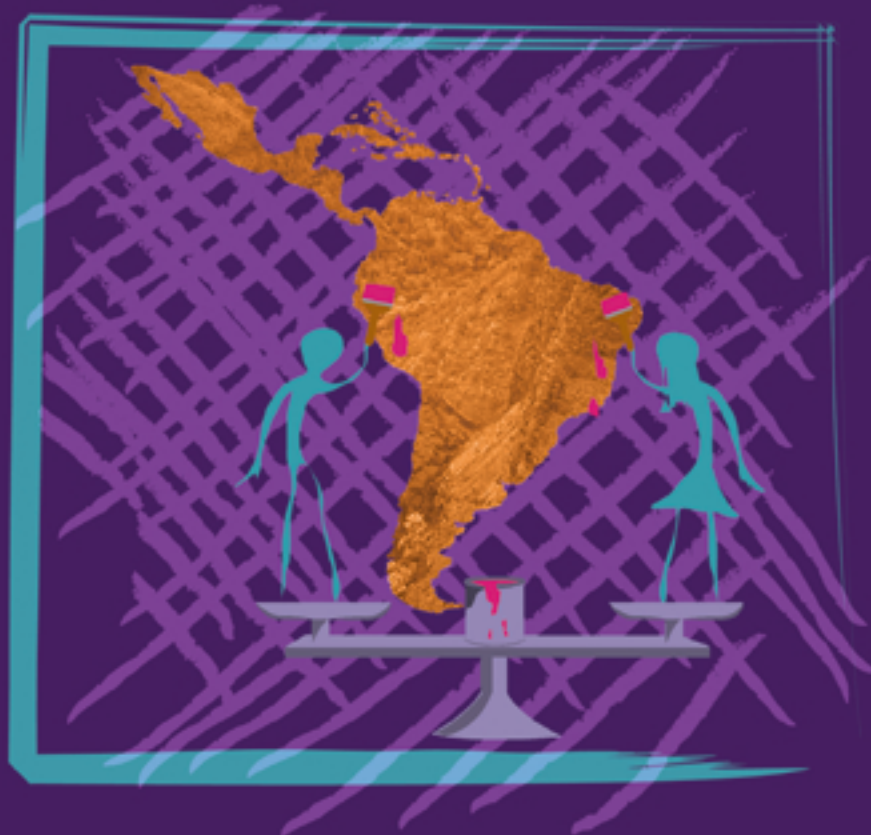


Women's contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean

X SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

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¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, St. Maarten, Suriname, Turks and Caicos Islands and Uruguay.

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FOREWORD

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has been monitoring progress of gender-sensitive public policies for more than a decade. Faithful to its mandate, ECLAC has proposed a rights-based development framework in order to produce positive synergies between economic growth and social equity in a context of modernization of production processes.

In the last few years, the Commission has drawn attention to the need to upgrade social protection and ensure universal coverage, the fundamental aim being to establish a fiscal and social covenant which will allow access to social protection mechanisms underpinned by a solidarity-based system of financing.

Against this background, *Women's contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean* brings to the fore two key issues in the structural pattern of inequality between women and men: first, political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels, and, second, women's contribution to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work.

At the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, as an indication of the progress achieved, the issue of parity will be analysed as an achievable democratic objective. Although there is evidence in all countries of the region of the considerable role played by women throughout political history and, above all, in the past twenty years, the statistics relating to female representation in parliament and in the executive point to the challenge that the political elites of the region must address in order to improve gender balance. The emergence of female leaders within the region, the increasingly independent electoral behaviour of women and the support received by women candidates from female voters are part of the new democratic landscape. Parity is one of the symbols of the new democracies and is presented as an ethical resource for strengthening the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

Section one of this document shows conclusively that women, while accounting for half of the population, have very low rates of representation in most parliaments. Similar discrepancies are visible in the other powers of the State and at decision-making levels as a whole. While the right to vote was won over a period of three decades, between the 1920s and the 1960s, it took almost fifty years to establish women's right to be actually elected and only in the last few years of the twentieth century was there any significant increase in the number of women elected to public office, mainly thanks to affirmative action, including quota laws, which fortunately have been gaining ground. All the countries that have adopted quota laws have had positive results, as proven by the fact that in some of them the proportion of women elected to public office has increased to around 40%. However, different studies show that, in addition to electoral system reforms, a number of aspects of the political culture which cause discriminatory biases need to be changed. These include inequitable access to financing, the unequal influence of social networks and unfair use of time, which, as shown in the second section of this study, constrains women to focus on reproductive tasks.

In the region, women's labour income is equivalent to 70% that of men. Despite this disadvantage, women's contribution is fundamental for alleviating poverty, whether they earn a monetary income or contribute to the home through unremunerated labour; indeed, this contribution becomes a reproductive tax, permitting savings on health costs, childcare and care for older persons in the family, to cite just the most obvious examples. As this study demonstrates, this contribution by women to well-being becomes the source of the disadvantages they suffer when they seek to join the labour force in an effort to gain economic independence. The situation is even more serious in the case of women with

partners and small children to take care of who are forced to put off further training and access to the labour market and who, as a result, have to do without the social protection that is part and parcel of this labour market.

The results obtained in five countries of the region demonstrate that men spend almost the same number of hours on unpaid housework, whether or not there is a “homemaker”. On the other hand, for the women of these same households, there is an important difference: the fact that another person carries out domestic chores reduces substantially the time that they spend on such chores. All women, irrespective of their employment status, devote a significant amount of time to caregiving, which proves how inappropriate it is to describe a homemaker as “non-working”.

The difficulty experienced by women in finding a suitable position in the labour market extends to their life as citizens and the world of politics in which, as already mentioned, notwithstanding some advances in the past decade, they have achieved a minority representation in parliament, in the executive branch and in other powers of the State.

This document highlights the possibilities of generating virtuous circles that favour universal access to social protection, provided that policies are implemented to promote equality in the labour market, the family and politics. A number of countries have made commendable efforts in this direction.

According to available information, only measures geared explicitly to achieving equality in the public and private spheres will be successful in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and particularly, goal 3, which is to promote gender equality and empower women.

Women’s contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean sets out active policies for overcoming the obstacles to equitable access to the labour market, especially those arising from the sexual division of labour which has become established through usage and the frequent discriminatory practices observed on the labour market. The abundant quantitative evidence collected and analysed points conclusively to the need for policies that foster shared responsibility between men and women in caring for members of the household, especially children, as well as for more comprehensive public action (by the State and the business sector) to facilitate the work of caring for the sick, older persons and the disabled.

Lastly, it should be noted that this document is part of a long ECLAC tradition which has sought to promote genuine gender equality within the framework of its efforts to reduce inequity in the different spheres of economic, social and political life in our region.

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INTRODUCTION

The women of Latin America and the Caribbean are at the centre of one of the greatest cultural shifts in history. In terms of the freedoms that have been won, it may safely be stated today that almost no woman would want to live the life her grandmother did. Yet equality has advanced more slowly than it might have done and, despite the drastic and probably irreversible changes that have occurred in the family, working life and politics, the malaise of women in the region is evidence of the gap between their contribution to society and the recognition they receive for it. Although women now play increasingly important roles in decision-making and are a crucial force in the labour market, they are still over-represented among the poor and under-represented in politics. The key to this lag and to women's treatment as a vulnerable minority in public policies lies, to a great extent, in the impossibility of breaking away from the cultural imperative of domestic work and the absence of men from care activities. Almost half of all women over the age of 15 have no income of their own, the number of one-parent households headed by women has increased and only a minority of men are occupied in unpaid work. Although it is thanks to women's work that the region's poverty index has decreased by almost 10 percentage points, women continue to earn less than men for equivalent work. They have secured the right to vote and to stand for election, but affirmative action, such as the adoption of quota laws, has been necessary to increase female occupancy of representative positions to 40% in some countries, while the great majority of women remain outside the sphere of decision-making.

This document will examine the two themes of the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, women's contribution to the economy and social protection—especially as it relates to unpaid labour—and political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels, in the light of two key concepts: discrimination, as defined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the sexual division of labour.

The Convention has acquired considerable importance in the region, since it has been ratified by all the countries and, in some, such as Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Brazil, it forms part of the Constitution, together with other human rights instruments. Other countries, such as Costa Rica and Ecuador, incorporate several of the Convention's principles into the text of their Constitution or use its definition of discrimination against women in legislation, as in Costa Rica's law 7142 of 1990 on promotion of the social equity of women. Hence, this law establishes that "discrimination against women" shall denote "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field". A similar definition is contained in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's 1990 law on equal opportunities for women.

This definition of discrimination is based on the concept of universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated human rights. "The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms."²

² Paragraph 5 of the Vienna Declaration, adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

The concept of sexual division of labour contributes to a clearer analysis of social roles clearly differentiated by sex. This division is considered to be a social construction —and hence changeable— which determines the main roles individuals must play in society: women supposedly in charge of social reproduction and men of production work.³ Above all, however, it sets up hierarchical power relations that force the majority of women to carry out work that has no visibility or social recognition, and this cultural matrix is reproduced in the public sphere where women occupy the most precarious and worst-paid jobs. The vicious cycle of inequality generated by the socially imposed obligation to perform domestic work, particularly care activities, largely explains women's absence from politics and decision-making in general.

Throughout this document, two complementary concepts will be used that serve to spotlight some key aspects of inequality: care work and parity. These two ideas are useful in understanding the challenges and tensions standing in the way of women's progress and in steering a course towards the policies proposed at the end of the document. The individual chapters delve more deeply into both concepts and demonstrate their analytical value. Here, however, it should be noted that parity is a useful concept for analysis because it is not simply a matter of a larger quota of posts being reserved for women, but rather a question of the broadest possible expression of universality. Achieving parity is thus part of a broader process that includes the use of quotas and other tools. Above all, however, it requires the recognition of women as citizens with full rights. More than being a quantitative concept, parity manifests the redistribution of power in three specific spheres: the labour market, decision-making and family life. The debate on parity makes it clear that citizenship is not neutral inasmuch as it is built on male models and access to representation occurs in a sexed environment characterized by the exclusion —not accidental, but structural— of women.

The term “unpaid care work” will be limited in this document to unpaid activities of caring for people —sick and healthy alike— to whom the caregiver is bound by family ties and a sense of moral obligation; it includes both direct personal care and the performance of indirect services that contribute to well-being and the development of human capacities. It is thus equivalent to domestic work performed without pay for the benefit of family members. Hence, it excludes unpaid work in family businesses and voluntary work in the community. There is no parallel between this definition and the one used in the system of national accounts.

From the point of view of women's autonomy, care work and looking after others entails a large degree of sacrifice and may even represent a “trap”, personally and politically speaking. Over the years it has been shown that “care” does not have to be equated with self-sacrifice, however. Gilligan (1982) distinguishes between the feminist ethic of autonomy and the female ethic of self-sacrifice, noting that they should not form a basis for the creation of two separate spheres, i.e., the public world of personal autonomy and the private world in which women function.

In this debate, gender is an essential category of analysis for an understanding of inequality in fields that have been considered neutral, particularly as regards philosophy, political science and the ideas that inspire democratic principles and governance. In common with many of the concepts set out here, gender has attracted critical analysis and thought, especially in the light of the countries' experience with the implementation of gender policies. One of the most interesting reflections is that, beyond the triumph of the gender perspective as a compulsory requirement for public policies, its true success lies in the fact that understanding it implies a conceptual leap: recognizing that male and female behaviours depend

³ See Benería (1984) and De Barbieri (1996).

essentially not on biological facts but, to a great extent, on social constructs. Thus, the notion of the gender perspective leads back to the core of the feminist discourse (Lamas, 2006a).

According to Baratta (2000), the lowest common denominator that has followed in the wake of feminist epistemology is the dismantling of the androcentric model of science, which took the male as the standard. Feminism has criticized the prejudices hidden behind these concepts and has introduced a new model that includes the necessary consideration of the public and the private, of productive and reproductive life and of how they interrelate. Nevertheless, the notion persists of politics as a male domain, and women's capacity to exercise power and lead nations is still mistrusted. It is therefore necessary to recognize that the problems are not simply technical, but fundamentally political and social, and hence call for new "covenants" (Pichio, 1999). The analysis of the two subjects explored in this document thus represents one more attempt to remedy the lack of attention to the inequity suffered by women in the region.

I. TOWARDS A HORIZON OF PARITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

In the last few years there has been a qualitative change in women's involvement in decision-making. Female candidates are being put forward in many countries and in some, such as Chile and Jamaica, they have been elected to the highest echelons of public office. There are more women in parliaments and at the helm of non-traditional ministries such as those of economic affairs, defence and the interior. Furthermore, more women are being invited to stand for election and increasing numbers of candidates are proposing pro-gender-equality agendas. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that progress has been slow and difficult. The sustainability of the changes that have been made depends on affirmative action applied to elected and mandated posts and—as noted by the ministers and women's authorities during the virtual forum held in January 2007 in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean—the strongest resistance is coming from political parties. This section discusses the concept of parity as a desirable horizon for strengthening democracy. It is suggested that gender equality in all spheres, particularly politics, must go hand in hand with the changes in the family and the labour market addressed in part II. Parity is a democratic necessity that calls for the commitment of all and that forms part of the much-needed renovation of political systems and the political parties which are their instruments.

Part II takes a thoroughgoing look at the role performed by women in unpaid care work. This sort of work falls mainly upon the shoulders of women, thus preventing them from acceding to better positions in the labour market and affecting their participation in decision-making. Although this section concentrates on the entry of women into the public world of politics, it must be recalled that the deficits identified in the course of this discussion tie in with the obligatory performance of domestic work and the lack of policies on shared responsibilities in family life.

A. WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

“All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated”.

*Paragraph 5 of the Vienna Declaration adopted
at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993*

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women underscores the fundamental role that the State is called upon to play in promoting true equality, the rights-based approach that must inspire public policy and the importance of cultural change in consolidating equality between women and men at all levels. The States parties are responsible for ensuring the enjoyment of rights on an equal footing and without any form of discrimination. Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention call upon the States parties to adopt any measures necessary, including prohibiting sex-based discrimination, to put an end to discriminatory acts that prevent the full enjoyment of rights, in both public and private sectors (United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 28 of 29 March 2000). The Latin American and Caribbean region was the first in which all States unanimously signed and ratified the

Convention, but the process has been slower with respect to the Optional Protocol.⁴ By early 2007, it had been signed by only 20 countries and ratified by 17.⁵

The Convention is viewed as the international charter for women's rights and gives legal expression to the quest for full equality by reformulating the concept of discrimination in an innovative way. The Convention defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women...of [their] human rights" (article 1). This notion is complemented by the concept of genuine equality, as distinct from the formal equality which has traditionally been invoked by those claiming that special measures to combat gender discrimination are irrelevant or unnecessary.

Thus, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it may be assumed that although most of the countries' constitutions proclaim the equality of men and women and many of them prohibit sex-based discrimination, it is necessary to change laws whose letter is egalitarian but whose effects, in practice, are not (Bareiro, 2006). It is recognized that laws can be discriminatory if they contain provisions that give rise to social, economic or political inequalities or do not contain provisions to avoid them. In this regard, it is important to reform the State to strengthen its role as a guarantor of rights and to build up a global institutional structure to empower multilateralism in order to ensure universal respect for human rights.

The Convention's adoption by Latin American and Caribbean States implies an acceptance of the fact that the traditional mechanisms and procedures for guaranteeing human rights fall short of ensuring genuine equality between women and men. The Convention now forms part of an international human rights protection system: more frequent and efficient interaction among all the relevant instruments should endow the countries with the tools they need to enforce justice in a timely and effective manner.

Over the years, the concepts enshrined in the Convention have inspired constitutional and legislative changes and have served as examples to hasten progress in the recognition of the rights of other groups in society, such as indigenous populations or those discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. The implications of the Convention thus transcend the specific issue of gender equality and represent a milestone in the redefinition of the concept of discrimination in a way that benefits many different groups. By the same token, the Convention has incorporated the experiences of other United Nations human rights committees.

This framework has helped to secure approval for constitutional and legislative amendments in many countries. It has also been a useful point of reference for the introduction of new legislation and has provided arguments to oppose direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, in politics and in the family. Furthermore, it has served to promote government accountability and thereby to institutionalize a practice of transparency in public management that allows different actors, including civil society organizations, to prepare alternative reports to the official ones.

⁴ The Optional Protocol to the Convention, which entered into force on 22 December 2000, provides a procedure for individual complaints, whereby individuals or groups may bring complaints before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding violations of the rights recognized by the Convention, subject to compliance with a series of requirements (articles 1 through 7).

⁵ Half (17) of the region's 33 countries have ratified the Optional Protocol: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Uruguay. Chile, Cuba and El Salvador signed the Optional Protocol between 1999 and 2001 but have yet to ratify it. The other 15 countries of the region have neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol.

The greatest difficulties, however, have arisen with the practical application of this standard. Unlike other international instruments, the Convention was formulated without any specific enforcement mechanism. The need for a complaints system was discussed early on, but some countries argued that discrimination against women did not warrant such a mechanism because it was not considered to be so serious a violation of human rights at the time.

Thus began a process of discussion which culminated in a new landmark, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted in October 1999 and opened for signature on 10 December 2000. Most countries have opted to ratify the Optional Protocol. As far back as 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action called upon States to consider accepting all the available optional communication procedures (paragraph 90). It also proposed that other methods should be examined, such as a system of indicators to measure progress in the materialization of the rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and urged the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to quickly examine the possibility of introducing the right of petition through the preparation of an optional protocol to the Convention.

The Convention provides sufficient resources to build the concepts of discrimination and genuine equality into the structural fabric of the labour, penal and civil reforms now taking shape in the region and thus to contribute to the effort to make this new millennium a fairer and more equitable one. The next step is to work for the proper implementation of these standards, which entails venturing into the domain of judicial reform. This is one of the greatest challenges for the region: the need to harmonize the framework of human rights that the existing institutional reforms have developed so amply over the past decade. The judicial reforms under way in many countries represent an opportunity to address some of the problems that have arisen in connection with the application of the Convention, such as a lack of familiarity with it on the part of lawyers, judges and the general public and the failure to disseminate information about representative cases in which the Convention has been used to serve the cause of justice. Accordingly, the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as other international treaties in force, need to be integrated into professional training programmes, the instruction provided in law schools and public information schemes in order to change not only legal standards and institutions but also the culture and day-to-day practices as well. National mechanisms for the enforcement of rules must therefore be improved and authorities' awareness increased in order to build the Convention and the Optional Protocol into the overall effort to strengthen human rights legislation.

B. THE CONTEXT OF GENDER EQUALITY

The struggle for equality between women and men is played out in a world context that is being shaped by complex processes, including a very sharp reduction in poverty in some countries, such as China and India, which contrasts with rising poverty in dozens of others. This is evidence that, in many parts of the world, the benefits of economic growth are not being fairly distributed. Threats to peace and security include not just international war and conflict but civil disturbances, organized crime, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They include, too, poverty, deadly infectious diseases and environmental degradation, since these phenomena can have equally catastrophic consequences. This has led to an effort to strengthen international institutions in order to address the challenges on the global agenda: migration, science and technology, natural disasters, development assistance, HIV/AIDS, climate change and environmental sustainability, trade, national debt, education and health, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Progress in all of these areas could be furthered by redoubled efforts to build up synergies

among development, security and human rights. In this process, gender equality is both a means and an end, calling for the empowerment of women and a new ethic of shared responsibility in public and private life (United Nations, 2005c).

For some 20 years now, a consensus has existed in Latin America and the Caribbean that democracy is the best form of government. The generalized establishment of democratic regimes in the region has placed societies in a complex situation, in which institutional fragility is juxtaposed with a citizenry that is ever more aware of its rights. Although there is a consensus among the forces of democracy regarding the importance of holding regular competitive elections to select those who will govern and of rejecting the various forms of authoritarianism, there is also agreement on the urgent need to improve the quality of democracy by overcoming the great social inequalities that exist and generating more effective mechanisms of citizen participation to enable the population to intervene in public affairs (ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2004).

The political, economic, social and cultural arenas have been transformed over the past two decades in step with processes of democratic transition, economic restructuring in the context of globalization and reform aimed at strengthening the market as the main engine of growth. Organized groups of women in civil society have been among the leading actors in this democratic recovery, and their mobilization has been instrumental in starting processes of change. Women have been active in the campaign for human rights, including civil and political rights. In order to recover the historical memory of women's contribution to democracy, a long-term view is needed to chronicle their involvement in all the relevant historic events. This document appeals to that memory and argues that, despite their contributions, women have yet to achieve a significant presence in decision-making. The challenge of democracy lies not only in promoting participation by women, but also in recognizing them and incorporating them into institutions where decisions are made.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the generalized consolidation of democratic systems, many institutions are the object of growing distrust: parliaments and political parties are losing strength as new political actors and mass-media personalities emerge as intermediaries between society and the State and, in some cases, as young men and women sharply criticize serious gender inequalities exacerbated by the unequal distribution of income, power and time use. This tension has translated into situations of institutional uncertainty, insecurity and political instability. The renewal of political systems and major institutions, such as political parties and the State, poses challenges which, in some cases, lead to constitutional changes, political covenants and other reforms of the democratic institutional structure.

Existing institutions have been overwhelmed by the dynamics that have emerged in society, in both the private and the public spheres, and changes are needed to adapt to the new circumstances. In this connection, concerns have arisen over the quality of democracy and the provision of opportunities for participation, apart from electoral processes, in which citizens can make their voices heard in a timely manner. The demand for greater transparency and accountability on the part of governments reflects a need that exists in general, but that is particularly pressing in terms of remedying the rights deficits experienced by women and girls.

C. DEMOCRACY OR “THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL”

Democracy is a difficult concept to define because it refers both to a political ideal and to a reality: that is, the imperfect democracy as it has developed historically. It is, however, a necessary concept for

normative purposes (Sartori, 2003). Democracy is, and cannot be delinked from, what democracy should be. Descriptive democracy refers to democracy as it actually exists, and prescriptive democracy to the ideal pursued by a society. Throughout history, democracy has invariably been associated with a political entity—a form of State and government—albeit within the framework of different, more or less liberal or radical schools of thought. A review of the literature attests to the breadth of the feminist discussion of the concepts of the individual, citizenship, politics and the State, as well as alignment with different stances on democracy. What is known as “liberal” feminism makes a priority of judicial changes, while more “radical” feminism maintains a debate on the deconstruction of the assumptions underlying the notion of democracy. In many countries, women have been involved in social movements which ask for a more participative democracy. This range shows that, although there is no single feminist definition of democracy, women and women’s movements are contributing to a broad debate on democracy.

Feminist movements have criticized the limitations of the concepts of democracy. As early as 1791, the French activist Olympia de Gouges wrote the “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen” and presented it before the French National Assembly, for which she was rewarded with the guillotine. In 1792, the British writer Mary Wollstonecraft published “A Vindication of the Rights of Women”, one of the most radical feminist manifestos ever written. Its inspiration was the idea that women do not exist solely for the pleasure of men, and it proposed that women should receive the same treatment as men in terms of education, political rights and labour and should be judged by the same moral standards.

Contemporary feminism has resumed the discussion and has criticized democracy for failing to devote sufficient attention to laws and institutions (Betty Friedan). More radically, it has called into question democracy’s omission of the private dimension. The slogan “the personal is political” has spread under the influence of Latin American and Caribbean social movements that have campaigned to change the status of women in legislation and within the State apparatus. Some theorists, including Carole Pateman, have gone even further by asserting that, in reality, there is no such thing as democratic theory because of the patriarchal biases of traditional doctrines; consequently, democratic practice does not exist, insofar as women have never achieved anything resembling egalitarian power in the family, civil society or the State. From this perspective, even countries considered to be democratic are seen as being in transition. They have had to naturalize gender relations and remove the problem of inequality from the sphere of politics (Valcárcel, 1997).

The democratic debate in Latin America and the Caribbean has been pursued in a number of different settings in the last few decades. One such arena has been the summits held under the aegis of the United Nations. At these summits, civil society organizations have contributed to the adoption of an agenda in which the struggle for democracy is tied in with efforts to combat poverty, eliminate violence and uphold reproductive rights. During the first world conferences on women, governments—in many cases in the hands of dictators—did not have mechanisms for women’s advancement, and the demands of civil society, sometimes made at great risk, were the main channel for the exercise of democracy.

A second, and enormously important, setting for the democratic debate is the struggle for human rights. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the women miners in Bolivia and innumerable associations of family members of the detained and “disappeared” came to represent the moral reserve of a society threatened by the loss of liberties. The third setting emerged with the return of democracy and the establishment of machineries for women’s advancement, which have become strategic elements that are often at the vanguard of efforts to secure constitutional reform or the adoption of quota laws, as well as other changes inspired by the Beijing Platform for Action.

Another sphere of democratic debate developed when the debt crisis hit the region in the 1980s. The countless survival strategies devised at that time by women —mainly from low-income sectors— led to the formation of new leadership roles. For a long time, the political system and, particularly, political parties shunned these movements, and this reaction triggered a mass exodus of women from those institutions.

By the start of the twenty-first century, women had become more closely involved with political parties within a democratic context. In many countries, female parliamentarians set up cross-party networks to promote legislative changes in favour of women, such as laws against violence and quota laws. Despite this, and although an increasing number of studies have scrutinized the political role of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, their contribution to the construction of democracy, especially during wartime and in the effort to combat dictatorships and authoritarianism, has not been sufficiently documented.

The debate on democracy, democratic governance and gender reveals the tensions and bridges between the usual definitions of democracy —as a political system made up of representative institutions— and the contributions that feminism makes by questioning dichotomies, redefining the boundary between the private and the public and extending the notion of democracy into the family. It also seeks to identify forums for dialogue with public policymakers to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender analysis.

Viewed from a gender perspective, one of the questions that arises is whether a democracy that is limited to the electoral process signifies an advance in the status of women. Similarly, it is important to consider the effects of poverty on equality and freedom of citizenship, the importance of sexual and reproductive rights, the impact of poverty-alleviation programmes on women, women's use of time and their capabilities and freedom to play a role in the spheres of democracy and governance. If women are to be effectively represented, they must be able to participate in institutional politics untrammelled by ingrained cultural stereotypes which associate female party members with responsibilities for caregiving functions.

D. STATE AND FAMILY: EQUALITY OF FORM AND REAL INEQUALITY

The first great dichotomy underlying the theories of the State is between the public and the private, which, according to Bobbio,⁶ spins off into another great dichotomy: that of equals and unequals.

The contemporary debate addresses the subject of the State or the political system indistinctly. What makes the two concepts interchangeable, according to Bobbio (1985), is the pursuit of power in its various forms. One of the main concerns of the women's movement has been the mounting debate regarding the State and the political system, extended into the sphere of the family, which —from other perspectives— was considered the domain of the non-political, with the public sphere thus exerting dominance over the private.

From the gender perspective, power does not reside solely in the public sphere, in the political system; it also exists in the private arena and the family. The concepts of gender and gender relations

⁶ Norberto Bobbio and Michelangelo Bovero (1985) use the term “dichotomy” to refer to distinctions that divide a universe into two jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive spheres which together make up a whole.

serve to disarticulate power relationships (Amorós, 2005) and to expose their lack of legitimacy from the point of view of gender equality.

The failure to identify social relations between men and women as political or power relationships forms part of the dichotomous construct that excludes the private sphere from power relations and accounts for the subordination of women in the public sphere (Scott, 1996). Conversely, the feminist movement criticizes gender systems as binary arrangements that place men and women, the male and the female, in opposition, but not necessarily on an equal footing. Politics is about power, and power—following this line of argument—is present in all relationships. The State has been one of the institutions most heavily criticized for producing and perpetuating gender discrimination. In formulating this criticism, the feminist movement has drawn on reflections about sexuality and the cultural construction of sexual difference.

Increasingly since the 1980s, concomitantly with redemocratization processes in the region, a notion that has been regaining credence is that the State can also help to change sociocultural patterns and create the conditions for true and effective equality and equal opportunities for women. In this argument, tension arises between criticism of androcentrism and demands for redistribution based on considerations of equality (Puleo, 2005). This is the tension described by Valcárcel (1997, p.101) between Weberian politics, as a managerial activity for solving macroproblems, and the influence of a tradition that seeks to transform power relations. The effort to influence State political reforms managed in a rather Weberian way, in which politics is defined more narrowly, while reconciling them with a vision of politics and power as things that must be dismantled, is a constant in the relationship between democratic governance and gender.

To address the matter of power relationships within the public and private spheres implies the analysis—and even a redefinition—of what a State may or may not legitimately do. The notion of sovereignty as referring to the ultimate power of command in a political society (Matteucci, 1991) ties in with the concept of State, since the State is sovereign insofar as it makes decisions within the territory in which it is established. Decisions are taken in accordance with the State's norms and institutions, but also in an environment in which a number of coexistent yet disarticulated types of society overlap, thus creating relationships of domination and hierarchies based on the different cultures and powers with which they interact (Zavaleta, 1990).

With the acceleration of globalization, societies are becoming more deeply intermixed in terms of economics, politics and culture, and new cross-boundary public and institutional problems are emerging to compound long-standing, unresolved difficulties. In many cases, the exercise of sovereignty, i.e., the State's capacity to decide (in this case in favour of women's demands) runs counter to efforts to improve governance, and this situation threatens the universal human rights principles to which women are appealing.

New means of regulating different spheres of social life—laws, standards and institutional practices—are debated, negotiated and decided upon not only nationally but also in the international community. Relationships of force, hierarchies and conflicts operate at the international level, but so do global consensuses on the rights of citizens that all States must respect.

The inclusion of gender equality, as well as the general issue of human rights, in public and institutional agendas has challenged the notions of sovereignty that are most closely associated with the national State framework. Lobbyists for the inclusion of gender equality on such agendas form networks of actors drawn from civil society, the political system and the State, who transcend national boundaries

to articulate their efforts in international forums, particularly those of the United Nations, as well as in local politics. Hence the importance of action taken at the regional and global levels. Efforts to achieve quality between women and men require political will, but they also run up against barriers within the global order which must be taken into account in order to achieve results at the national level.

E. EQUALITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The modern notion of equality dating from the eighteenth century originally referred to the rights and dignity of individuals, although often not everyone was considered apt to be a rights-bearing citizen. More recently, with the gradual expansion of citizenship and suffrage (especially for women), equality has come to be treated as a convention whereby the same value is assigned to the different components of a society which is diverse in terms of sex, social class, ethnic origin, culture, race, age and other considerations. Equality is an end, a principle and an objective of the democratic and social State where the rule of law prevails.

Two meanings of the term “equality” are often confused: the idea of similitude —two or more identical things or people— and the notion of justice. The term “equality” in the singular is useful as a declaration of principles, as a reference for protest, but when it becomes a signifier in gender policy proposals, the term should be used only in the plural: “equalities”.

In many countries, the notion of equality of opportunities masks two heterogeneous concepts. Citing Flew, Sartori (2003) states that equal access for all to everything, based on merit, is one thing, but that equal starting conditions that give all equal initial capabilities is a completely different matter.

This difference is especially relevant from the standpoint of policies for the provision of equal opportunities for women, since equality of access refers to the fact that all individuals should have equal legal standing and receive equal treatment. A policy of equal opportunities must also, however, consider men’s and women’s starting conditions, which are differentiated as a result of socialization and the history of male accumulation of power, as well as the maintenance of a sex-based division of labour and discriminatory sociocultural patterns. As the philosopher Amelia Valcárcel (1997) points out, democracy is not just equality, it is also freedom; most debate, however, has revolved around the former, which is precisely the idea of equality that underpins the feminist tradition.

Box I.1

“Feminism is a political philosophy of equality which, all principles being clear and distinct, simply argues as follows: if it is accepted that all human beings are equal in the quest for what are considered to be goods, why should half of the human race, the full collective of women, not have the same recognized rights to such goods as the entire human collective body?”

Source: Amélia Valcárcel, *La política de las mujeres*, Women’s Institute of Spain, Madrid, 1997.

Affirmative action policies or special temporary measures, as they are termed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, are intended to achieve true or effective equality by employing formulas of statutory inequality to eliminate the negative consequences of de facto differences.⁷

The Convention refers to this type of measure when it establishes, in article 3, that States parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. In addition, paragraph 1 of article 4 states that adoption by States parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the Convention. Rather, it should be construed as a means of emphasizing that temporary special measures are part of a strategy to be pursued by States parties that is necessary for the achievement of substantive equality of women with men in the enjoyment of their rights and freedoms.

In the Spanish Constitution, the reference to sex seeks to put an end to the inferior position historically attributed to women in the area of employment and working conditions. Thus, measures are constitutionally legitimate only if they aim to counteract a real initial inequality and systematically interpret the constitutional precept that prohibits discrimination based on sex in conjunction with other constitutional precepts, in particular article 9.2, which obliges public authorities to ensure that conditions of equality between women and men are “real and effective”.⁸ Hence the idea that instead of facilitating women’s access to the labour market by providing equal opportunities, compensatory measures are needed to offset the imbalance that developed at a time when the prevailing notion was that the man was the “head of the household” and that married women had to be freed from factory work (STC 19/89 of 31 January, f.5) (Torrente, 1999). In General Recommendation No. 25 on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women calls upon States parties to “analyse the context of women’s situation in all spheres of life, as well as in the specific, targeted area, when applying temporary special measures” (paragraph 27).

F. CITIZENSHIP

The debate on women’s citizenship was taken up at the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995. The resulting Beijing Platform for Action incorporates various initiatives of the women’s movement.

Like the ideas of democracy and the State, the idea of women’s citizenship connects up with discussions in the liberal tradition (Jelin, 1996), the most radical perspectives that different social groups have taken on rights (Bareiro, 1996a) and the extension of rights to encompass human rights, including reproductive rights. The discussion on citizenship is now part of the debate on “the right to have rights” (Bobbio, 1991) and transcends the concepts delimited in legal practice and public policies, whose application is usually confined to people of a particular age group, with residence in a particular territory and the ability to vote. Some authors have expanded the concept of citizenship to the point of eliminating

⁷ General Recommendation No. 25 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women sets out the meaning and scope of affirmative action or temporary special measures.

⁸ Ruling 28/92 of the Constitutional Court (STC) of 9 March 1992.

boundaries between human, reproductive, sexual and citizenship rights (Bermúdez, 1996). This not only raises methodological and conceptual issues, but also has political implications for the strategies that women can employ to achieve greater power in society.

There are a number of strains and challenges revolving around the citizenship debate. The most significant are: the redefinition of the national State, the tension between the particular and the universal, the tension between the individual and the collective, and the debate on the public and the private, as well as issues relating to representation, delegation of power and forms of leadership.

Women's citizenship has been associated mainly with suffrage. The right to vote, entry into the education system, work and the abolition of the double sexual-moral standard have been the costliest objectives of suffragism. Gains made by women's groups in the area of education fuel their demand for political rights, and it becomes more difficult to justify denial of the right to vote to women as their levels of education rise. Through gradual achievements and long years of struggle, successive and interrelated generations of women involved in the suffragist movement in different countries have secured the right to vote and to receive an education.

The suffragist movement questioned the representativeness of governments and developed a new style and method of civic campaigning —necessarily, since their political intervention was orchestrated from a position of exclusion. The effort to secure legal equality and win civil and political rights was, in turn, a powerful stimulus for women's individuation and, hence, for their empowerment.

Analysis of the way civic, political and cultural rights are exercised, in combination with the perspective of women's human rights, shows a number of points of intersection, including: the right to vote, participation in civil struggles for democracy, the recovery of human rights, demands for education, criticisms of excesses or absence of the State and other forms of individual and collective expression by women regarding local management, the preservation of language, the applicability of traditional systems of authority and ways of relating to the State, as well as, more recently, reproductive rights. These aspects are summed up in the concept of the right to have rights.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth Jelin (1997) recalls that behind the notion of citizenship is a process of negotiation in which citizenship refers to a conflictive practice linked to power, which reflects the struggles about "who is entitled to say what in the process of defining common problems and [deciding] how they are to be faced". The constitution of the modern imaginary of public and private and the modern idea of the radical difference between men and women have been crucial to the criteria of inclusion, exclusion and classification that have underpinned contemporary forms of citizenship. In fact, the modern State has been based on a clear separation between the public and private spheres and on a hierarchical order of gender.

The dichotomy between the public and the private institutes two different types of power (Zincone, 1992). The first is political power, which is exercised among "equals" and involves a negotiation of interests and conflicts together with a mutual recognition of the participants' political capacities. The second is family power, wielded over "non-equals" and built on the belief in a natural and hierarchical order of decision-making power, based on the principle of authority and the assumption of the natural inequality of the political capacities and social vocations of the participants. Historically, power has been a male prerogative: men, the members of the community of "equals", have exercised their political powers in the public sphere, and in private they have exercised their authority over "non-equals", including women, children and servants.

The persistent symbology of gender and power differences between men and women have given rise not only to a discriminatory distribution of rights, but also to a serious limitation on the real and autonomous enjoyment of them.

The emergence of the theoretical and political expressions of the feminist movement has brought significant pressure to bear for the inclusion of women in the public sphere and for a shift in the boundaries between the public and the private. Women's organizations and gender institutions have done much to bring issues previously considered private, such as domestic violence and the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights, into the public arena.

The discourse no longer compares men and women and their respective differences and advantages, but contrasts women's deprivation of goods and rights with universal declarations (Valcárcel, 2001, p. 9). Based on a critique of the new sociopolitical paradigm and its inadequacy, the feminist movement makes a first, sweeping correction in "enlightened democratism" and, by formulating its demands in political code, shows how the male concept of citizenship and the definition of femininity have laid the foundations for an non-inclusive form of democracy.

Gender equality is an indicator of how democratic a political system is. Gender has become a specific variable in the political arena. Increasingly, mechanisms have been developed to include women in elected and mandated posts, with the most important compensatory mechanisms being minimum quotas for representation.

In the last few years, there has been some debate and acceptance of parity democracy, which consists of a rethinking of the concept of representation as confined to ideological and territorial plurality alone: since the citizenry is made up of men and women, both should be represented in equal percentages in the political system. In this sense, parity is not simply a higher quota for women, but the broadest possible expression of universality.

This is how parity is understood by the Venezuelan women who argued for its inclusion in the legislation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Lastly, in order to provide scope for twenty-first century demands for parity, progress must be made in the realm of theory in order to overcome the naturalist cultural heritage once and for all and strengthen democracy (Valcárcel, 2001). Achieving parity is thus a process that includes recourse to quotas and other tools but that, above all, requires the recognition of women as full citizens in their own right.

G. PARITY AS A DEMOCRATIC OBJECTIVE

The rights women have secured as citizens and their political representation in the current context provide grounds for considering parity to be a feasible democratic objective once power-related tensions and disputes are resolved. The emergence of "governmentality" does not always coincide with the devitalization of sovereignty (Butler, 2006) and it may be that women have to accurately capture the constellation of stakeholders within which they function in order to make a leap in history.

The parity movement emerged during the 1990s in a context of accelerating globalization and internal differentiation within increasingly complex societies. Citizenship and the political representation of diversity becomes a highly relevant issue as globalization deepens and, in the process, States become

relatively less powerful, new global institutions arise and large waves of migration move across continents.

In that context, the parity movement questions the unitary, linear thinking of the past and opens up the democracy agenda to the need to weave an institutional fabric that represents social diversity and recognizes new ways for society and the State to relate to one another.

More than other rights, gender equality has been associated with changes in the collective mentality. As noted by Murillo de la Vega (2006), the regulation of private property was accomplished without the measure being subject to the populace having a clear understanding of the limits imposed by respect for other people's belongings. Any attempt to apply the principle of equality, however, prompts a chorus of female and male voices alike, recommending waiting periods and more gentle changes to avoid disturbing the social status quo (Fagoaga and Saavadra, 2006, p. 9).

The campaign for parity in elected and appointed positions at senior levels of government was initiated in the late 1980s by women in European politics, in response to the poor representation of women in parliaments—it was surprisingly low in France—and in high government positions. The concept of parity was proposed in 1989 by the Council of the European Communities. In November 1992, at the request of the Commission of the European Communities, the European summit “Women in Power” was held in Athens, bringing together current and former women ministers, who concluded that democracy requires parity in the representation and governance of nations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these demands arose in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Two traditions may be identified in the campaign for parity: the French tradition, whose arguments are based on universalism, citizenship, equality and difference; and the tradition of the American continent, whose rationale is the need for affirmative action to counteract the exclusion of different groups from the exercise of power.

One strand of the French school of thought argues that women are not a category of the population, but rather constitute half of humanity. The duality of sex is thus a difference of universe, not a category, and that “mixed-ness” does not run counter to the equality principle but, on the contrary, represents a necessary translation of it. From this perspective, there must be room in politics for sexual difference as something that is cross-cutting and inherent to the human genus.

The philosopher Sylviane Agacinski (1999) views parity as a new concept of sexual difference and a new way of conceiving democracy. Parity campaigners reject supposed neutrality and acknowledge the difference between the sexes without ascribing any hierarchical order, asserting that public responsibility is the concern of men and women alike. Womanhood is one of the two possible manifestations of humanness. For Agacinski, women are not in essence different from men but constitute a distinct social and cultural category, owing to their traditional exclusion from power. As women, therefore, they require a deliberate effort of inclusion in political affairs. Acceptance of parity enables more accurate representation of the nation.

Parity is a recent thing and it has developed according to the political traditions of individual countries, including the influence wielded by the women's movement. In Latin America, Chile is the only country to have assumed parity as a programmatic commitment under the government of President Bachelet. This has led to the appointment of a parity cabinet and has extended to the make-up of under-secretary's departments, provincial governor's offices and other public services. The effort to establish a gender balance in decision-making has been accompanied by policies with a gender perspective in such

areas of social security, labour practice, reproductive health and management.⁹ Women have been appointed in larger numbers than usual in other countries, including Ecuador, where President Correa appointed seven female government ministers, and Bolivia, where President Morales increased the number of female cabinet members and where Congress passed an alternation bill that encouraged the apportionment of 30% of the seats in the Constituent Assembly for women.

Although it is premature to state that these initiatives constitute a range of possible routes to parity, the measures taken by the president of Chile, the strength of women's organizations, the support of women's machineries in other countries and, no less importantly, a climate of change undoubtedly exercise a significant impact which is helping to propel women into government cabinets. It must not be forgotten, however, that women's presence in cabinets is typically highly volatile and generates a resistance that forewarns of sanctions for the entire gender should a female governor make a mistake. Women, even those in power, have not been able to prevent their individual presence from being taken to represent the entire gender, while men in positions of power have secured recognition as individuals and the mistakes of the few are not attributed to all men.

One of the first criticisms that both male and female politicians level at the concept of parity is that it undermines the principle of universality, one of the pillars of modernity and democracy. Refuting that claim, Françoise Collin, a Belgian feminist philosopher, argues that adherence to the parity principle does not imply the adoption of a philosophical position (Collin, 2006). The concept of universality refers to the whole of humanity, whereas "parity" operates at the level of the citizen. The category of citizenship is narrower than that of humanity, since it is always inscribed within the framework of a particular State and legal system and, hence, cannot be universalistic. Citizenship is circumscribed externally by a country's borders and internally by systems of inclusion and exclusion. Women claim their rights—in this case, to represent their co-citizens—as citizens and as members of one of the two communities that constitute and reproduce humanity. Accordingly, parity represents a demand made in the realm of citizenship, not a philosophical stance on the fundamental status of humanity and sex.

Parity reveals what was hidden behind the concept of the individual, built in the image and likeness of man. By questioning the monism of democratic universalism, the campaign for parity recognizes many ways of being an individual, of incarnating the universal and the everyday world. In this sense, parity desexualizes power by extending it to both sexes and thus it may be said to represent true universalism (Collin, 2006). Insofar as the concept of the individual citizen is not neutral, but is built on the male model, access to representation as a human being and an individual occurs in a sexed environment, characterized by the exclusion—not accidental but structural—of women.

Feminist schools that assert substantive equality between men and women and those that emphasize the difference put forward different rationales for parity. Those known as universalist feminists see a flagrant contradiction between the law, which states that all citizens must be represented independently of their sex, and the reality, insofar as male and female citizens are represented almost exclusively by men, which evinces profound discrimination. In order to arrive at equality it is necessary to do away with the artificial differences between men and women, which would disappear if inequality were overcome. As this school sees it, parity representation does not imply that women speak only for women: they represent the whole of the population just as men do and can likewise be conduits for the wider interest in all its forms. Parity requires only that the basic mixed nature of humanity be represented in assemblies—parliaments, in this case. Notwithstanding their affirmations, the

⁹ See the gender equity system incorporated in 2002 into the Government of Chile's administration improvement programme [online] <http://www.sernam.cl/pmg>.

universalist school's arguments in support of parity are based on the valuation of the differences between men and women. They argue that women are better placed to achieve true equality between the sexes and that they are much more deeply committed than egalitarian men to driving forward processes conducive to real equality.

Adherents to the school of feminism that emphasizes the difference between women and men base their arguments on the heterogeneity of the sexes and affirm that difference is about more than inequality. Women's involvement in party or community leaderships brings change, because women bring something different from men, derived from their shared experience of exclusion, which is expressed in anti-patriarchal reflexes and habits that stand in opposition to the male way of engaging in politics. Although the acknowledgement of difference and of the diversity of different groups' interests has paved the way for the consideration of specific rights and the recognition of different types of public, it is necessary to be aware of the risk of setting publicly acknowledged differences in stone and treating them as inalterable. People who take a historical perspective are able to adopt other points of view nourished by different approaches and histories.

At the political level, feminists' reservations about parity are based on their scepticism that, by itself, the entry of women to politics will suffice to desexualize the power of a system that was solidly structured without them, much less if they lack an understanding of gender inequalities and have not proposed prior shared objectives to change the system. Feminists argue that the sole fact of being women does not guarantee representatives the clarity and willpower to uphold the interests of marginalized members of their sex. They also ask where the real power mechanisms are in contemporary society. This question is especially important in the context of globalization, with other power spheres emerging in the economy and politics that transcend national States. These spheres are inhabited largely by men and exert pressure on national States.

Feminists also question whether women in power and the feminist movement can represent women as a group. Like the different strands of parity feminism, they signal the risk of falling for the fiction that women are a homogenous group and challenge the feminist movement's capacity to represent them all. The movement can never represent all women or all the elements that may identify them. Beyond the general observation that women are oppressed, it must be admitted that the female condition in the singular is a fiction and that women experience multiple social realities. Feminist campaigns have themselves increased the diversity among women —inevitably, since the collective effort has aimed to empower women as subjects and free them from the domination of others.

From this perspective, the campaign for parity is one of the forces at work in the reactivation of democracy and gender equality and it coexists with other campaigns driven by forces within civil society, the public arena and the State. Parity in political representation has, generally speaking, been coupled with strategies aimed at generating the conditions for women's parity participation in all social, private and public realms. Indeed, the achievement of equality requires social pacts that enable all adult members of society to interact as equals. This, in turn, cannot happen without equitable distribution of material resources and the recognition of independence and of the different voices in society.

H. THE CAMPAIGN FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE REGION

Latin American women's campaign for citizenship and political representation has evinced specific features resulting from the economic, social and institutional characteristics of the countries and their

position on the world stage at various times in history. Although women's movements in the region have been inspired by different feminist schools in Europe and the United States, their strategies and the direction of their campaigning have given rise to considerations and thinking that reflect their own perspective. The struggle has been marked all along by tensions and proposals that have arisen from the debate between equality and freedom, between political rights and social rights. These proposals, in turn, have combined women's pursuit of emancipation with the objectives of democracy, respect for human rights, social equality and the effort to combat poverty. Although later than elsewhere, the adoption of the reproductive rights agenda and the extension of the concept of human rights to population policy form part of this process. Unlike other regions of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean has a strong tradition of women's movements from working-class sectors that have been involved in the pro-human-rights social struggles of trade unions and those against dictatorships and poverty. Alliances of working- and middle-class women added up to a powerful movement which helped to give strength and legitimacy to feminist movements. In such culturally diverse countries as those of the region it has been necessary to recognize the coexistence of different orders of gender, corresponding to the different cultural traditions and ethnic groups within a given society. The feminist movement has had to attend to the ways in which the various systems of inequality are interconnected and hierarchically structured, and to the contradictions between the desire for gender equity and for social equity, or ethnic and gender equity. Cultural globalization has enabled the region's feminist movement to be in contact with feminist groups in other developing countries with different cultural traditions, including India, the Philippines and certain Arab countries, among others, thereby broadening its frames of reference.

Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries only a small minority of women figured in public affairs and even those who were involved were confined mainly to religious and charitable organizations, there were a few groups already campaigning for equality at that time. In the early twentieth century, a number of women entered revolutionary political parties and were involved in democracy movements opposing dictatorships, as in the case of the Costa Rican feminist league against the dictatorship of Federico Tinoco in 1920. The Adela Barrios feminist club, formed in the late nineteenth century in El Salvador, campaigned for women's suffrage and, in the 1920s, became involved in reformist and revolutionary movements opposed to the regime of Meléndez-Quiñones.

In 1922, 6,000 women marched in black to symbolize mourning for the death of democracy and support of the presidential candidate Tomás Molina. The membership of these organizations consisted mainly of female teachers, who created organizations, clubs and journals as part of their political activity. These women thus opened up separate political spaces from which to interpret their exclusion and campaign for recognition as subjects of rights. These organizations were led by exceptional women who shared a strong political will to combat the subordination of women in the family, the workplace and education. One such leader was Prudencia Ayala, a Salvadoran of indigenous origin, who in the early twentieth century wrote in local newspapers in support of Central American union and the cause of César Sandino in Nicaragua and against the political regimes of the Central American countries. In 1930 she lobbied the municipal council of San Salvador and the Supreme Court for women's suffrage and campaigned to be registered as a candidate for the presidential election. She also set up the Santa Tecla women's circle (*Círculo Femenino Teceleño*) and the journal *Redención femenina*.

The suffragist movement took on an international dimension from the outset. Through networks connecting their organizations in different countries, women's movements were able to share new ideas, discourses and arguments in order to demand women's suffrage simultaneously in different societies.

The suffragist movement emerged mainly in social contexts with favourable cultural and political conditions, from where it spread to other areas. Feminist discourses started from within broader

democratic movements, gradually becoming more independent until they grew into autonomous and emancipatory movements in their own right and, hence, a political force. Initially, arguments in favour of education and the right to vote and to work were based on existing gendered role divisions. The suffragists argued that women who were better educated and more involved in public affairs and the labour market would be better qualified to fulfil their social roles as wives and mothers. Their discourse later became more emancipatory, contrasting women's exclusion with the democratic ideals of equality and justice. Achievements were made only gradually and the social and political world met each step forward with huge ideological resistance and, not infrequently, threats to the physical integrity of the movement's leaders aimed at forcing them to give up their aspirations and achievements.

Table I.1
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (36 COUNTRIES): A TIMELINE SHOWING THE
RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE AND STAND FOR ELECTION**

1924	Saint Lucia
1929	Ecuador ^b
1931	Chile ^a
1932	Brazil, ^a Puerto Rico ^a
1934	Cuba, Brazil, ^a Uruguay
1936	Puerto Rico ^b
1939	El Salvador (right to vote)
1941	Panama ^a
1942	Dominican Republic
1944	Jamaica
1945	Bolivia, ^a Guyana (right to stand for election)
1946	Brazil, ^b Guatemala, Panama, ^b Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
1947	Argentina, Mexico (right to vote)
1948	Suriname
1949	Chile, ^b Costa Rica
1950	Barbados, Haiti ^a
1951	Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia
1952	Bolivia ^b
1953	Mexico (right to stand for election), Guyana (right to vote)
1954	Belize, Colombia
1955	Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru
1957	Haiti ^b
1961	Bahamas, ^a El Salvador (right to stand for election), Paraguay
1964	Bahamas ^b

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in Politics" [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm> [date of reference: 14 September 2006]. Karen Bart-Alexander, "Women's political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean" (SOC/2007/2), document presented at the Subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, 22 and 23 May 2007, unpublished; responses of the governments of Haiti and Puerto Rico to the ECLAC questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent in September 2006.

^a Right subject to conditions or restrictions.

^b Restrictions or conditions lifted.

Beginning in the 1940s, as a result of modernization processes under way in the countries and the achievements made in education and political life, women began to be considered for senior posts, albeit a minority of them, in public administration. This change began slowly, but has gathered strength in recent decades. Research by Eglé Iturbe de Blanco (2003) and Karen Bart-Alexander shows that, between the 1940s and the 1960s, women ministers were appointed for the first time in the following countries: Ecuador (1944), Panama (1950), Chile (1952), Cuba (1952), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1953), Colombia (1954) Costa Rica (1958), Trinidad and Tobago (1962) and Barbados (1966).

With the political democratization processes of the last two decades of the twentieth century, the men and women of Latin America regained the right to elect their representatives and stand for election. In Central America, peace agreements paved the way for the creation of new institutions to support consensus. In the region as a whole, countries came under pressure to reform their institutions in a context of increasing globalization and shifts in economic models.

The women's movement, including feminists, played a crucial role in the recovery of democracy and peace-building in the wake of armed conflicts. The relationships established among the various strands (human rights groups, survivors' groups in conflict zones and feminist organizations) raised the profile of the movement and secured it recognition as part of the anti-dictatorial and progressive forces committed to peace and democracy.

In the last few years, women's involvement in politics has become an item on the political agenda, with women's political participation being promoted through equality strategies implemented by mechanisms for women's advancement in most of the countries as part of equal opportunities programmes. Table I.2 gives an overview of the recent evolution of government agendas in the region.

First, political participation is universally recognized as a tool for women's empowerment and gender equity. As regards electoral affairs, women of all sectors have explicitly expressed an aspiration to see quota laws enacted in many of the countries where no such legislation yet exists. The positive discrimination of women within the structure of the State is another recurrent strategy in the region. Some recent plans also include parity explicitly, not only for the purposes of elections but also within the structure of government. Notably, Uruguay and Costa Rica have equal opportunities plans in which parity figures as a goal with a set timescale. Table I.2 shows government objectives or strategies which, in combination with other factors, can help achieve positive results. Those other factors include the political will of governments, the existence of cross-party consensus on the effective promotion of women's political representation and cross-party alliances of women parliamentarians.

Women's participation is not confined to the national level. The equality policies put in place have provided momentum for new leaderships in almost all the countries. Although there are no definitive studies yet, national women's offices report achievements as regards local and national female leaders' access to political institutions such as parliament or local government. In many countries strides have also been made in the judiciary, in business and other important arenas, but comparable and up-to-date regional information is still lacking.¹⁰

¹⁰ The responses of a number of countries to the ECLAC questionnaire indicated that trends at the local level are similar to those seen at the national level, but it is not yet possible to make categorical statements or to identify any specific features of those developments.

Table I.2
LATIN AMERICA (20 COUNTRIES): NATIONAL PLANS FOR EQUALITY, POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARITY

Country	Latest available action plan ^b	Treats political participation as an instrument of equity	Proposes establishing a quota law for elections (in countries without quota law)	Proposes positive discrimination or quotas within the structure of government	Explicitly treats parity as an instrument of equity	Includes specific targets or deadlines for achieving parity at different levels
Argentina	Plan for equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market (1998). c/	X				
Bolivia	Plan for equal opportunities for women and men (2004-2006).	X				
Brazil	National plan of women's policies (2004-2007).	X				
Chile ^a	Equal opportunities plan (2000-2010) (evaluation of first phase 2000-2005).	X	X			
Colombia ^a	National policy on women as peace- and development-builders, in the framework of the national agreement for equity between women and men (2003).	X		X		
Costa Rica	National plan for equality and gender equity (2007-2017).	X		X	X	X
Cuba ^a	National plan of action in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (1997).	X		X		
Ecuador	Equal opportunities plan (2005-2009).	X		X	X	
El Salvador ^a	National women's policy (2005).	X				
Guatemala ^a	National plan for the promotion and development of Guatemalan women. Equitable opportunities plan (2001-2006).	X	X	X		
Haiti ^a	Strategic public policies plan (2006-2011).	X			X	
Honduras	National plan for women – first national equal opportunities plan (2002-2007).	X				
México	National programme for equality of opportunities and non-discrimination against women (PROEQUIDAD) (2001 - 2006).	X		X		

Country	Latest available action plan ^b	Treats political participation as an instrument of equity	Proposes establishing a quota law for elections (in countries without quota law)	Proposes positive discrimination or quotas within the structure of government	Explicitly treats parity as an instrument of equity	Includes specific targets or deadlines for achieving parity at different levels
Nicaragua ^a	National gender equity plan (2002-2006).	X	X			
Panama	Equal opportunities for women plan (2002-2006). National plan against intra-family violence and policies on civic coexistence (2006).	X				
Paraguay	Second national plan for equality of opportunities and rights (2003-2008).	X		X		
Peru	Law and national plan on equality of opportunities for women and men (2006-2010).	X		X		
Dominican Republic	National gender equity plan (2000).	X		X		
Uruguay ^a	First national plan of equality of opportunities and rights (2007-2011).	X	X	X	X	X
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) ^a	Women's equality plan (2004-2009).	X		X	X	

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the most recent national equality or gender equity plans published by the respective countries.

^a No quota law applies in the legislative branch.

^b Over the last year new governments have taken up office in the region and national women's plans are under review. In these cases, the most recent official plan published has been taken as a reference, since the table is intended to show the evolution of government agendas.

^c In Argentina, the quota law (1991), the decree that regulates it (2000) and the plan of equal opportunities in the labour market (1998), which has force of law, have been key instruments forming the basis for policies in more specific areas, including the pension system, as well as notable progress in women's representation in the legislative branch.

In many countries, a new collective subjectivity was built around gender inequalities and new political fields emerged. Actors in these fields drew attention to the systemic nature of gender inequality and identified different and sometimes contradictory forms of discrimination within the social and institutional spheres, that is, in day-to-day interactions, family life, the marketplace, politics and culture. Unlike the feminist movement in Europe and the United States, the feminist campaign in this region revolved around development, social equality and poverty.

The effort to develop measures to deliberately increase women's political representation comes in response to the slow or almost non-existent growth of their numbers in parliaments, despite improvements in women's levels of education, their entry to the labour market and their growing membership of political parties. Thus, women's organizations —especially groups of female politicians in cross-party alliances— are campaigning for affirmative action to counteract the formal or informal barriers preventing women's nomination to electoral lists or appointment to designated positions.

Electoral gender quotas, as initially implemented in political parties in the Nordic countries in the 1970s, were intended to guarantee a certain number of women in senior political positions and to create a “critical minority” (30% to 40%) to counteract their political isolation and channel resources, not only towards meeting women's demands, but also into initiatives to change the way political systems worked.

Quota systems may be examined from two angles: first, the source of the quota mandate (constitution, legislation, political parties) and, second, the stage of the political and electoral process at which it is enforced. Quotas can be employed at the first stage of the process (identification of would-be candidates), at an intermediate stage (candidate nomination) or the final stage (by reserving a certain percentage of seats for women). The double-quota system is one which not only calls for a certain percentage of women to participate, but also requires them to occupy positions on the electoral lists that have a good possibility of being elected.

The use of quotas is a matter of considerable debate and resistance in the political system. Some of those in politics argue that quotas violate the principles of the universality of citizenship and of competition on an equal footing based on individual merit. They warn of the danger of encouraging the differentiation of new groups and the corporate representation of group interests. In relation to these arguments, however, from the point of view of political strategy electoral quotas do not imply the recognition of any fundamental interpretation of womanhood, but constitute a mechanism to counteract subordination and improve chances for real equality. Quotas are built upon the concept of affirmative action concept mentioned earlier.

Affirmative action is associated with programmes to train social and political leaders and with measures to promote the formation and action of women's organizations. In a political environment constructed around gender equity, it is possible to define gender problems and build them into governments' institutional agendas; promote legal and constitutional reforms; expand knowledge towards the State; provide appropriate human-resources training; and support the establishment of arenas in which pro-gender-equity policies can be coordinated. The world conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations in the 1990s were highly significant and became major media events that galvanized public opinion and therefore went a long way towards disseminating and legitimizing issues, proposals and the resulting agreements. The growing involvement of NGOs in preparatory meetings for conferences, national committees and delegations, alternative forums and follow-up committees and conferences provided the feminist movement with new opportunities for political participation at the global level, as well as channels through which to influence governments. This helps to explain why the

agreements adopted at each conference have acted as genuine global agendas guiding the political action of the forces committed to gender equity in the different countries.

In the 1990s, in this international climate disposed to promote increased gender equity, the Latin American and Caribbean countries became the stage for a series of demands and negotiations that would eventually lead to the adoption of quotas for elections to legislative posts. Each country that adopted quota laws did so in its own particular way, but it was always the culmination of a long process. Women politicians formed cross-party alliances with the support of the feminist movement and women's organizations mobilized to campaign for the adoption of quota laws, identify their main weaknesses, reform rules and establish sanctions to ensure proper compliance. The existence of State-sponsored gender mechanisms helped to articulate the various strands of the campaign and to mediate between the movement and the rest of the State. In all cases, women politicians' relations with their parties were conflictive. Political parties were reluctant to adopt affirmative action as a way of promoting women's political participation, but ultimately did so in the context of the wider debate on equity within the region.

In the early 1990s, women had very limited access to decision-making and representative bodies. In the Caribbean, women accounted for 12% of the two chambers of parliament in 1990 (Bart-Alexander, 2007), while in Latin America they accounted for about 5% of the members of upper chambers and about 9% of the lower chambers of legislatures (Bareiro and others, 2004). This was a clear indication that there were still structural barriers to more egalitarian participation in the exercise of political power.

In 1991 Argentina became the first country to enact a women's quota law, in response to the demands of female politicians, who proposed the measure after the main parties refused to establish quotas within their ranks. In 1989, the female senator for the province of Mendoza submitted an electoral code reform bill aiming, for the first time, to oblige party-political organizations to include women in their lists of candidates for legislative posts. In 1990, 15 party organizations set up a network of feminist politicians, which was to play a crucial role in analysing and adopting the quota law. The fifth National Women's Meeting (1990), which brought together a wide range of activists, expressed its support for the quota law in notes sent to the presidents of all political parties and to both chambers of parliament urging the approval of the quota bills. Other key factors included the support of both the Multisectoral Women's Group (made up of feminists, members of political parties and civil-society representatives) and the National Women's Council (Marx, Borner and Caminotti, 2006). This legislation had a broad impact in Argentina, where a 30% quota was also adopted for women's participation in trade unions in 2002,¹¹ and in other countries.

The first elections held following the enactment of the quota law demonstrated the need for certain amendments and for strict monitoring to close the loopholes that parties used to get round the legislation. Legal proceedings brought by female politicians over parties' failure to comply with the law placed crucial pressure on parties to accede. The constitutional reform of 1994 provided further political and legal backing to these demands by recognizing the principle of equality among men and women as regards access to elective posts and political positions, and by making it unconstitutional for any future law to reduce the quotas established.

¹¹ Act 25,674.

In Costa Rica the quota issue began to be discussed around 1988, after the country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984. This led parties to include mechanisms to promote and guarantee the effective participation of women in the allocation of posts and in nominations for electoral lists. A broad mobilization took place between 1992 and 1996, when a quota system was established with the enactment of law 7635. Under this system, parties must ensure that women represent 40% of both the party structure and candidates included on tickets for elections. Similar rules apply in local government. The registry office will not register lists that do not comply with the law. In addition, the law requires women to be candidates for eligible posts and recommends alternation and observance of the historical average. In 2007, the main lines of action of the Costa Rican government's national equality and gender equity policy were to enhance women's participation (line 5), promote care of the family as a social responsibility and assign value to domestic work (line 1) and strengthen the pro-equality and pro-gender-equity public institutional structure (line 6). Line 5 aims to have established parity political participation in all decision-making spheres in Costa Rica by 2017.

In Mexico, in 1993, section 3 of article 175 of the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COFIPE) was amended to oblige political parties to promote greater participation by women in politics. In 1996, it was agreed that the statutes of national political parties should stipulate that neither sex may represent more than 70% of the candidates for election to parliament and the senate. In 2002, clauses (a), (b) and (c) of article 175 were approved as follows: neither sex may represent more than 70% of candidates; the first three segments of every list shall each have a candidate of a different sex from the others; and any political party or coalition failing to comply with the provisions of the Federal Council of the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico will be given 48 hours to rectify the situation, after which time it will be publicly reprimanded. Repeated non-compliance will result in denial of registration for the offending party's candidates. This does not apply to the candidatures of individuals directly elected by a relative majority (Reynoso and D'Angelo, 2004). Cross-party alliances of women politicians have been formed at key moments in Mexico to promote and campaign for women's political representation and for larger numbers of women in decision-making. At one point the "Plural" group comprised female leaders from the main political parties and, in the framework of the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage in Mexico, issued a declaration in support of women's political participation and representation.

In Brazil, as in other countries, 100 years had to pass between the first extension of the right to vote (1824) and the law that conferred that right upon married women (providing they had their husband's consent) and some single women and widows with income of their own (1932). In 1934 some of these restrictions were lifted and voting was made obligatory for women in remunerated positions in the civil service. Universal suffrage was instituted in 1946.

The first experience of quotas occurred within the Workers' Party (PT), which approved a quota of 30% for the party leadership. In 1993, the Amalgamated Workers' Union (CUT) applied lower and upper limits of 30% and 70% to both sexes. Lastly, in 1995 following the Campaign "Women Unafraid of Power" (*Mulheres sem medo do poder*), a quota of 20% was set for lists of candidates for municipal elections for 1996. The following year, an amendment to the electoral law raised to 25% the minimum quota of female candidates on lists for legislative positions elected by proportional ballot. The involvement of the organized women's movement in debates in Congress was crucial to the law's adoption. Members of the movement provided advice and viewpoints during public sessions in the chamber of deputies and the senate, thus creating an ongoing dialogue between parliament and society.

In Bolivia, a quota law introduced in 1997 establishes that female candidates shall make up at least 30% of the list of candidates for seats in parliament. Owing to the law's incompatibility with the electoral system and shortcomings in its formulation, however, women have yet to represent more than 16% of such posts in Bolivia, except in the Constituent Assembly (2007), in which 30% of representatives are women.

In the Dominican Republic the electoral law has been amended twice. First in 1997, to oblige political institutions to include a proportion of no less than 25% of women in their nominations and proposals for congressional and municipal positions. Second, in 2002 a new law was passed to increase the proportion to 33% in provincial governments and municipal departments. In addition, the approval of Law 13-2000 on district executive boards (*sindicaturas*) provided for the addition of a paragraph to article 5 on municipal organization, stating that all parties must include a women on their electoral ticket for the election of district executives or deputy district executives.

In Peru, the general elections act of 1997 stipulated a minimum proportion of 25% for either sex on lists of candidates for congress. This percentage was raised to 30% in 2000. In 2003 a new piece of legislation made it compulsory for candidate lists for party leadership positions and political groupings to have a certain quota of men or women. At the local level, candidate lists for municipal councillors have been required to comply with a gender quota since 1997. In 2002, the quota system became a constitutional requirement and minimum percentages were stipulated for gender representation in regional and municipal councils. Lastly, in 2007, the law on equal opportunities for women and men and a decree on policies with which national government entities are obliged to comply added measures to promote women's access to decision-making in society and the public administration.

In Ecuador the broad feminist movement played a prominent role in having provisions included in the Constitution of 1998, thereby establishing that the State shall promote the equitable participation of women and men as candidates in election processes, in management and decision-making within public affairs, in the administration of justice, in oversight bodies and in political parties (article 102). This provision has translated into an electoral law under which 23% of legislators elected to the single legislative chamber are women. In May 2007, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal approved the necessary regulations for enforcing the quota law.¹²

In some countries, major strides are made from one period to the next. This is the case of El Salvador, where the proportion of women candidates jumped from 16% to 35% in the last administration. The sustainability of this continues to rely on the individual decisions of political parties, however. After a decade of campaigning, quota laws have been passed in 14 of the region's countries (see table I.3).

¹² Report of the Government of Ecuador presented at the Subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, Chile, May 2007).

Table I.3
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (14 COUNTRIES): TIMELINE OF ENACTMENT OF
 QUOTA LAWS AND SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS**

Country	Year of enactment of quota law	Amendments
Argentina	1991	1993
Bolivia	1997	2004
Brazil	1995	1997
Colombia	1999	2001- declared unconstitutional
Costa Rica	1996	1999
Ecuador	1997	2000
Haiti ^a	2005	
Honduras	2000	
Mexico	1996	2002
Panama	1997	
Paraguay	1996	
Peru	1997	2001
Dominican Republic	1997	2000
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	1997	2000 - declared unconstitutional ^b

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), “Global Database of Quotas for Women” [online] <http://www.quotaproject.org/> [date of reference: 16 August 2006]. Responses of the Government of Haiti to the ECLAC questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent in September 2006.

^a An article in the most recent electoral decree reduces by two thirds the registration cost for all candidates of parties presenting electoral lists on which women represent at least 30%.

^b On 1 April 2005 the National Electoral Council of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela issued resolution no. 050401-179, which requires political organizations to alternate male and female candidates for national, municipal and parochial decision-making bodies, on a basis of parity.

In Cuba, the only country without a quota law where women participate broadly in political decision-making, affirmative action procedures have been in place since 2002, in the form of an agreement with the Organizations of the State Central Administration (OACE). This consists of a commitment to work towards the formation of a vacancies roster formed by equal numbers of candidates of each sex and, from 2003 on, to make the final selection of appointees from a shortlist of two equally qualified candidates—a man and a woman—in order to ensure that decisions are made on a basis of equality.

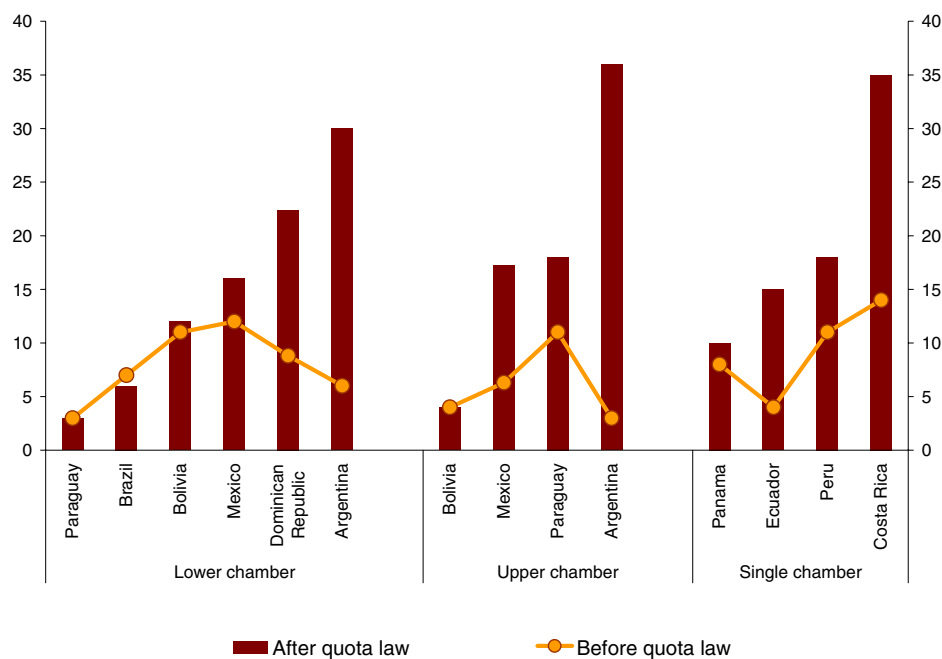
Guatemala is one of the countries where lack of affirmative action measures has been clearly felt. Between 1986 and 2003 there were never more than 14 female representatives in the legislature and Mayan women never had more than a single representative. This exclusion has led to a campaign entitled “More women, better politics” (*Más mujeres, mejor política*), which is aimed at increasing women’s participation in decision-making in the 2007 elections, when voting will be held for 3,720 positions in public office, including members of the Guatemalan and Central American parliaments, mayors and representatives to municipal corporations. Guatemalan women represent a minority in political parties and civic committees too. Women make up 51% of the total population, but only 44% of those registered to vote (56% of the electoral roll are men) and an even smaller percentage of actual voters. Female candidates are also few in number: 2,254 in 2003, compared to 21,451 male candidates. This contrasts

with the situation in Costa Rica: although it is in the same region, female candidates there represent around 40% of the total thanks to the use of quotas.

With the exception of Dominican Republic and Haiti, none of the Caribbean islands have approved the use of quota laws. They have all, however, adhered to the principle established in the Santiago Consensus (1997) and by the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs that that 30% of posts should go to women. In 2004, the Commonwealth Ministers restated their commitment to work to achieve the minimum target of 30% representation in political and corporate decision-making by 2015. In its programme for 2003-2008, the Department of Women's Affairs of Belize made a commitment to work to achieve a quota of 30% and some of the region's NGOs have joined the campaign of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) aimed at increasing the target to 50% (Bart-Alexander, 2007).

Quota laws have had positive effects in all the countries that have adopted them, as female representation has increased, especially in the lower chambers and single chambers. Argentina and Costa Rica stand out with women representing 35% and 38.6%, respectively, of seats in the legislature (see figure I.1). Cuba, with 36%, constitutes an exception since its political system is different. These three figure amongst the 10 countries in the world with the highest numbers of women in parliament, together with Rwanda (34%), Sweden (47%) and Finland (42%). In the Bahamas more than 30% of upper chamber seats are held by women. However, in most countries female representation remains below the percentage stipulated in the law.

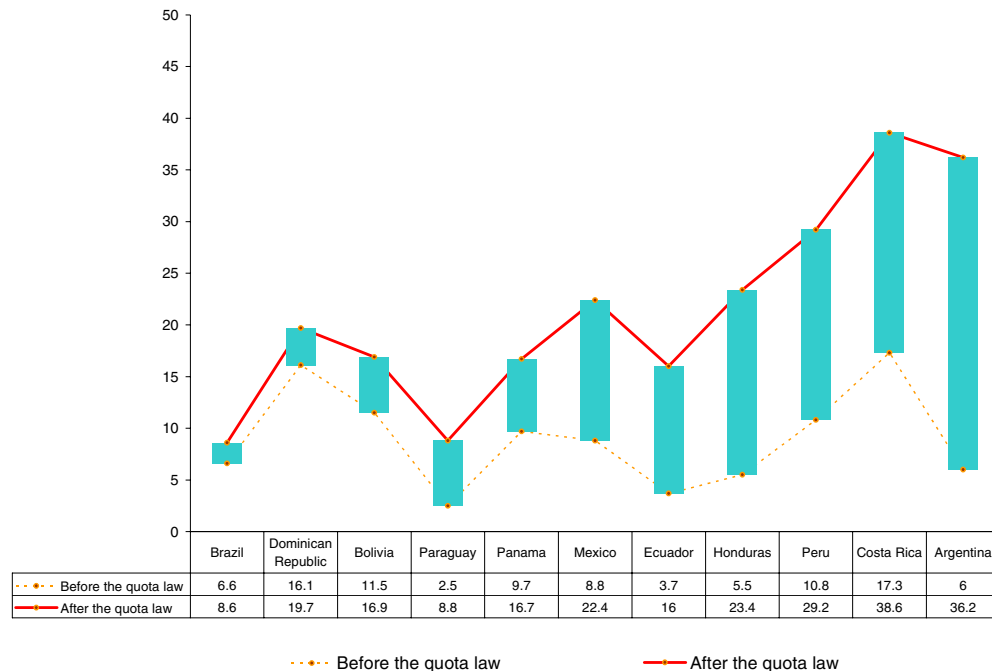
Figure I.1
LATIN AMERICA (10 COUNTRIES): RESULTS OF THE QUOTA SYSTEM
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 30 April 2007].

The differences between the results prior to quota laws and the latest election results are even larger, especially in Argentina, where representation increased from 6% to 36.2%; Costa Rica (from 15.8% to 38.6%); Honduras (from 5.5% to 23.4%); Peru (from 10.8% to 29.2%); Mexico (from 8.8% to 22.4%); Ecuador (from 3.7% to 16%); and Ecuador (from 3.7% to 16%) (see figure I.2).

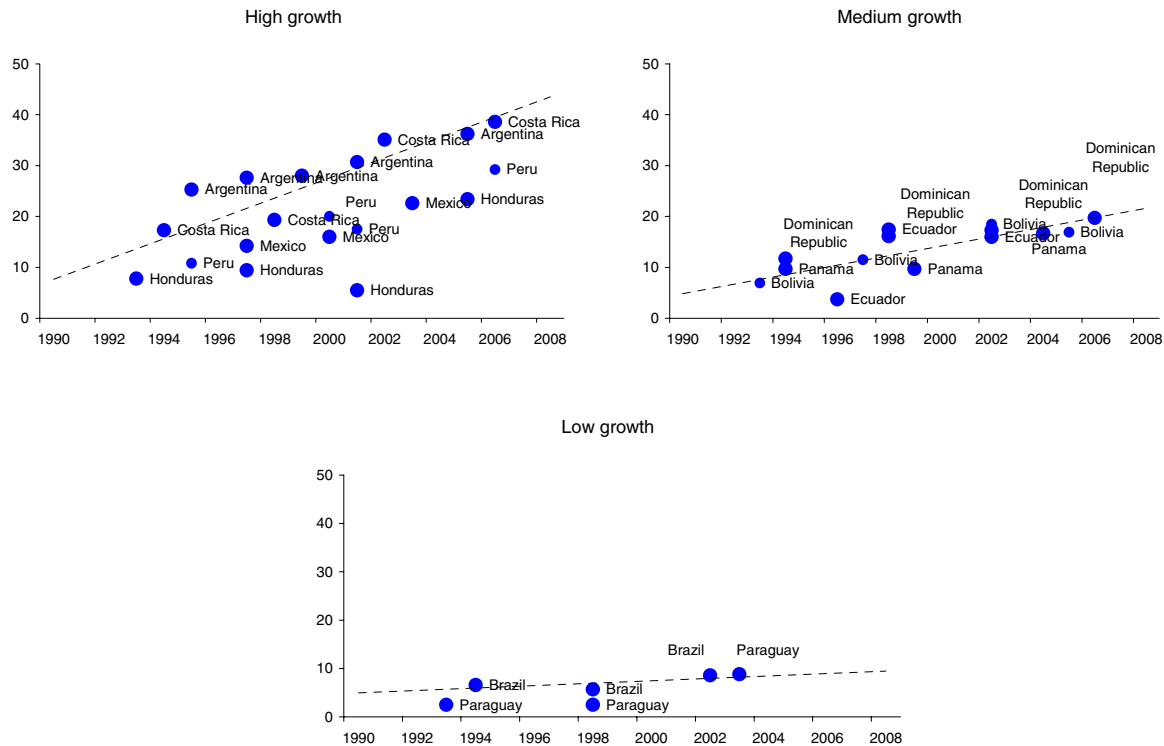
Figure I.2
LATIN AMERICA (11 COUNTRIES): DIFFERENCES IN FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBER) BETWEEN THE ELECTIONS PRIOR TO QUOTA LAWS AND THE MOST RECENT ELECTIONS
(Percentage points)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in National Parliaments” [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 16 August 2006].

Countries in which female representation exceeded 30% in the most recent elections, especially Argentina, Costa Rica and Peru, display a systematic, upward trend in such representation. Figure I.3 shows that the countries in which women achieved less than 20% of seats in the last election show a less rapid and more unstable pattern of growth. Lastly, women’s representation shows no significant growth in Brazil or Paraguay. Women are capable of forming a critical mass that reinforces the achievements made and provides a platform for advancing towards parity. In Argentina, Costa Rica and Peru, the three countries that met the target, this achievement was aided by broad cross-party alliances, intensive work within the parties, support for women’s advancement mechanisms, the decisive leadership of the women’s movement and democratic conditions that allowed the adoption of quota laws as a means of moving towards equality.

Figure I.3
**LATIN AMERICA (11 COUNTRIES): INCREASE IN THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN
 PARLIAMENT (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS), UNDER THE EFFECTS OF
 THE QUOTA LAW**
(Percentages)

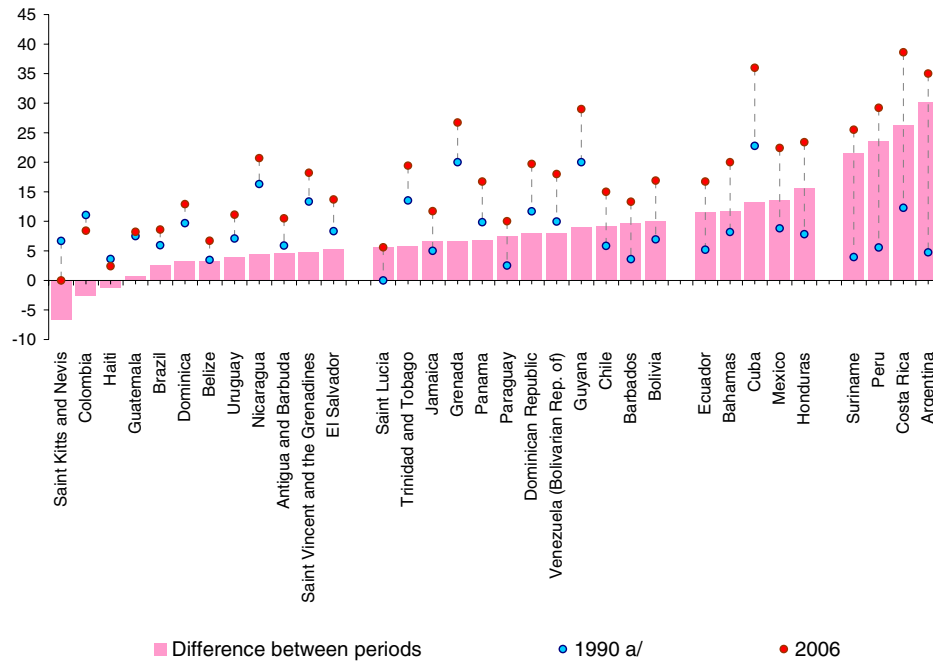


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in National Parliaments” [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

Brazil is an interesting case, as there was no significant increase in female participation, despite the fact that conditions appeared conducive to the adoption of a quota law: a strong feminist movement, a large group of women lobbying for the adoption of the 1988 Constitution, the coordinating role played by the First National Women’s Council and the early adoption of a 30% quota by the Workers’ Party (PT) for either sex in its governing bodies. The lack of increase is attributable in part to political factors and the nature of the electoral system. Some studies have found that increasing women’s numbers in the legislative power through affirmative action was not one of female politicians’ main concerns in Brazil (Miguel, 2002; Marx, Borner and Caminotti, 2006). Furthermore, the proposal came up against an electoral system that was not conducive to the use of quotas. This shows how important it is bring about a combination of propitious factors —a firm political will, a suitable electoral system and an active force in society— in order to achieve progress in women’s political representation.

The countries that have adopted a quota law yield better results than those that have not (see figure I.4). This is especially true for the legislative branches in Argentina, Costa Rica, Honduras and Peru.

Figure I.4
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (33 COUNTRIES): PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN
 LEGISLATIVE BRANCH (LOWER AND SINGLE CHAMBERS)**
(Percentages)



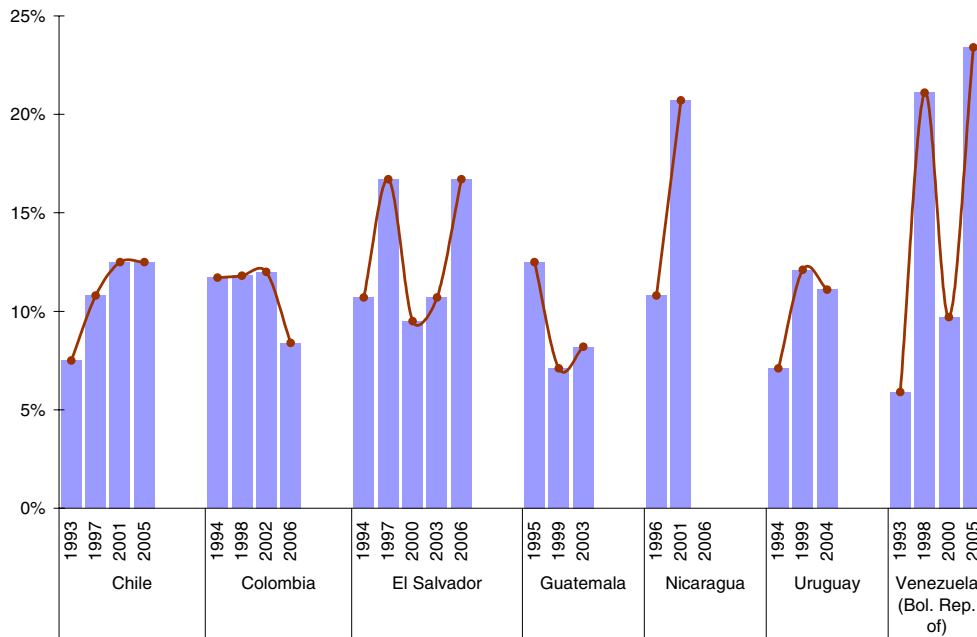
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

^a Elections: Argentina (1989), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1988), Bolivia, (1989), Brazil (1990), Chile (1989), Colombia (1994), Costa Rica (1990), Dominican Republic (1994), Ecuador (1992), El Salvador (1991), Guatemala (1994), Honduras (1993), Mexico (1994), Nicaragua (1990), Panama (1994), Paraguay (1993), Peru (1990) and Uruguay (1994).

Female representation has also risen in countries that do not have quotas, although more slowly and less steadily, since in these cases the presence of women representatives depends more on political will than on statutory requirements (see figure I.5).

The percentage of women in Latin American parliaments has been quite uneven between countries and unstable from one period to the next, which makes it difficult to categorize countries by any particular pattern. In Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and El Salvador, for example, the trends are fairly erratic, with sharp increases and decreases between periods. In Colombia, women's representation has dropped sharply in the most recent period, after remaining stable for some time, whereas in Guatemala it remains below the more advantageous level of 1995.

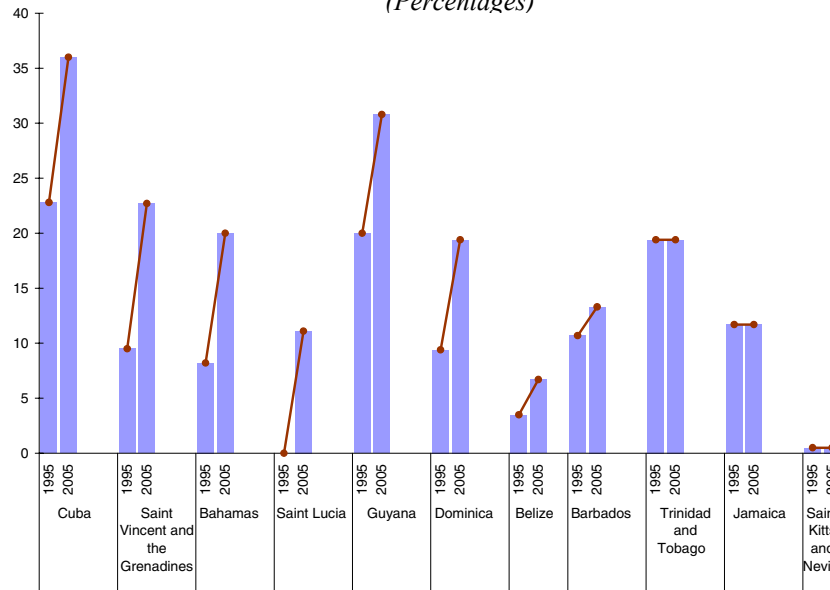
Figure I.5
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (7 COUNTRIES): WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
 PARLIAMENT IN COUNTRIES WITH NO QUOTA LEGISLATION
 (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS)**
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

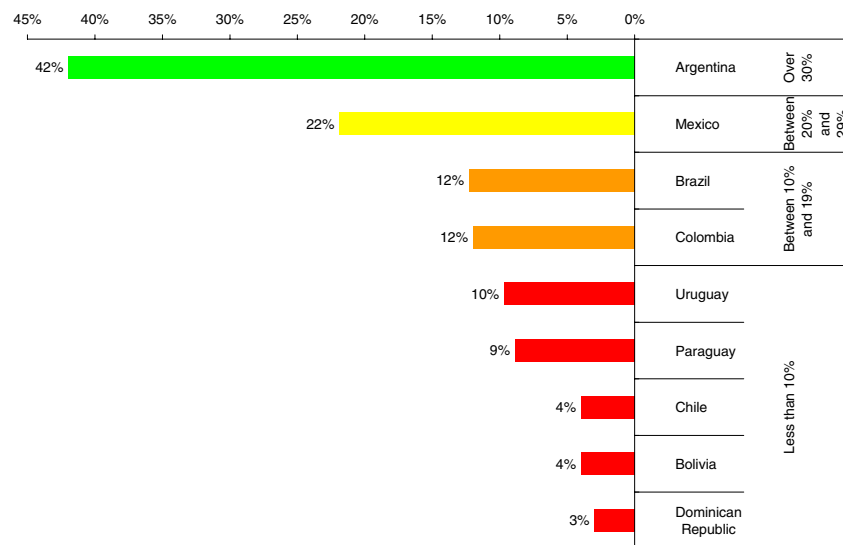
The information provided by governments in response to the ECLAC survey suffers from shortfalls that prevent accurate comparisons between the situation in Latin America and in the Caribbean. It is thus not possible to follow the patterns in women's representation in the lower chambers of parliament in the last three periods in any comparable manner, although there appears to be a slight increase between the first and the third periods (see figure I.6). The data supplied by the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico show a volatile situation with regard to women's participation, varying from 17.6% in 1996 to 13.7% in 2000 and 15.7% in 2004.

Figure I.6
CARIBBEAN (11 COUNTRIES): WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT IN COUNTRIES WITH NO QUOTA LAW (LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBERS), 1995 AND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Karen Bart-Alexander, “Women’s political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean” (SOC/2007/2), document presented at the Subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, St. John’s, Antigua and Barbuda, 22 and 23 May 2007, unpublished.

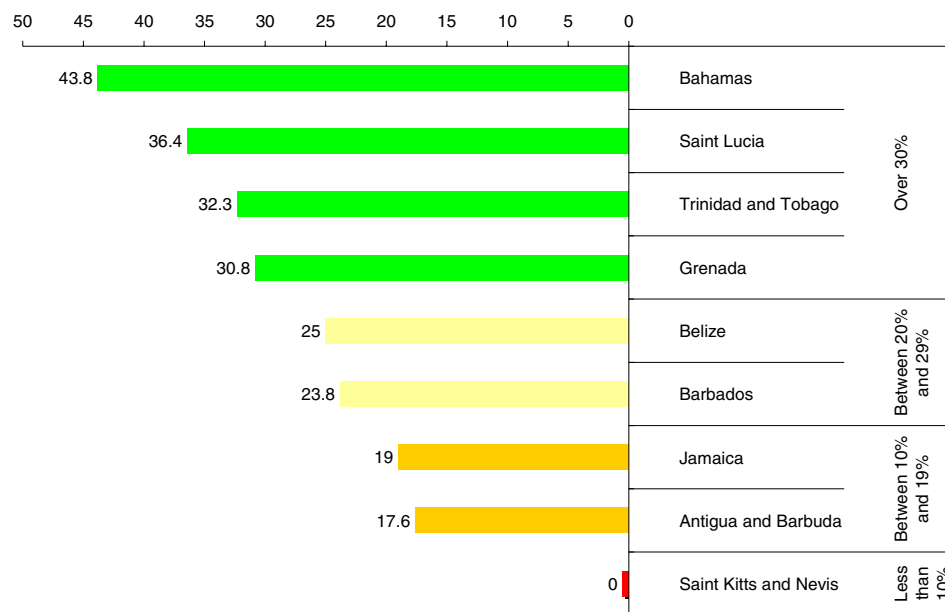
Figure I.7
LATIN AMERICA (9 COUNTRIES): REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE SENATE, 2006
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in National Parliaments” [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 10 December 2006].

The data for 2006 show that less progress has been made at the level of the senate than in chambers of deputies in Latin America: Argentina and Mexico are the only countries where women represent over 20% of senators. This situation makes it difficult to mobilize collective action to form a critical mass large enough to institute changes. In the Caribbean, by contrast, women represent a higher proportion of senators than of deputies (see figure I.8), partly owing to the fact that women are appointed to the Senate.

Figure I.8
CARIBBEAN (9 COUNTRIES): REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE SENATE, 2006
(Percentages)

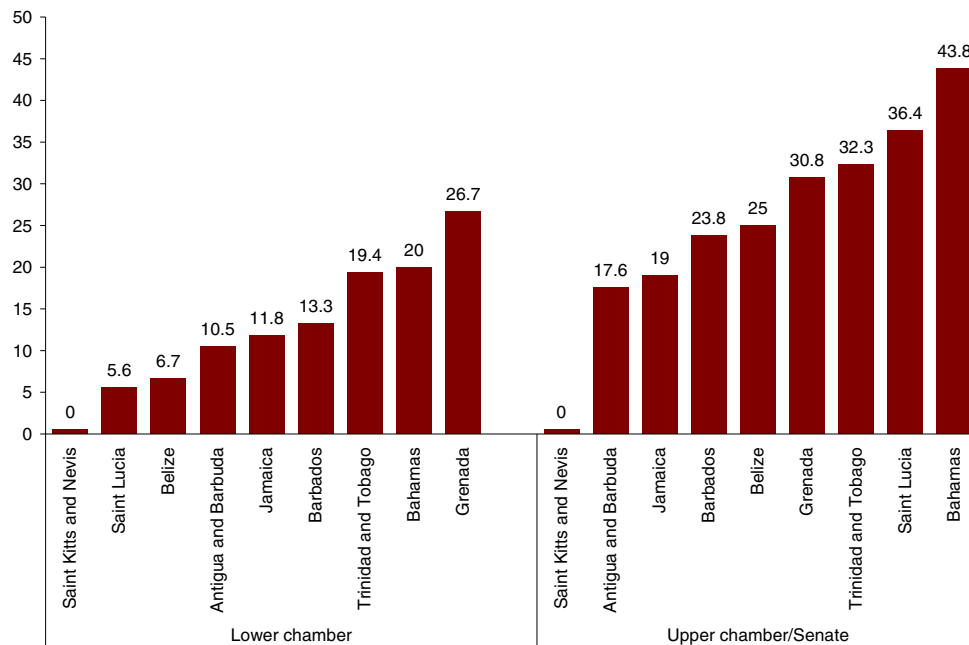


Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report*, 1999, 2000 and 2006, New York, Oxford University Press.

The greatest differences between the two chambers are seen in Saint Lucia, Bahamas and Guyana, with disparities of 31, 23 and 19 percentage points, respectively. The smallest disparities were registered in Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada, with 8, 7 and 4 percentage points, respectively. As a result of the selection process, the 30% target for women's representation in upper chambers has been attained or surpassed in several countries: the Bahamas (43.8%), Trinidad and Tobago (32.3%), Saint Lucia (36.4%) and Grenada (30.8%). The information received from the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico shows more uneven women's participation in the senate, with the figure moving from 22.2% in 1996 to 25.9% in 2004, after just falling short of the target in 2000 (29.6%).

In the lower chambers, only Cuba and Guyana have reached the target of 30%, with women representing 36% and 30.8% of deputies, respectively, in the two countries. These are closely followed by Grenada (28.7%), Suriname (25.5%) and the Bahamas (20%). Saint Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda have made least progress in this respect, with 5.6% and 10.5%, respectively. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, there are no women in parliament except the speaker (Bart-Alexander, 2007).

Figure I.9
**CARIBBEAN (9 COUNTRIES): COMPARATIVE COUNT OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN
 LOWER AND UPPER CHAMBERS, 2006**
(Percentages)



Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report*, 1999, 2000 and 2006, New York, Oxford University Press.

Quota laws are a successful strategy for increasing and stabilizing women's numbers in parliament, and have generated a critical mass of women that can make headway towards parity. As noted earlier, this strategy was implemented in a context favourable to gender equity—social transformations, growing economic and cultural exchange, and agreements adopted at world conferences—and was strengthened by the domino effect of the approvals of other quota laws in the region. Quota laws are most effective in systems of proportional representation with closed lists and where the law demands that women be placed high on electoral lists, so that they have a real chance of being elected. These factors explain the successful growth of female representation between 1995 and 2004 in the two-chamber Argentine parliament and the legislative congress of Costa Rica. However, the effectiveness of quotas depends not only on the nature of each country's electoral system, but also on the dynamics within political parties, which act as filters in electoral processes, the political culture and democratic reform. The fact that there was a broad and committed political alliance in favour of increasing the political representation of women in these countries was fundamental in improving laws and closing the loopholes that allowed the legislation to be avoided.

Apart from the obstacles inherent in electoral systems, there are other important factors that influence women's access to power. During the virtual forums for authorities of women's advancement mechanisms held in early 2007 in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the participants agreed that political parties put up the strongest resistance to women's entry to parliament. Men usually have more to gain from gender-differentiated

access to economic resources for campaigns—that is, corporate financing—because they tend to have more numerous and powerful linkages within public affairs that give them more highly developed networks of social capital.¹³ Another important factor has to do with interpersonal trust which, as Putnam (1993) argues, is an important element in a democratic political culture. This is based on the supposition that trust among citizens and their active participation in social organizations are crucial to the proper functioning of a democracy.

From this perspective, in the context of a patriarchal culture in which women are assigned caregiving roles, these prejudices translate into distrust of women's capacity to govern and to command. Politics are thus construed as a male domain. This narrow construct of politics acts as a barrier to the inclusion of other dimensions of democracy associated with different types of discrimination (ethnic or gender discrimination, for example), which collide with traditional ways of understanding the business of political parties.

I. WOMEN IN POWER

1. Once in parliament

What happens when women enter parliament? What positions do they hold, what are their concerns, what obstacles do they face and what are their assessments of their contribution to political life and public welfare? Where do parliamentary women come from and what is their background?

The majority (78%) of women in parliament get there through their parties, often at the invitation of a political leader. The proportion of women parliamentarians from outside party circles is lower and, in most cases, women are courted by parties on account of their public and social standing. In circumstances other than these, women state that it is more difficult to access positions of power within a party, be nominated to electoral lists and enter a parliamentary position, as they tend to be excluded by a culture of male chauvinism and fraternity (IPU, 2000).

Table I.4

THE CARIBBEAN (10 COUNTRIES): TIMELINE OF THE FIRST ELECTION OF A WOMAN TO A POSITION IN PARLIAMENT OR ONE ITS CHAMBERS

Cuba	1940
Jamaica	1944
Guyana	1953
Trinidad and Tobago	1962
Suriname	1963
Grenada	1976
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1979
Dominica	1980
Belize	1984
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1984

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report, 2006*, New York, Oxford University Press.

¹³ The interplay between social and political capital tends to benefit men to a greater degree than women (Arriagada, 2003).

Women's entry to parliament can be the result of a combination of various factors including a history of social activism, a background in local government, a successful professional career (lawyers, economists), the political culture of their family of origin and the support provided by their current family. Many of these women have already held positions in the executive or been involved more than once in parliamentary activities. Outside parliament, they continue their political and professional careers in prestigious decision-making positions. In most cases, they are part of a political elite that expands to admit them. Although in a minority, some women have chaired parliament or one of its chambers, as in Uruguay and Mexico in 1963; Argentina in 1973; Bolivia in 1979; Dominica in 1980; Belize and Jamaica in 1984; Costa Rica in 1986; Grenada and Nicaragua in 1990; Guatemala in 1991; Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1993; Bahamas and Suriname in 1997; Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 1998; Dominican Republic in 1999; Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana and Peru in 2000; Saint Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago in 2001; Chile in 2002 and Antigua and Barbuda in 2004. Women currently preside over at least one of the two chambers of parliament in seven countries: Bahamas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Saint Lucia.

Table I.5
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (23 COUNTRIES): TIMELINE OF DATES WHEN
PARLIAMENT OR ONE OF ITS CHAMBERS HAS FIRST BEEN CHAIRED BY A WOMAN**

Uruguay	1963
Mexico	1965
Argentina	1973
Bolivia	1979
Dominica	1980
Belize	1984
Jamaica	1984
Costa Rica	1986
Grenada	1990
Nicaragua	1990
Guatemala	1991
Trinidad and Tobago	1991
Puerto Rico	1993
Bahamas	1997
Suriname	1997
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	1998
Dominican Republic	1999
Ecuador	2000
Guyana	2000
Peru	2000
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2001
Chile	2002
Antigua and Barbuda	2004

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments" [online] <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> [date of reference: 11 June 2007]; information provided to ECLAC by the Government of Mexico, June 2007.

Women parliamentarians report that that they are encouraged to take part in commissions concerned with social problems, but they are less involved in those considered more substantive. They describe an ongoing culture that excludes them from informal settings for discussion and decision-making. Women complain of being the subject of jokes, and of the jealousy of some male politicians, who find it difficult to accept women's political ambitions. They also state that the explicit and implicit operating rules do not allow for the demands on women to reconcile parliamentary activities with their private lives (IPU, 2000; Iturbe de Blanco, 2003; Hardy, 2005a; Guzmán, 2007).

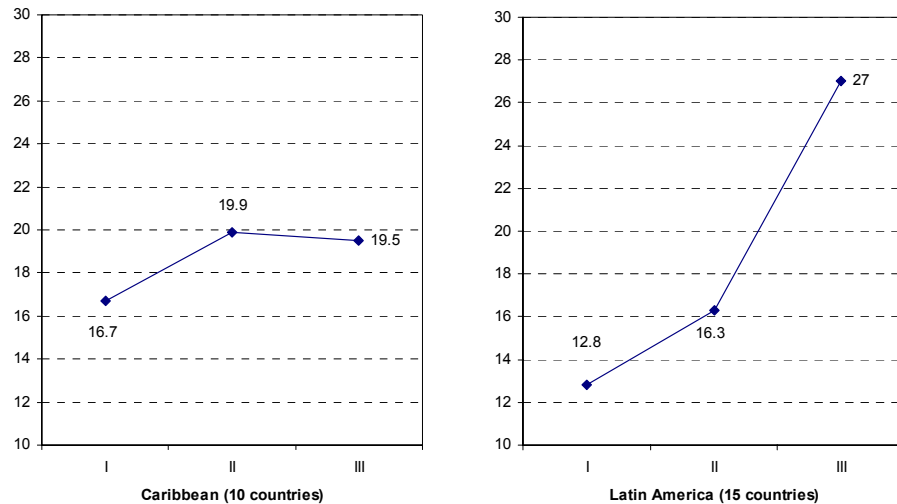
Research conducted in Chile (Hardy, 2005a) shows that most women in politics have a high level of self-esteem and state that their presence makes a difference for the better in legislative work, as it transforms agenda priorities (78%), internal culture (79%) and rules and regulations (74%). Female parliamentarians declare themselves more concerned with social and ethical matters (such as poverty, human rights, social justice and the environment) and state that they also face issues of corruption and falling standards in politics. Lastly, they consider their presence indispensable in tackling problems such as violence against women, the recognition of new rights and reconciling reproductive and productive work (IPU, 2000).

Their minority position and their good opinion of their own performance lead 80% to favour affirmative action policies and quotas (of between 30% and 50%), as well as the promotion of cross-cutting partnerships to form the basis of legislative gender commissions (Guzmán, 2003). As for the electoral system, women are in favour of a limit on campaign spending and advocate the creation of funds to enable women to compete on a more equal footing.

2. From a symbolic presence to parity

In 1999, women were a minority in the ministerial cabinets around the world and any female ministers were found mainly in social portfolios. By then, no ministry was formally closed to them, however (IPU, 2000). In 2006, there was an increase in the number of women in ministerial posts or running for president and other positions of national leadership, and this generated an impact on subjectivity with respect to the feminization of power. The figures speak of a slow and volatile process that is still far from arriving at any sort of consolidation.

Figure I.10
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: FEMALE MINISTERS IN THE LAST THREE
 PRESIDENTIAL TERMS, SIMPLE AVERAGES**
(Percentages)

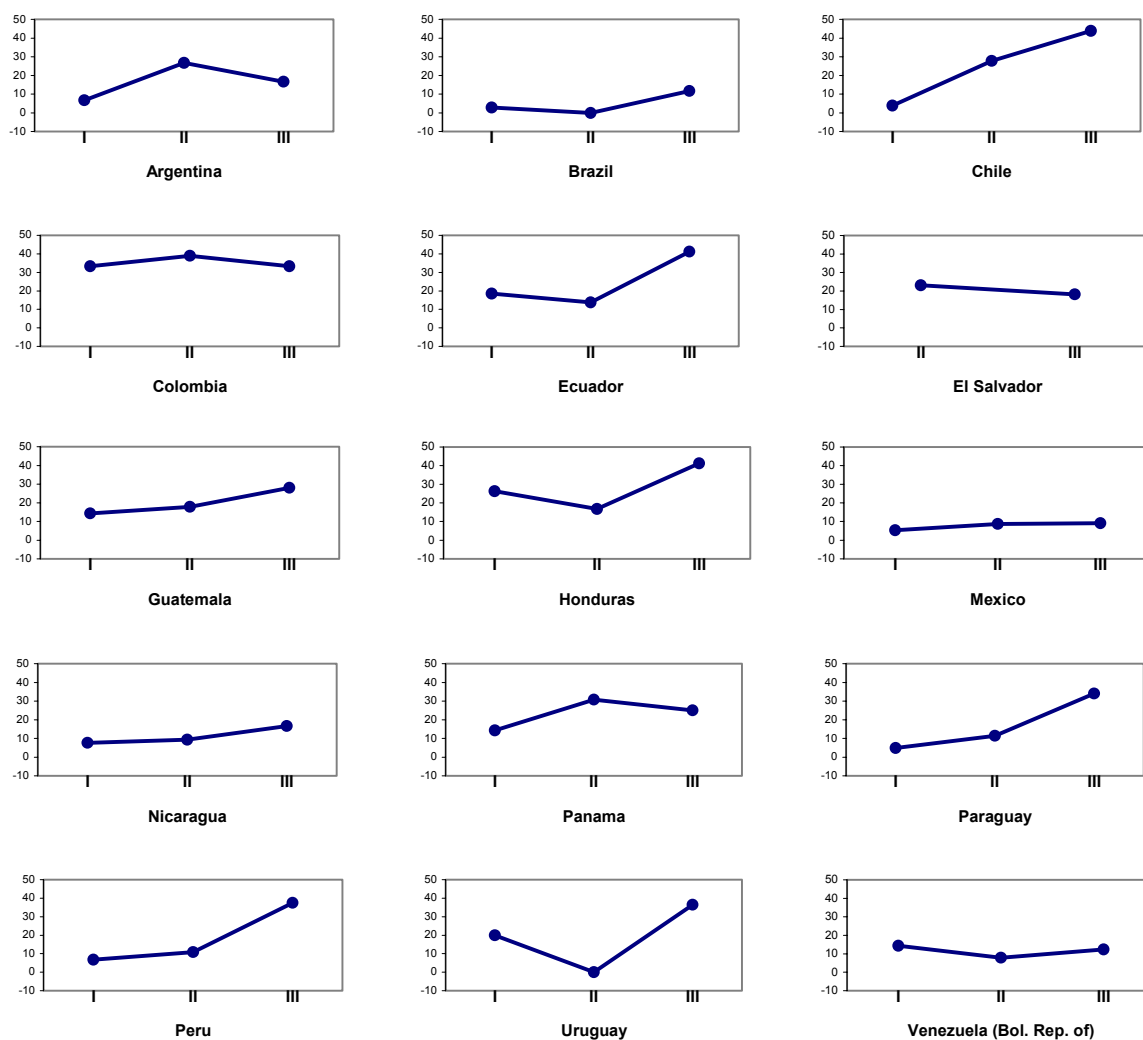


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of responses to the questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent to the countries on 15 September 2006.

In Latin America, the percentage of female ministers has followed an upward trend. The increase in the last three presidential periods has been from 12.8% in the first to 16.3% in the second and 27% in the most recent.¹⁴ In the Caribbean countries, the percentage increased between the first and second periods then stalled at around 19%. In Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru in Latin America, and in Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Martin and Suriname in the Caribbean, the number of female ministers has tended to increase more or less steadily. In Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras and Uruguay, and in the Bahamas and Grenada, the figures have improved only in the most recent period. In Argentina, El Salvador and Panama, the number of female ministers has declined in the most recent period, as it has in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Cayman Islands and Haiti. In Cuba, the most recent figures indicate that 25.9% of government ministers and 21.5% of all deputy ministers are women.

¹⁴ The third period is in course in most of the countries. The information shown includes the period up to the reception of the questionnaires sent by ECLAC on 15 September 2006.

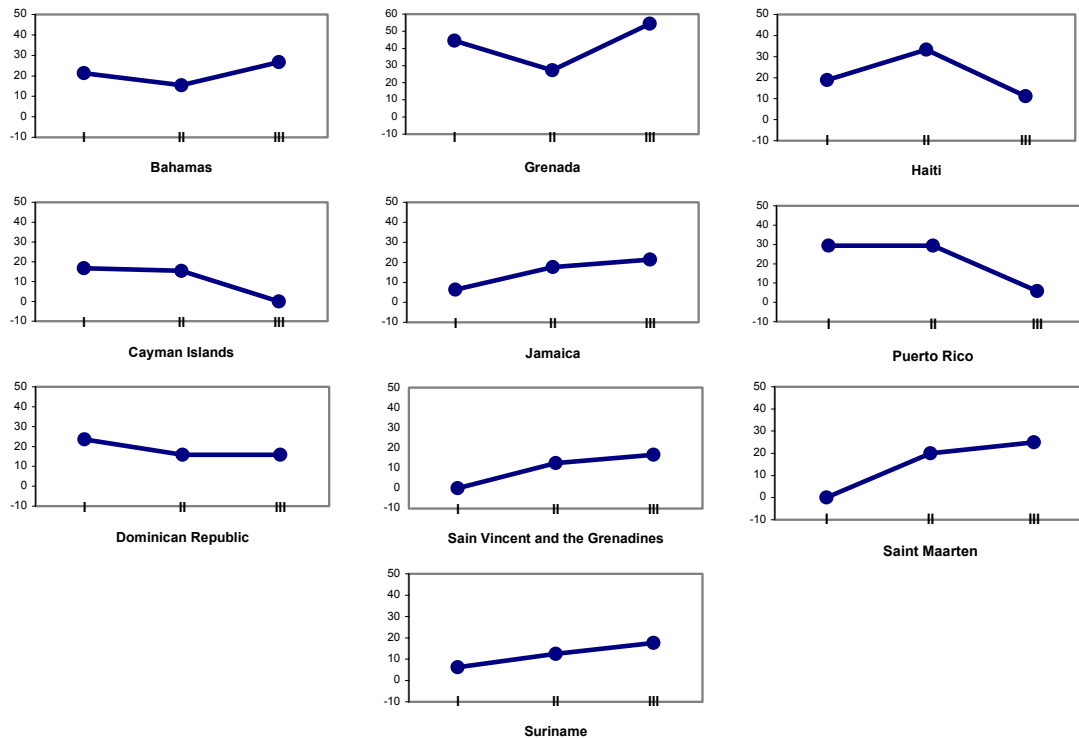
Figure I.11
**LATIN AMERICA (15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE MINISTERS IN THE LAST THREE
 PRESIDENTIAL TERMS**
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of responses to the questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent to the countries on 15 September 2006.

Note: See annex for the duration of each period in the different countries.

Figure I.12
**THE CARIBBEAN (10 COUNTRIES): FEMALE MINISTERS IN THE LAST
 THREE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS**
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of responses to the questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent to the countries on 15 September 2006.

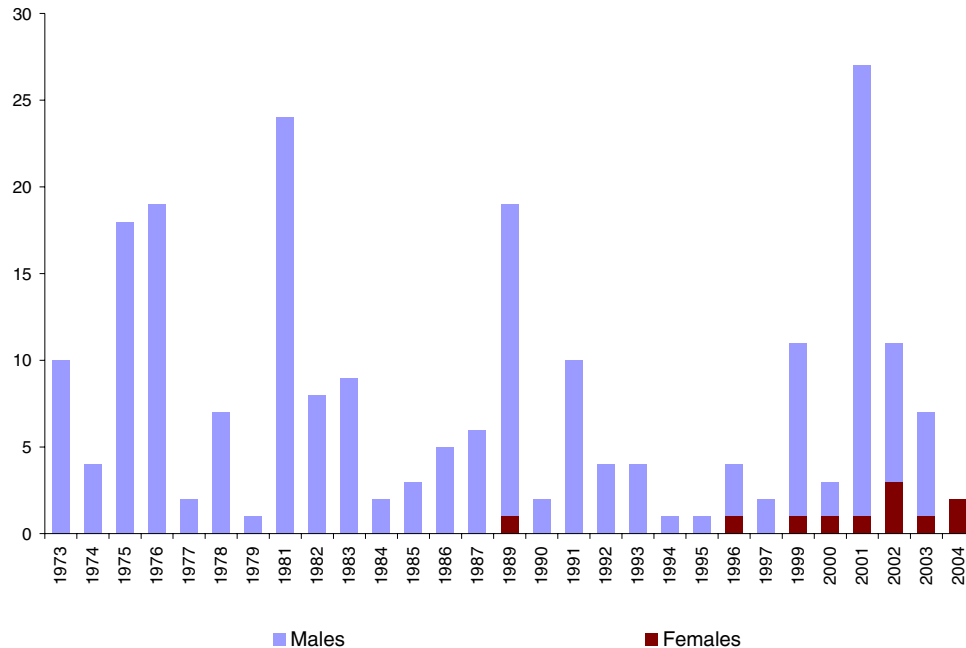
Note: See the annex for information on the executive branch and its terms of office in the relevant countries.

Generally speaking, the presence of women in ministerial cabinets is now part of the region's culture, even if their numbers are not increasing arithmetically and are not yet consolidated. In the great majority of the countries, female ministers are a minority and research on individual trajectories is lacking. It may still be asked whether women in ministerial posts share social origins, family legacies and merit in the same proportion as men do. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is no research to show any difference in age, educational level or family traits of the men and women involved in politics.

In the case of Argentina, female representation can be tracked over a longer period of time.¹⁵ Over 32 years, 245 ministers were appointed, of whom only 11 were women (4.7%). Women were first appointed in 1989 (in one ministry) and then not again until 1996. From that year, women figure constantly up to 2005, but have remained a minority.

¹⁵ Argentina has records on all male and female ministers in 18 ministries from 1973 to 2005.

Figure I.13
ARGENTINA: MALE AND FEMALE MINISTERS BY YEAR, 1973-2004
(Percentages)

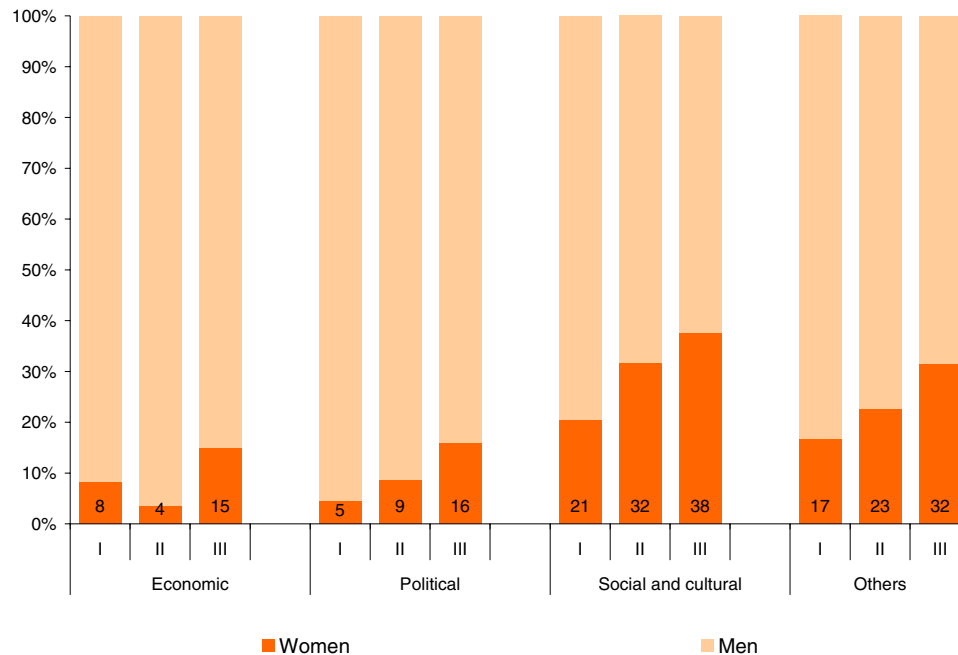


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of “Rulers” [online] <http://rulers.org/rula2.html#argentina> [date of reference: 30 November 2006].

There are barely any women with economic portfolios in Latin American government cabinets, very few with responsibility for political affairs and slightly more with social portfolios. In the most recent period, 38% of ministerial posts occupied by women were in social ministries, which was a 17-percentage-point rise with regard to the first presidential term examined. Between the first and the third terms, the proportion of women rose by 11 percentage points in political portfolios and by 7 points in those concerned with economic affairs.¹⁶ For the first time, women hold defence portfolios simultaneously in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, which is a notable development since these ministries have traditionally been occupied by men in those countries.

¹⁶ The ministries have been classified in four groups: political, economic, social and cultural, and others. In many cases, ministries cover too many different fields or their areas of responsibility are grouped in too many different ways to be placed in any single category. Generally speaking, the social and cultural cabinet consisted of the portfolios of education, health, labour, housing, women’s affairs and other similar areas; the economic cabinet comprised the ministries of economic affairs, finance, energy, mining, communications, transport, public works, agriculture, tourism and related fields; and the political cabinet consisted mainly of ministries of the interior, external affairs, justice, security and defence and other similar matters. “Others” included ministries of the environment and science and technology and “mixed” ministries, which are most commonly found in the Caribbean countries and have responsibility for a number of different areas.

Figure I.14
LATIN AMERICA (15 COUNTRIES): COMPOSITION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS IN THE LAST THREE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS, BY SEX ^a
(Percentages)



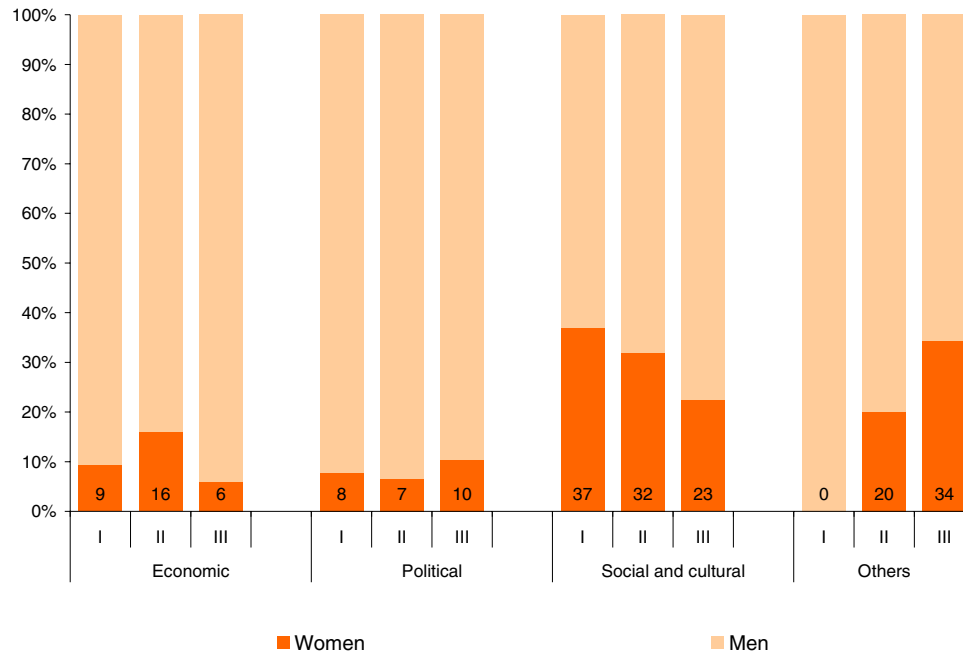
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of replies to the questionnaires sent to the respective countries, Santiago, Chile, 2006.

^a Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

A breakdown by area of responsibility shows that, at present (the third presidential term in the study), around 50% of female ministers in Latin America hold portfolios in the social area, 22% in the economic field and 21% in political affairs. In the Caribbean, 34.6% of female ministers have social portfolios, 11.5% political portfolios and 7.7% economic ones. Most of these ministers have responsibility for mixed cabinets covering different areas of ministerial work.

A review of ministries held by women in the Caribbean during the last three presidential terms shows that they have gradually been gaining access to high-level portfolios in the “hard core” areas of the State. The number of women with responsibilities in the economic area varies from one period to another, however. Those working in political affairs have increased in number slowly but systematically, while there have been many women in the social and cultural area in all three periods, albeit with a sharp drop from 37% to 23% between the first and second terms. In the most recent term, the cabinets classified under “others” had the highest percentage of women (34%).

Figure I.15
THE CARIBBEAN (10 COUNTRIES): COMPOSITION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS IN THE LAST THREE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS, BY SEX ^a
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of replies to the questionnaires sent to the respective countries, Santiago, Chile, 2006.

^a Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Martin, Suriname.

The increasing numbers of women in political, economic and social and cultural ministries, albeit in different proportions, show that there are now no areas closed to women. Although women are not often elected to be president or prime minister, they have served as such in six Caribbean countries: Haiti and Guyana have had female presidents, while Bahamas, Dominica, Haiti, Guyana, Jamaica and the Netherlands Antilles have had female prime ministers, twice in the case of Dominica and five times in the Netherlands Antilles (see table I.6). Five English-speaking Caribbean countries have had a female governor-general and a female governor was elected in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico for the first time in 2000. In turn, this governor appointed two female judges to the supreme court, thereby increasing the percentage of female supreme court judges from 0% to 33%.¹⁷

¹⁷ Information provided to ECLAC by the Office of the Women's Advocate of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico on 29 May 2007.

Table I.6
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (17 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES): TIMELINE
 SHOWING THE FIRST FEMALE HEAD OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCH,
 1961-2006**

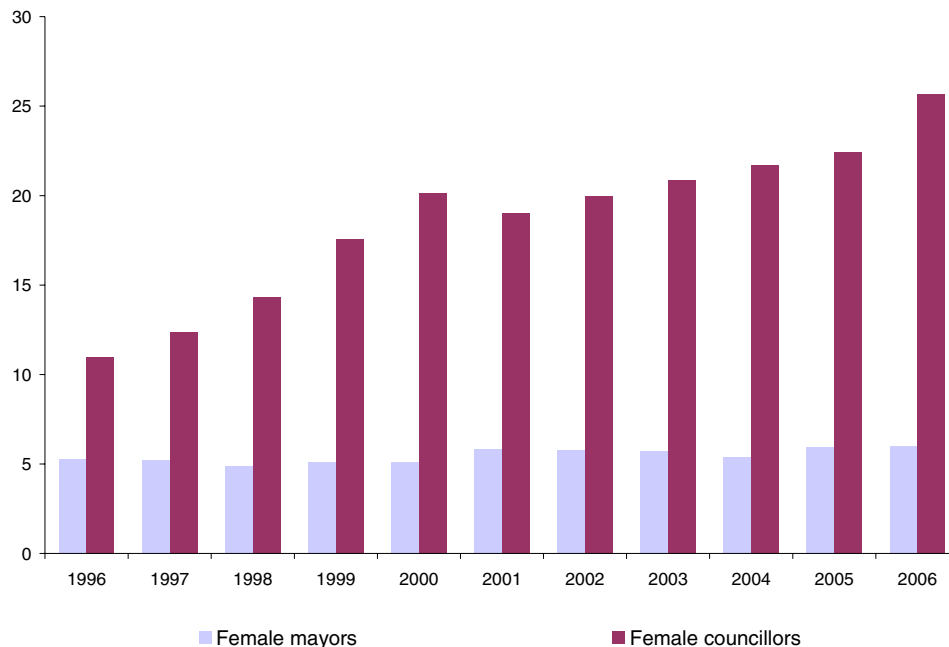
Country	Name	Term
Presidents		
Argentina ^a	María Estela Martínez de Perón	1974-1976
Bolivia ^a	Lidia Gueiler Tejada	1979-1980
Haiti	Ertha Pascal-Trouillot	1990-1991
Nicaragua	Violeta Barrios de Chamorro	1990-1997
Ecuador	Rosalía Arteaga Serrano	1997
Guyana	Janet Jagan	1997-1999
Panama	Mireya Moscoso Rodríguez	1999-2004
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	2006-present
Governors		
Belize	Elmira Minita Gordon	1961-1993
Barbados	Ruth Nita Barrow	1990-1995
Saint Lucia	Calliopa Pearllette Louisy	1997-present
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico	Sila María Calderán Serra	2000-2005
Bahamas	Ivy Dumont	2002-2005
Montserrat	Deborah Barnes-Jones	2004-present
Prime Ministers		
Dominica	Mary Eugenia Charles	1980-1995
Netherlands Antilles	María Liberia-Peters	1985
Haiti	Claudette Werleigh	1995-1996
Guyana	Janet Jagan	1997-1997
Bahamas	Cynthia A. Pratt	2005
Jamaica	Portia Simpson-Miller	2006-present

Source: “Worldwide guide to women in leadership” [online] <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/> [date of reference: 31 May 2007]; information provided to ECLAC by the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in June 2007.

^a María Estela Martínez de Perón (1974-1976) and Lidia Gueiler Tejada (1979-1980) acted as heads of State in Argentina and Bolivia, respectively, although they were not elected to power by popular vote.

The representation and participation of Latin American and Caribbean women in local decision-making has evolved in a similar manner. Regionwide, the number of local councillors has risen strongly, from 11% in 1996 to 25% in 2006, or twice as many councillors in absolute terms. The percentage of female mayors in the region, however, has changed little in the past 10 years, hovering at very low levels of around 5% or 6% (see figure I.16).

Figure I.16
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (25 COUNTRIES): REGIONAL PATTERN OF WOMEN
 IN LOCAL POWER**
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of responses to the questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation sent to the countries on 15 September 2006.

The municipality is the organ of representation and government that is closest to the citizenry, so it seems paradoxical that efforts have not been made to help women to accede to positions of municipal power, the majority of which are occupied by men. Evidently, the proximity of the government body to the citizenry does not correlate positively with the proportion of women in representative and leadership posts in municipalities. The principle of proximity that specifically legitimizes local government apparently does not operate to favour gender equity (Massolo, 2003).

According to the available information, the number of women councillors varies both within and across countries. Between the first and last of the three most recent presidential terms, the proportion of women at this level rose from 14.2% to 26.8% in Chile, from 22.5% to 76.1% in the Dominican Republic, from 8.2% to 31.7% in Ecuador, from 10.7% to 31.2% in Suriname and from 0.0% to 15% in Uruguay. In other countries where there was no strong leverage for women's participation, the proportion remained stable: El Salvador (around 21%), Guatemala (5.1%-5.8%), Brazil (11.1%-12.6%) and Nicaragua (22%-23.6%).

Few countries showed significant increases in the number of female mayors. Countries that did stand out, however, were Costa Rica, where the percentage rose from 6.2% to 28.4%, Dominican Republic, where the increase was from 1.7% to 11.9% and Cuba, where the proportion of female mayors rose from 5.3% in the first period to 14.8% today. In contrast, the number of female mayors declined in many countries over the last three periods. This is the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where the proportion decreased from 8.6% to 7.7%, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, where the drop

was from 9% to 1.3%, Jamaica (from 12.5% to 7.4%), Panama (from 13.4% to 9.3%), Honduras (from 9.5% to 6.7%), and Mexico (from 3.8% to 3.5%).¹⁸ No women occupied mayoral posts in Uruguay between 1995 and 2006, whereas 57 men did so.

As at the national level, quota systems have a strong impact at the local level when they are implemented in a way that takes existing electoral systems into consideration. Quotas have proven to be a successful strategy for the election of female mayors, with higher numbers being elected in Costa Rica (up from 6.2% to 28.4%), Ecuador (from 3% to 5.9%) and the Dominican Republic (from 1.7% to 11.9%), although the increase fell short of the national target in all three cases. The use of quotas has not brought any substantive change and, indeed, has had the opposite effect to that expected, in Bolivia and Honduras, where the percentage of female mayors has decreased despite the existence of quota laws.

Essentially, the greatest achievements have been seen in the numbers of female councillors, which have risen in all the countries with quota laws except in Brazil, Colombia and Panama, where there has been some increase, but no more than three percentage points since the first period. Paraguay and the Dominican Republic stand out, since the proportion of female councillors has reached 42.6% and 76% in those two countries, respectively. In Bolivia, application of the principle of alternation in the 1999 elections has raised the proportion of women councillors to over 30%.

As far as numbers of female councillors go, the situation has changed significantly in Chile and Cuba, where women now account for 26.8% and 23.4% of councillors, respectively. El Salvador and Nicaragua also display percentages of some 20% to 25%, but these countries have experienced less variation with respect to the first period and have actually seen the proportion of women decline in the last legislative period with respect to the previous one.

As noted in the introduction, the tendency towards a higher proportion of women in politics is, in most cases, the outcome of social mobilizations in which the campaign for women's participation has coincided with a need for legitimization on the part of political parties and democratic systems. Although women are now increasingly likely to be found in elected posts and those that entail decision-making, Chile is the only country to have formed a parity-based government as part of a political agenda and to have explicitly acted on the conviction that women have a contribution to make to democracy, public service and management. In Colombia too the proportion of women in the executive branch has been made an institutional requirement, although only at the level of 30%. This is the only country whose legislature has approved an affirmative action rule at this level, and this has translated into greater stability in the numbers of women (see figure I.11). The experience of countries that lack such legislation shows that significant progress can be made during a particular government mandate, but will not necessarily last long enough to change the political culture.

The female ministers in the administration of President Bachelet agree that a parity-based administration is conducive to the mainstreaming of gender equity in government policy and to the

¹⁸ The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has begun a survey of the local institutional structure of gender in Latin America and of women's participation in local politics, as well as case studies in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru regarding the participation of indigenous women in governance processes and in local government, based on research conducted by Alejandra Massolo, Claudia Ronaboldo, Gilles Cliche and Antonieta Castro. These efforts represent inputs for the project on the strengthening of governance with a gender focus and women's participation in local politics, which is being financed by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI). The project's findings and the respective documentation are available [online] <http://www.un-instraw.org/participacionpolitica/default8.htm>.

adoption of measures to combat inequality. The fact that these women are in positions of authority relieves them of having to constantly negotiate and demonstrate the importance of such measures. They also speak of a new climate of mutual assistance and a more relaxed style of political management and authority. Their presence in senior posts also places them in a prime position for identifying valuable professional women who may have been marginalized at work with no prospect of advancement. Under female authority, these professional women are more likely to achieve positions of responsibility. The subsequent upward career paths of the women concerned is evidence of the discrimination that they had been subjected to previously and demonstrates the importance of having a critical mass of female professionals in positions of responsibility (Seminar on parity and equality in the government of Michelle Bachelet, Santiago, Chile, 16 December 2006).

One of the virtues of the parity agenda has been to demonstrate that women are capable of representing society as a whole. Another has been to encourage the democratic demands put forward by different segments of society, such as indigenous and Afrodescendent women who, through such organizations as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, have campaigned for the right to participate and to give or withhold their free, prior and informed consent in the formulation of policies to promote equality.

The increase, albeit at different rates, in the proportion of women in the legislative and executive branches reflects cultural changes as regards recognition of their capabilities. It also reflects increased access to material resources and prestige and entails the creation of a critical mass of women among political authorities and representatives. The fact that women occupy a variety of ministerial and legislative positions shows that the time is now ripe for efforts to make parity an objective in the region.

The authorities of machineries for women's advancement have identified a number of obstacles.¹⁹ The greatest of these has to do with the difficulty of reconciling public life with family responsibilities. This is compounded by a poor image of politics among the citizenry and far from negligible obstacles as regards financing and women's economic capacities.

Many female politicians, government authorities, female intellectuals and NGOs have taken up the call for parity.²⁰ Generally speaking, there is agreement that the changes have been occurring too slowly and that there is a need for policies on affirmative action, such as quota mechanisms in the legislative and executive branches; Colombia offers the clearest example of these. Such measures are needed to break down the cultural and political resistance which is evident in all the countries, even if opinions as to where to apply them do not necessarily coincide. In some countries it has been found necessary to specify affirmative action measures in constitutional provisions, while in others work at the political level has proved more fruitful.

Representatives from the Caribbean countries have pointed to the importance of engaging in awareness-raising by enlisting the media and working to involve men in the campaign for parity. Cuba also notes that education and the political will of leaders have a strong bearing on women's advancement.

Lastly, all the representatives who participated in the virtual forum said that such strategies must be accompanied by efforts to strengthen the institutional fabric of gender. This includes positioning

¹⁹ Virtual Forum of Ministers for Women's Affairs, 29 January 2007.

²⁰ As part of these calls, ECLAC organized two seminars on the subject of parity and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted agreements on the need to incorporate the issue into the contemporary political agenda.

agencies at the highest level and establishing institutions to monitor the implementation of measures, such as the regional observatories of women's affairs in Peru and the Gender Observatory in Colombia.

The main challenges include the need to associate the parity campaign with the process of vindicating and legitimizing political activity in times of democracy in a way that takes the fact into account that women's active political participation in public affairs is influenced by factors that consign it to a more private sphere of activity. Another influential factor that limits women's political participation in elections and decision-making at all levels is the lack of a stronger State, which restricts access to social services that would buttress women's involvement in society. This situation is further compounded by all the various implications of poverty.

Violence against women, in both the private and public spheres, is another major limiting factor. In the public domain, violence is generally manifested in psychological and verbal shows of aggression against women taking part in political processes which leads them to fear social sanctions that may damage their family life as well as their role in other spheres of activity.

One challenge about which there was unanimous agreement by the ministers and gender authorities participating in the virtual forums and subregional preparatory meetings for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was that of promoting the active participation of historically excluded sectors, such as indigenous and Afrodescendent women. The racism faced by indigenous women in institutional, structural and legal domains, as well as in daily life, translates into a much more limited role for them than for the rest of the female population, and this issue must be confronted. Despite this constraint, indigenous women, especially in Central America, have clearly demonstrated the fact that they stand ready and willing to take up a role at various levels in terms of both participation and decision-making. As an illustration of the inevitable link between parity and democracy, it may be noted that participation by indigenous women in public affairs in Guatemala began to come to the fore in 1986, just as the country was embarking on its transition to democracy.²¹

The authorities responsible for national machineries for the advancement of women in the region emphasized the importance of providing leadership and management training for women and of strengthening participation at the local level in order to further the strategies being pursued to promote women's empowerment at all levels. They also advocated the use of communications strategies with a view to dismantling patriarchal values in society and in political parties.²²

²¹ Report of the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM) and the Indigenous Women's Public Defender's Office (DEMI) of Guatemala as presented to the Subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Guatemala, May 2007).

²² One interesting experience as regards the promotion of women's political participation at the grass-roots level is that of the focal points developed by the National Women's Institute (INAMUJER) of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Women represent 65% of the membership of the grass-roots organizations involved in the social works known as "missions" and of the communal councils, which are widespread throughout the country. The legislation on communal councils treats the INAMUJER focal points as a constituent organization of the councils. INAMUJER is now conducting training in the more than 20,000 focal points to enable them to carry out their work from a gender perspective, identify women's practical and strategic needs, and create projects to help satisfy those needs.

Latin America has seen progress on the adoption of legislation to promote political participation, and the positive results of this effort have helped to make parity a feasible democratic objective. Quotas have proven to be a valuable strategy, especially when combined with appropriate electoral laws, and have garnered broad support across society. In the Caribbean the process is still slow and incipient, and political elites tend to reject the idea that quotas need to be adopted on a temporary basis. The significant number of women serving in government cabinets as a result of the political will of governors and parties constitutes a slightly more encouraging picture in the Caribbean than in Latin America, but the situation in this respect is unstable in both subregions. This is an ongoing process which requires careful monitoring to ensure that women's political participation can be consolidated in the terms set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

II. WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, WITH REFERENCE TO UNPAID WORK

The purpose of this section is to analyse women's contribution to the economy and to social protection, with particular reference to unpaid work. The replacement of the idea of "social security" with that of "social protection" in development parlance has meant a quite significant conceptual shift, since "social security" referred to a wide range of social provision in which the State played a leading role, not just as service provider but as regulator and financing agent too. The idea of social protection, on the other hand, implies a far more restricted model in which the State has a smaller presence and the market, individuals and families play a greater role, taking over many of the functions and responsibilities involved (Pautassi, 2005). The analysis in the present document concentrates on the relationship between paid work, which has been extensively studied throughout history, and unpaid work, which has received much less attention and is usually overlooked in economic analysis and public policies.

As indicated in the introduction to this document, the sexual division of labour is at the heart of gender inequality, which is underpinned by a patriarchal family structure where the man is the highest authority and sole provider and there is a rigid division of tasks and responsibilities, regulated by social norms that have become ingrained over time. This document attempts to show the interactions between the public and private spheres that help to perpetuate inequality.

For over two decades, economists and academics have highlighted the significance of the rapid influx of large numbers of women into the labour market (United Nations, 2005b; Rico and Marco, 2006). Although governments recognized at the Fourth World Conference on Women that women were key contributors to the economy and to anti-poverty efforts "through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace", progress had been slower than hoped because the care of children, other family members, the infirm and the elderly was a responsibility that fell disproportionately on women, owing to lack of equality and the unbalanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men (United Nations, 1995a, chapter 2).

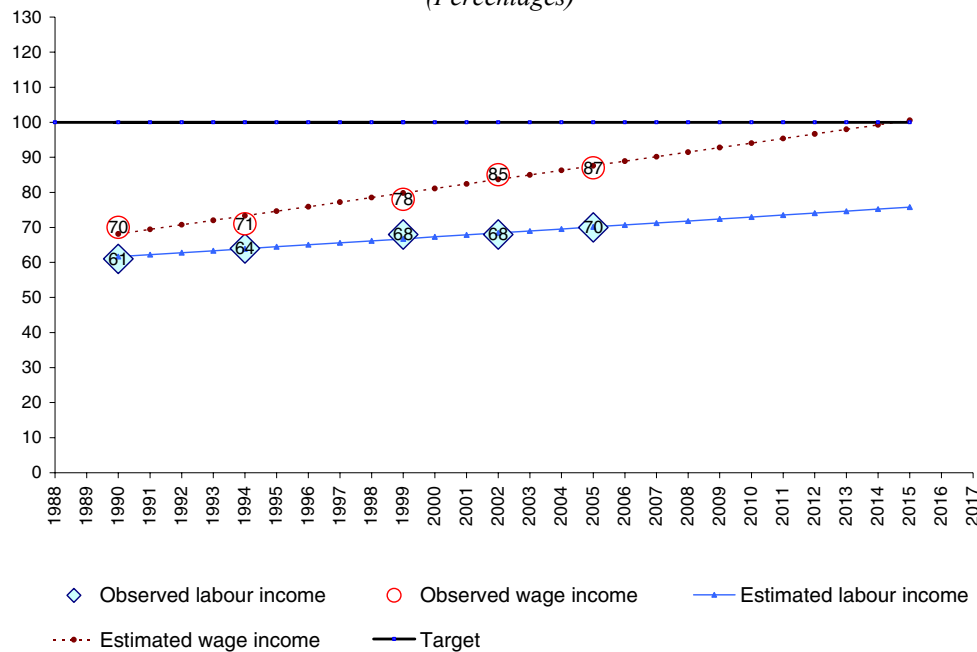
One of the most widely recognized contributions of women's work has been its positive impact in reducing poverty. Despite this contribution, however, even the most educated women earn less than men, women generally receive a lower return on their education, female unemployment is higher and the horizontal and vertical segmentation of the labour market has not changed significantly (ECLAC, 2007a; Rico and Marco, 2006).

ECLAC research has shown over and over again that workplace discrimination against women is reflected in pay irrespective of educational level (see statistical annex). In 2005, women's earnings from work of all kinds averaged 70% of men's in Latin America, while their wage incomes were 87% of men's. From the trend of progress in closing this gap since 1990, it can be projected that equal pay for men and women ought ideally to be achieved by 2015, while women's overall incomes should stand at 75% of men's that year (see figure II.1).

Labour market inequality is reflected in the pension system, and this is true whether countries have carried out reforms or not, with women being placed at a disadvantage because they remain outside the system or because they receive lower pensions and have to make them last longer (ECLAC, 2006b; Marco, 2004a and 2004b). In short, the evidence of employment discrimination is so overwhelming that the entry of women into the paid job market is recognized as one of the most significant new developments for the economy, society and the family (Arriagada, 2007) while it is also accepted that,

despite some positive and encouraging trends, progress (albeit irreversible) has been very slow. There is less agreement about the causes of continuing discrimination, the importance of women's work and the reasons for promoting it. If women's paid work contributes to development and the family economy, then why is it not being encouraged? If women have not achieved equality in the labour market and in the family, is it because of their own shortcomings, or because their education or natural endowments lead them to give priority to care over paid work?

Figure II.1
LATIN AMERICA: WOMEN'S AVERAGE EARNINGS COMPARED TO MEN'S, URBAN AREAS,
OBSERVED VALUES AND PROJECTIONS, 1990-2015
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), “Gender statistics” [online] http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/proyectos/perfiles_en/comparados/trabajo12.htm, on the basis of special tabulations of data from the household surveys of the countries concerned.

This study shows that the sexual division of labour has been and remains a functional part of economic systems (Benería, 1995; Elson, 1992; Henderson, 1994), since it ensures a labour supply subsidized by the work of women, who produce cost-free goods and services that would otherwise have to be provided by the market or the State. Women's ability to participate in the labour market is affected by what the feminist economist Ingrid Palmer (1992) has called “the reproduction tax” arising from the unpaid work they perform in the home because of an unwritten pact that endorses men as the universal economic providers for their families and women as carers. This is reflected in philosophical debates that credit women with a special moral predisposition for caregiving. The crux of the matter is that women are associated with the care ethic and with a “natural” predisposition to give primacy to interpersonal and affective networks. From this dichotomous standpoint, men are seen as being more individualistic and

more concerned with the ethic of justice prevailing in the public sphere (Hierro, 1998).²² The concept of “extreme individualism” in philosophy is equivalent to the “rational economic man” in economics.²³

An analysis based on the public-private dichotomy masks the decisive impact that decisions taken in the public sphere have on the most intimate aspects of people’s lives. The process of women’s emancipation has gradually shifted the boundary between the two worlds. Not only have women gone out to work and study, but progress with human rights has led to standards and institutions concerning themselves with the private sphere so that they now regulate conjugal life, birth rates, gender violence and innumerable other aspects that have brought the rights principle into the heart of the family. Similarly, changing family structures —the shift from the extended to the nuclear and one-parent family— have altered economic and political arrangements and affected the organization of labour. Changes in women’s aspirations, as they increasingly seek greater economic, physical and political autonomy, need to be treated by policymakers as a genuine long-term shift since, for all the discrimination in the labour market, the region’s women show no sign of wishing to go back to their traditional roles.

The main concern of governments has been to change the way the market (including the labour market) functions and to find ways of promoting productive development and growth. In this context, unpaid female work has received no consideration other than a bare acknowledgement of its existence as a factor associated with an instinct for altruism or care. According to the data available, women in the labour market have mainly gone into care-related activities such as paid domestic work, which employed an average of 13.5% of women in urban areas and 10.7% in rural areas of the region around 2005 (ECLAC, 2007a), followed by health services, education and, to a lesser extent, productive activities.²⁴

The traditional sexual division of labour did not concern itself with the divide between the productive and reproductive spheres, since it assigned clearly differentiated realms, spheres of action and roles to men and women. The issue of shared responsibility for domestic tasks emerged in particular historical circumstances and is associated with structural and intersubjective changes (Céspedes, 2002).

This document examines changes in gender relations and demonstrates the importance of promoting an ethic of shared responsibility for women and men in both the public and the private spheres, while advocating the design of policies to facilitate the working life of both sexes, improve the terms on which women participate in the labour market and support an active role for men in unpaid domestic work. The emphasis on responsibility should not mean a greater burden for women, nor should it be left at the mercy of individual preferences. The point is to reduce their responsibilities in the private sphere, and this means that measures are needed from public institutions and policymakers to promote the sharing of obligations (with more of them being accepted by institutions and by men) and to increase the responsibility of the public sphere for the enforcement of men’s and women’s rights and obligations.

²² See Gilligan (1977) for a fuller account of the debate contrasting the ethics of justice and the ethics of care.

²³ See Hierro (1998), Maffia (1994) and Amorós (1985) for a broader overview of this debate.

²⁴ In Argentina, the health sector provides about 8% of all female employment and 65% of all health workers are women (Pautassi, 2006). In the productive sector, women make up the bulk of unpaid family workers. In Latin America, 18% of female workers in the agriculture and fishing sectors were unpaid in 2004, as compared to 5.5% of men (Rico and Marco, 2006).

A. CAREGIVING, UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY

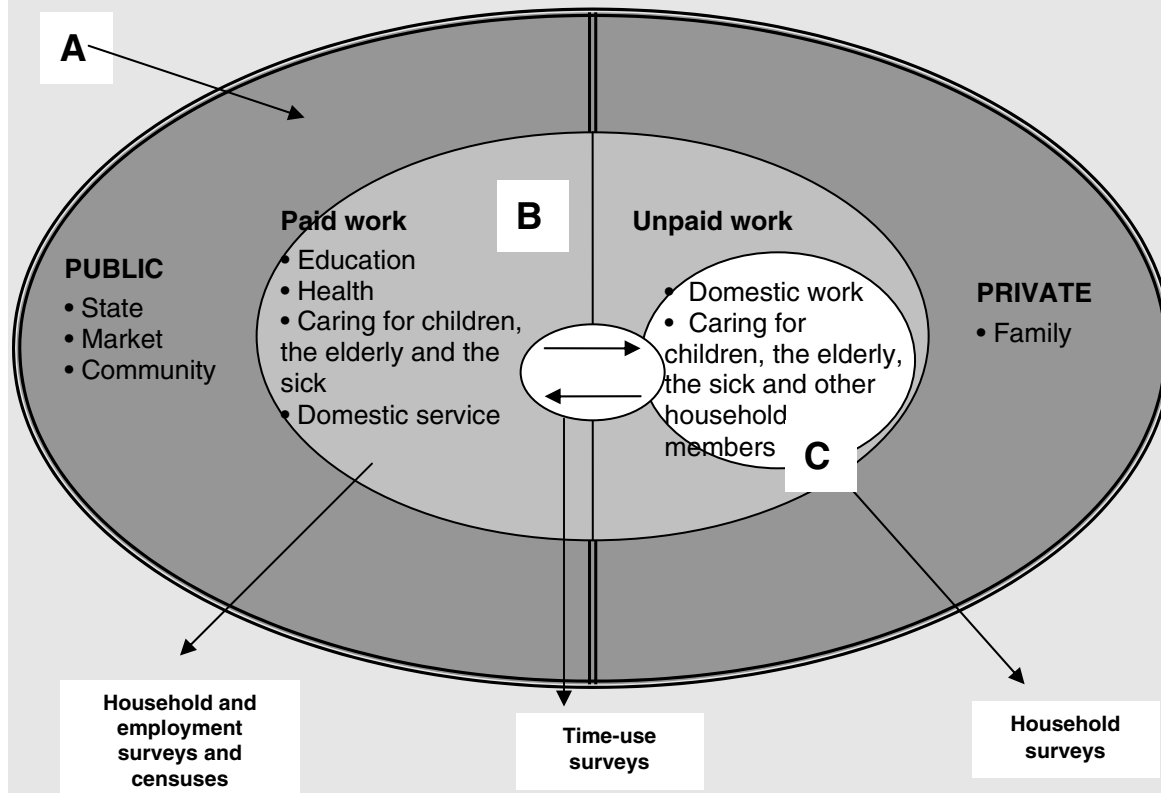
Caregiving has been analysed from a variety of perspectives. Firstly, it has been understood as the most basic survival activity. Human beings require care from birth for their feeding, health and personal development, and caring therefore has psychological and emotional connotations that are inseparable from the life of any human being. Societies have organized caregiving activities both within and outside the family. As noted earlier, these tasks have usually been associated with women because of the cultural assumption that they tend to form networks whereas men tend to develop their individual capabilities. Secondly, each society organizes caregiving in the public sphere, with policies for childcare, nutrition, health, education and others, which have traditionally relied for their success on the active involvement of women. Research has shown again and again that, as well as working in the private sphere, women have also played the role of intermediaries between primary health policies and health ministries, childcare services, the receipt of cash transfers for family welfare and anti-poverty programmes, while producing and organizing the consumption of donated foodstuffs and other anti-poverty programmes that have been conducted in the region (Serrano, 2005). In almost all these studies, women's time is a non-existent variable and so its economic value is not included in calculations.

Caregiving is part of the unpaid work of social or domestic reproduction. This work is part of a material and symbolic process characterized by maintenance of the home and domestic goods, physical care and nutrition, socialization, the education and upbringing of minors, the maintenance of social relationships and psychological support for family members. Although the functions of this work have been the same for centuries, the actual activities carried out, their relative weight and the technology used to attain the intended objectives reflect the cultural diversity and economic inequalities of each country and the historical changes that have occurred in society and the family.

Some authors (Picchio, 2001) divide this work into: (i) domestic work, meaning the processing of goods and the care and maintenance of the home; (ii) caring for people (mainly children, the sick and the elderly), and (iii) work done of necessity, namely interaction between the domestic and public spheres entailed by family responsibilities, such as taking children to school, paying bills, or carrying out other necessary tasks and procedures; other authors have called these activities "support services" (García and De Oliveira, 2006). The relative weight of these three components has changed over time but the total burden has not, an example being the case of families where the time spent preparing food diminishes over the life cycle, but the time spent on children or on necessary care activities increases.

Care work has quality characteristics that are of vital importance for the sustainability of the system as a whole, and this gives it institutional significance. Since well-being is the ultimate objective of social reproduction work, this has a structural connection with the production, distribution and exchange of wealth, making it one of the major aggregates of the economic system (Picchio, 2001). The need for unpaid work is permanent, since it makes up the gap between available income and social consumption norms, and in particular between the conditions of wage-paying work and living conditions. The income boost represented by unpaid work is not just a statistical convention but is real and serves to narrow the gap between family resources and consumption levels. The permanent and growing tensions and contradictions between the conditions of the social reproduction process and those of goods production require a new social pact; they cannot be resolved through symbolic enhancement of the capabilities of women (who are increasingly perceived as "superwomen" in the public mind), or through cash subsidies to families, unless there is also a debate in which these tensions and contradictions are approached as inherent characteristics of the economic and social system (Picchio, 2001).

Box II.1
**THE WORK OF CARE IN SOCIETY: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN
 THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES**



To analyse the place of caregiving and its interactions with the public and private spheres, society (set A) has been divided into two parts, representing the traditional dichotomy between the public and private spheres. Within this set is subset B, which represents the work of caregiving. In the public sphere, consisting of the State, the market and the community, paid work is identified in the sectors of education, health, care provided to children, the elderly and the sick, and domestic service, which can be captured and measured using household and employment surveys and censuses. In the private sphere, i.e., the family, there is subset C, consisting of unpaid domestic work and care provided to children, the elderly and sick and other household members, of which a partial estimate can be formed through the countries' household surveys. Time-use surveys can be employed as an information-gathering instrument to estimate the time given over by men and women to caregiving in the public and private spheres, and to understand the dynamic of exclusion and segmentation in the labour market as a result of the care responsibilities assigned to women. The social and economic value of care, measured in terms of time use, is a non-monetary subsidy that contributes to the functioning of society.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The “community mothers” of Colombia, mothers’ clubs in Bolivia, “glass of milk” associations in Peru and women who receive cash transfers from the different social programmes in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are clear examples of the mobilization of cultural mechanisms of protection and care for the benefit of social programmes, enabling

the State to tap into reserves of altruism within the family in order to achieve its social goals.²⁵ None of these countries has information on how much the State saves because of the “generosity” of women, whose unpaid work does not show up in government expenditure figures.

In the case of the Oportunidades programme in Mexico, the responsibility-sharing requirement of certain programme activities devolves upon women, often requiring them to travel to attend health centres and education and nutrition workshops or to receive payments, on top of the reproductive obligations for which they tend to have sole responsibility. Despite the positive effects the programme has had, it does entail an extra burden of work and time for many women, and other productive and reproductive obligations suffer as a result (González de la Rocha, 2006). Thus, while on the one hand the Oportunidades programme incorporates features intended in principle to empower women beneficiaries (grants are 10% higher for girls and payments are made only to mothers), it is also assumed as a matter of course that women are the sole providers of care and reproductive services within the home (Arriagada and Mathivet, 2007).

These programmes can be seen as a point of intersection between cash transfer programmes based on the cultural outlook that assigns the caring role to women and other programmes driven by changes in women’s attitudes and government appraisals that explicitly aim to recognize the social and economic value of the care provided by them in the family and the community.

Although women are over-represented in paid caregiving work, their readiness to carry out care functions within the family remains unchanged. The present document highlights this dimension of care and specifically analyses the role that women play in the social reproduction of the existing model because of their unpaid work and the impact this has on their role in the labour market.

The predicament of women is also manifested in dissatisfaction as they are overwhelmed by the burden of family responsibilities and the almost complete lack of male involvement. Moreover, public policies have proved ineffective in promoting greater equality in this area, largely because they overlook its cultural dimension and the need to adopt legislative or whatever other types of measures —monetary or fiscal incentives— are needed to bring about change in male and female behaviour. The “love economy” (Henderson, 2005) is nothing other than the production in the home of goods and services that are not included in the national accounts, are hardly reflected in statistics, and are not taken into account by long-term social protection policies.

Gender analysis can provide a critical insight into the social determinants of female and male roles in the family and the institutions that uphold these, and can be a force for change in adapting them to the interests of a more equal society. It is not a question of discovering universal principles applicable to all circumstances and to both genders, or of reaching a timeless appreciation of female nature on which everything can be based. What is needed, rather, is a profound grasp of the morality of the present and of changes foreshadowed or sensed that tend towards more desirable approaches and perspectives (Hierro, 1998).

The public and private spheres are interdependent. Thus, when society does not take responsibility for its most disadvantaged members, the assistance given to all vulnerable groups becomes a matter for private morality. When the State or the employment legislation applicable to businesses does not provide for the welfare of children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled as a public good, the burden

²⁵ The programmes are: the Plan for Unemployed Men and Women Heads of Household in Argentina, Family Grant in Brazil, the Human Development Bond in Ecuador, Oportunidades in Mexico and Tekoporã in Paraguay.

of care on women mounts up. This unseen work—which institutions cannot do and which has to be provided personally because it is emotional in nature—has repercussions for the organization of labour.

The term “care economy” refers to the distribution of care services, and includes both the providers and the recipients. The latter may be either dependent—the elderly, the sick and children—or active in the labour market. On the provision side, there are four agents: the State, the market, civil society (the “third sector”) and the family. In the case of this last, however, the prevailing gender system means that it is not entirely accurate to say that families are responsible for the care of children or older adults. Rather, this responsibility falls directly on women as unpaid workers (Rico, 2005).

Throughout history, four types of institutions have been involved in the provision of care: civil society institutions (churches, volunteers and foundations), the State, the market and families, with families invariably playing the greatest role. In all four cases, most caregiving—whether inside or outside the home, paid or unpaid—is done by women. As societies become more complex, institutionalized care mechanisms improve, while in less modern societies it is care in the home that will predominate (Giménez, 2003).

When the State provides care services, especially in the areas of health and of basic and preschool education, women are heavily represented in terms of numbers and disadvantaged in terms of pay. When services are purchased in the market they are still regarded as women’s work, although the proportion of men participating rises as their income-generating potential increases.²⁶

The growing concern about care work is linked to the rise of certain developments, including: (i) the steadily increasing participation of women in the labour market; (ii) unemployment and exclusion among particular groups of people, heightening dependence on unpaid work; (iii) crises, business cycles and new forms of employment in the informal economy, strengthening the connection between activities performed within and outside the market; and (iv) challenges deriving from new demographic structures and changes in the family (Benería, 2006). In addition, there are other factors such as the increased demand for care resulting from the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean and some Latin American countries, which has not been sufficiently acknowledged or studied.

Like any other work, caregiving requires time and knowledge. Its peculiarity is that it is relationship-based, whether performed in the family or outside it. Within the family, its “unavoidable and disinterested” nature gives it a moral and emotional dimension. Elsewhere, care work is characterized by a relationship of service and assistance. The unifying factor in the notion of care is that it is a task performed essentially by women, whether within the family or outside it in the form of personal services provision, so that it has been claimed that “caring and femininity are two sides of the same coin” (Batthyany, 2004, p. 51).

²⁶ A recent ECLAC study containing an in-depth analysis of employment in the health sector in Argentina found that larger numbers of men were entering nursing, an activity traditionally carried out by women. Three factors accounting for the increased involvement of men were clearly identified: (i) the employment crisis, which led men to seek work in this sector; (ii) the professionalization of nursing, with higher-level academic degrees being demanded and pay improving as a result; and (iii) changes in the way the profession was perceived (Pautassi, 2006; Rovere, 2006).

The relationship between caregiving and femininity has a long history, but it begins to be seen as a problem when women enter the labour market in large numbers while remaining responsible for the provision of unpaid care, as this brings to light the tension between the time needed for care activities and the time spent on paid work. Despite this tension and the deficiencies of care in Latin American societies, the problem is not yet on the public agenda, being treated as a private matter for individual decisions and choices.

In addition to unpaid care work in the home or voluntary work in the community, the care economy in the broad sense includes the public and private provision of care outside the home. This encompasses commercial provision, provision under public-sector social programmes run by different levels of government and activities organized by the third sector. These areas are all interrelated and in each of them women make a vital quantitative and qualitative contribution to the countries' development and economy.

B. INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that States parties are responsible for ensuring the equal enjoyment of rights without any discrimination. Articles 2 and 3 require States parties to take all steps necessary, including the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, to put an end to discriminatory actions, both in the public and the private sector, which impair the equal enjoyment of rights.²⁷

The conventions of the International Labour Organization are other international instruments whereby governments undertake to adopt measures to recognize and protect women's social and biological reproduction work and ensure that men and women receive equal treatment in paid work. In particular, these include Convention No. 3 (1919) and Convention No. 103 (1952) concerning Maternity Protection, the latter being revised in 2000 with the drafting of Convention No. 183; Convention No. 100 (1951) concerning Equal Remuneration; Convention No. 111 (1958) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation; and Convention No. 156 (1981) concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (see table II.1). This last convention requires member States to adopt policies that enable workers with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to do so without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities. It also requires countries to take all measures compatible with national possibilities to enable workers with family responsibilities to choose their employment freely, facilitate their access to vocational training, and enable them to become and remain integrated in the labour force and re-enter it after an absence due to those responsibilities. Lastly, it clearly establishes that family responsibilities shall not, as such, constitute a valid reason for termination of employment.

There are other conventions that could help to further integrate the gender perspective, provided they are taken together with the treaties on the issue. One example is Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, article 20 of which provides: "Governments shall, within the framework of national laws and regulations, and in co-operation with the peoples concerned, adopt special measures to ensure the effective protection with regard to recruitment and

²⁷ Human Rights Committee, "Equality of rights between men and women (article 3)", *General Comment*, No. 28 (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10), 29 March 2000.

conditions of employment of workers belonging to these peoples.” The concept of effective protection as applied to indigenous people and women is tied to the protection of rights within and outside the family, an aspect that needs to be spelt out in laws to avoid a clash with usages and customs based on structures of patriarchal authority and subordination.

In December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly approved the first human rights treaty of the twenty-first century, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its Optional Protocol, establishing that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities (Resolution 61/106 of the United Nations General Assembly). Among the convention’s most important provisions is the one providing that “States Parties reaffirm that every human being has the inherent right to life and shall take all necessary measures to ensure its effective enjoyment by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others” (article 10). The convention also provides that States parties must ensure the “full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Convention” (article 6). Persons with disabilities must have the option of living an independent life, be included in the community, have the choice of where and with whom to live and have access to in-home, residential and other community support services (article 19).²⁸

It is important to stress that the right of the disabled to live as independently as possible needs to be given particular attention by the State, rather than simply being allowed to devolve upon the women of the family. This is a clear example of the importance of care as an indispensable activity for human development, and of the risks to women’s independence when States do not provide the means and resources for disabled people to access the services they need as beneficiaries and for men, together with women, to act as providers within and outside the home.

These international instruments, which are often reflected in national legislation, serve to give different social groups policy leverage but do not yet form part of a follow-up and monitoring system comparable to that of the institutions that oversee economic policies.

A rights-based approach is a development and policymaking strategy (OHCHR, 2004), which makes it important to analyse the State’s level of compliance with the obligations contained in the international instruments signed, and to evaluate the extent to which public policy design takes this perspective into account. In view of this, there needs to be consideration of how the rights of people performing unpaid work (domestic work in general or caregiving in particular) are formulated in international instruments and the national laws of the region’s countries.

There can be no doubt that, as Pitch (2006) points out, legal recognition of rights cannot be the only issue for women’s policy, or indeed for policy in general —or ensure the recognition of women as political subjects. Nevertheless, it can make an effective contribution to real empowerment for women (and for the elderly, children, the sick and other social groups) provided rights are treated as universal. This means transcending the particular and the concept of the minority or “vulnerable group” and positing a universality that takes account of differences (Pautassi, 2007).

²⁸ As of May 2007, the countries of the region that had signed the convention were: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Suriname.

Table II.1
**STATE OF RATIFICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CONVENTIONS
 OF MOST IMPORTANCE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK (AS OF MARCH 2007)**

	Convention 3	Convention 103	Convention 100	Convention 111	Convention 156	Convention 177	Convention 183	Convention 169
1. Antigua and Barbuda			2003	1983				
2. Argentina	1933		1956	1968	1988	2006		2000
3. Bahamas		2001	2001	2001				
4. Barbados			1974	1974				
5. Belize		2000 ^a	1999	1999	1999		2005	
6. Bolivia		1973	1973	1977	1998			1991
7. Brazil		1965	1957	1965				2002
8. Chile		1994	1971	1971	1994			1991
9. Colombia	1933		1963	1969				
10. Costa Rica			1960	1962				1993
11. Cuba	1928	1954 ^b	1954	1965			2004	
12. Dominica			1983	1983				2002
13. Dominican Republic			1953	1964				
14. Ecuador		1962	1957	1962				1998
15. El Salvador			2000	1995	2000			
16. Grenada			1994	2003				
17. Guatemala		1989	1961	1960	1994			1996
18. Guyana			1975	1975				
19. Haiti			1958	1976				
20. Honduras			1956	1960				1995
21. Jamaica			1975	1975				
22. Mexico			1952	1961				1990
23. Nicaragua	1934		1967	1967				
24. Panama	1958		1958	1966				
25. Paraguay			1964	1967				1993
26. Peru			1960	1970	1986			1994
27. Saint Kitts and Nevis			2000	2000				
28. Saint Lucia			1983	1983				
29. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines			2001	2001				
30. Suriname								
31. Trinidad and Tobago			1997	1970				
32. Uruguay		1954	1989	1989	1989			
33. Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	1944	1982 ^c	1982	1971	1984			2002
Total States ratifying	6	7	32	32	9	1	2	13

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Labour Organization, “Number of ratifications of the ILO Conventions” [online] <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/index.cfm?lang=EN>.

^a Repudiated in 2005.

^b Repudiated in 2004.

^c Repudiated in 1985.

Over 15 years ago, recognizing the heavy pressure placed on women by unpaid work originating in household needs, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean agreed in the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean to “promote more equitable sharing of family responsibilities between women and men” (ECLAC, 1995, p. 53).

Lastly, in General Comment No. 16 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, States parties are urged to “collect statistical data on women who work without payment,

social security and social benefits in enterprises owned by a family member, and include these data in their report to the Committee”.

It is clear from analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean and the treaties and conventions referred to that there has been progress with government policies designed to respond to this issue. Again, some firms have been taking major strides towards policies that take the reproductive dimension into account, particularly for women. There are not many examples as yet of corporate policies to promote the sharing of responsibilities, and where these do exist they are confined to the public sector, as in Chile and Cuba. A number of countries in the region are developing “suitable statistical means to recognize and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy, including their contribution in the unremunerated and domestic sectors, and examine the relationship of women’s unremunerated work to the incidence of and their vulnerability to poverty” (Strategic Objective A.4).

Where poverty is concerned, although the statistics still have methodological failings (Milosavljevic, 2005), most of the countries have information that shows women to be more vulnerable to poverty and, once in it, to find it harder to escape. In some countries, major efforts are being made to calculate the precise contribution of women to care activities. These include the Observatory of Gender Equity in Health Policies in Chile, Mexico’s Gender and Poverty Observatory and the Observatory of Gender Issues in Colombia, which have already yielded information illustrating the relationship between low or non-existent female earnings and the family responsibilities women take upon themselves.

The evidence for the critical situation of poor women in many countries has led governments to seek out a variety of strategies to deal with future social protection needs. In some cases, these have brought to light the non-payment of social security contributions by women who are excluded from the labour market or work in informal activities, while in others efforts have been made to compensate women for their work, especially as mothers and carers in the home, via a minimum benefit entitlement. These are recent programmes that have yet to be evaluated.

Concerning the impact of unpaid work on employment access and pension benefits, legislative measures have been taken by several countries and there are reforms afoot in which gender considerations are used to argue for affirmative action policies. In Panama, Law No. 54 (1999) amended the voluntary insurance system of the Social Security Fund to include people employed in caring for their families; in Argentina, Laws 25.994 and 24.478 extended the time limit for inclusion in the pension system for those aged over 60 who were not covered, irrespective of whether they had paid contributions. As of late 2006, 73% of the 900,000 people who had taken advantage of this pension moratorium were women with an average age of 71, and the average payment was the equivalent of US\$ 160 in Argentine pesos.²⁹

Likewise, the pension reform currently under way in Chile provides for the implementation of a solidarity pillar that includes a State contribution for working men and women who have not succeeded in paying enough contributions for a basic subsistence pension by the time they retire. The “basic solidarity pension” will be received by men and women over 65 who have not paid into the pension system at any time in their lives. The solidarity contribution will also supplement the pension amount due to workers

²⁹ Information provided by the Government of Argentina at the virtual forum to prepare for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, January 2007, and the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2007.

who have paid into the system only sporadically and have not accumulated enough contributions to fund a basic pension. This measure is especially beneficial for those carrying out temporary work, such as women working in the agricultural export sector, since the solidarity contribution will allow them to retire on much the same terms as other workers, on a pension that covers their basic needs.³⁰

In the case of Mexico, in early 2006 the Mechanism of Saving for Retirement Opportunities (MAROP) was established to help members of the poorest families save for their retirement. The federal government will match people's deposits peso for peso, allowing women who work in the home to build up individual savings without the need to participate in the formal labour market.³¹

Similarly, the available literature and country reports show a much more promising situation when it comes to attempts "to develop a more comprehensive knowledge of work and employment through, inter alia, efforts to measure and better understand the type, extent and distribution of unremunerated work, particularly work in caring for dependants and unremunerated work done for family farms or businesses" (Strategic Objective F.1), although this information is not updated on a regular basis and is not among the resources drawn upon by policymakers. Academics and NGOs have a very important contribution to make in this area, given how slow governments have been in making use of the information available.

Comparing the current economic situation with the progress made in ratifying the conventions, what is striking is that despite the mechanisms and provisions that now exist to guarantee gender equality, working conditions have actually become less secure in the past few years. This has been clearly detrimental to both men and women, as the rights won by workers have often been flouted. Moves to increase the flexibility of employment laws, mainly through deregulation (Todaro and Yáñez, 2004), have resulted in the introduction of part-time or reduced hours contracts, temporary working or the use of supply workers, and outsourcing, for example, which have been presented as ways of boosting job creation, especially for women of all ages and young people of both sexes. These methods have not had the promised results and female unemployment has remained consistently higher than male unemployment, topping 10% between 2002 and 2005 (ECLAC, 2006d). One reason for having a flexible working day was so that women could continue to take charge of all caregiving and domestic tasks, without any redistribution of these within households or support from the State or businesses, all this on top of low wages and the lack of social protection.

The fact is that these characteristics of economic policy in recent years have meant that the most urgent problem for many women is not to protect themselves when they have children but to be able to reconcile motherhood with the need to work. With working conditions increasingly insecure, many companies are using the "maternity problem" as a reason to press for more flexible working conditions, thus making reproduction a problem for women rather than a necessity for society. Later marriage and the drop in fertility rates among women with higher levels of education is not only part of women's move towards physical independence. It also has other causes, among them the need to reconcile working life with family responsibilities, since the higher labour costs supposedly represented by women are a

³⁰ Information provided by the Government of Chile at the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, May 2007.

³¹ Information provided by the Government of Mexico at the subregional preparatory meeting for Mexico and Central America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2007.

disincentive to their recruitment;³² nor are services provided for reproductive work, while in the most completely unprotected kinds of employment working women are penalized for “breaking the rules” by having a child. Motherhood has thus gone from being an occupational right for women to a personal matter which worsens the position of working women in some countries, particularly with the withdrawal of State social services (Pautassi, Faur and Gherardi, 2004). In others, recently elected governments have given a new impetus to social services whose effects on working women and society will need to be assessed.

This serious asymmetry between constitutions that give a large place to gender equality and the harsh reality of women’s working lives is found even as large numbers of women enter the labour market. This influx is not a temporary development associated with crises or one that can be reversed by family welfare policies, it is an ongoing process that has increased the conflicts between productive and reproductive work and the cultural tensions between female autonomy and dependence. This new situation requires comprehensive policies and a “re-engineering of time” (Darcy d’Oliveira, 2003), since it cannot be resolved simply through individual contracts and monetary relationships (Elson, 1992).

C. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION WORK IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE REGION’S COUNTRIES

Only two countries, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Ecuador, make specific reference to the value of social reproduction work in their constitutions (see box II.2). In Colombia, according to the Presidential Council for Women’s Equity, the Constitutional Court has argued for the value of unpaid domestic work on the basis of certain constitutional provisions, such as those establishing that “the law may determine that family property is inalienable and unattachable. Family relationships are based on equality of rights and duties between the couple and on mutual respect between all its members” (article 42) and that “women and men have equal rights and opportunities. Women may not be subject to discrimination of any kind. During pregnancy and after childbirth, women shall receive special assistance and protection from the State and shall be entitled to a State food allowance if they should then be unemployed or unsupported. The State shall provide special support to women heads of household” (article 43).³³

Other countries have been making significant legislative efforts to recognize the contribution made by women to development and the economy through unpaid work and, consequently, to grant them some benefits in relation to this. An example is Jamaica which, in 2004, adopted the Family Property (Rights of Spouses) Act recognizing the contribution made by spouses in the form of domestic work and childcare and stipulating that there should be no presumption that a monetary contribution was of greater value than a non-monetary one.³⁴ In 2001, the Supreme Court of Belize stipulated in the Supreme Court of Judicature Act (91 148A) that the value of unpaid domestic work, including the raising of children, should be taken into account in the division of property when a marriage or legal union was terminated. Trinidad and Tobago passed the Counting Women’s Unremunerated Work Bill in 1996, but this has not yet been

³² See Abramo and Todaro (2002) for an analysis of male and female employment costs.

³³ Response by the Government of Colombia to the survey on unpaid work and political participation sent out by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to the countries of the region (September 2006).

³⁴ Information provided by the representative of the Government of Jamaica at the virtual forum in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, February 2007.

implemented (ECLAC, 2007d). In Brazil, there is a proposal (PEC 385) before the Chamber of Deputies to amend articles 195 and 203 of the new Federal Constitution and introduce benefits for housewives aged 60 and over, who would be entitled to one minimum wage even if they had not contributed to the National Social Security Institute (INSS).³⁵

Box II.2

LATIN AMERICA: UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK IN NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS

In Ecuador, the Constitution of 1998 establishes that “the State shall encourage the incorporation of women into paid employment with equal rights and opportunities, guaranteeing them identical remuneration for work of equal value. It shall provide particularly for the enforcement of employment and reproductive rights in order to improve their working conditions and access to social security systems, especially in the case of expectant and breastfeeding mothers, working women, women in the informal and craft sectors, female household heads and widows. Any type of employment discrimination against women is prohibited. The work of their spouses or partners in the home shall be taken into consideration for the purposes of equitable compensation in special situations where the spouse or partner is at an economic disadvantage. Unpaid domestic work shall be recognized as productive labour.”^a

Box II.2 (concluded)

The 1999 Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela explicitly recognizes household work as an economic activity that adds value and produces wealth and social well-being, while also recognizing the right of every person to social security (specifically including housewives) “as a non-profit public service to ensure health care and protection when maternity-related contingencies arise”. The Constitution also states that “inability to pay contributions will not be grounds for excluding people from protection” and that “the State will guarantee equality and equity for men and women wishing to exercise their right to work”.^b

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

^a Article 36, “On labour”, second section of chapter IV, “On economic, social and cultural rights”.

^b Articles 86, 87 and 88.

The measures referred to are mainly confined to the legislative sphere; most do not have a sufficient track record for rigorous assessments to be made, and they have not on the whole translated into enduring programmes with wide coverage. Indeed, there is a dearth in the region of studies that clearly show the difference between policies favouring women, policies favouring the sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and policies openly promoting male participation in reproductive life and changes in the female employment structure, dominated as it is by care activities and services.

There is also a debate under way on the status of legislation dealing with women’s work. Not all the countries consider it necessary to amend their constitutions, although many recognize that an explicit constitutional framework encourages the adoption of policies and programmes, an example being Ecuador, where the provisions of the constitution favoured the policy initiatives adopted by the National Women’s Council. Changes to the Human Development Bond programme, which have replaced the welfare approach with a rights-based one involving recognition of women’s unpaid work, were made possible by well-judged and appropriate use of a constitutional provision, although clearly this is not enough on its own. In Costa Rica, similarly, an initiative recently presented for parliamentary debate

³⁵ Reply to the survey on unpaid work sent out by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to the countries of the region (September 2006).

seeks to reform the constitution so that it enshrines women's right to non-discriminatory treatment in job applications and establishes the right of housewives to social security.³⁶

Box II.3

ECUADOR: "YOUR WORK MATTERS!" REORIENTING THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT BOND

The Government of Ecuador is refocusing its social protection policies. As part of this, it has made changes to the Human Development Bond, which was created in 2003 as a system of direct transfers to mothers that were conditional on children in the poor beneficiary households concerned staying on at school and undergoing health check-ups. Mothers were recognized as the caregivers and the responsibility for meeting the programme conditions and overseeing the use of these resources in the home fell upon them. The programme did not make any specific provision for women's participation in decision-making processes, their financial independence or their ability to protect their rights and their children's.

From now on these transfers will be recognized as a right, the aim being to focus them in a way that acknowledges and values reproductive work. Consequently, the 995,000 women beneficiaries will receive the payments unconditionally with the message "Your work matters!" In addition, the National Women's Council (CONAMU) successfully pressed for the incorporation into this programme of the initiative known as the Networks of Social Service and Protection for Women in Poverty and Extreme Poverty. As time goes on, the networks will allow the programme to link up with other social programmes and health services, such as public-sector microcredit programmes, sexual and reproductive health services and nutrition and literacy programmes. These services will be provided by networked public- and private-sector institutions that will implement a training plan centred on the rights of women beneficiaries who live in deprived rural and urban areas and go once a month to the bank used to make programme payments. The idea is thus to relaunch the Human Development Bond and enhance its ability to generate progressive social and economic mobility and recognition for the reproductive work of women. Networks have initially been set up in six of the country's cantons during 2007, and the plan is that they should gradually be extended further afield.

Source: National Women's Council (CONAMU) of Ecuador, 2007, and Amparo Armas, "Redes e institucionalización en Ecuador. Bono de Desarrollo Humano", *Mujer y desarrollo* series, No. 76 (LC/L.2405-P), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2005.

D. LEGAL PROVISIONS GOVERNING PAID DOMESTIC WORK

It was pointed out earlier that domestic work, unlike some other activities, enjoys social legitimacy because it does not entail transgression of any cultural norm. Caring is a task for women, and serving one for poor women. As a result, care and service are the normal working occupations of the female population of the Latin America and Caribbean region. Discrimination against female domestic workers is at once a cause and a consequence of discrimination against women generally.

Analysis of job creation by occupational category in 2004 shows that 10% of all new jobs were in domestic service, a category that grew by almost 5% that year (see table II.2). Some analyses suggest that rising employment in this sector is indicative of a recovery in the earnings of middle-income groups (ECLAC, 2005), but also of a lack of job opportunities for women, especially those who are less educated (Rico and Marco, 2006).

³⁶ Report by the Government of Costa Rica to the subregional preparatory meeting for Mexico and Central America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, May 2007.

Table II.2
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: CONTRIBUTIONS TO NET JOB CREATION, 2004
(Percentages)

Contribution to non-agricultural employment growth by branch of activity		Contribution to total employment growth by occupational category	
Total	100	Total	100
Manufacturing	24	Wage workers	67
Construction	6	Own-account workers	24
Commerce, restaurants and hotels	23	Domestic service	10
Basic services	5	Unpaid workers	0
Financial services, insurance, real estate and business services	13	Other occupational categories	-1
Social, community and personal services	34		
Other branches of activity	-5		

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2004-2005* (LC/G.2279-P/E), Santiago, Chile, August 2005, United Nations publication, Sales No. S.05.II.G.2, and official figures.

Domestic work is the main source of employment for the region's women. Its treatment in legislation and public policies is indicative of gender discrimination and, particularly, of the low value set on what is considered to be women's work.

Provision is made for paid domestic work or domestic service in almost all employment legislation. On the grounds that this work possesses certain peculiarities associated with the demand for care and social reproduction in households and families, however, there has been a tendency to regulate it without regard for or recognition of the acquired rights accruing to most wage earners in other occupational categories. This highlights the particular occupational vulnerability of the region's poorest women when they enter domestic employment, since exploitative working hours and pay are legitimized in many labour codes.

Long working hours are among the openly discriminatory characteristics mentioned by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Generally speaking, the legal working day for those employed in domestic service can be as long as 12 hours. This implies a working week of up to 72 hours for this group of workers, therefore, whereas in most of the situations regulated by labour codes the maximum working week is 48 hours. The working hours of women employed in private homes can be as much as 50% longer than those of other workers. In some countries, such as Argentina, paid domestic workers are not only excluded from employment contract law, but any administrative conflicts must be settled by a special mechanism separate from the labour tribunals. Some Caribbean countries also have special legislation for domestic service, one example being Barbados, where the Domestic Employees Act regulates minimum pay and the maximum working week.

In the light of reports from the governments of the region, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has warned on a number of occasions about the unsatisfactory situation of women working in domestic service, who often earn less than the legal minimum wage and work more than the maximum working week (Birgin, 2006).

Box II.4

**REGULATION OF EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST POOR WOMEN AND SOME
EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS. PAID DOMESTIC WORK IN THE NATIONAL
LEGISLATION OF SELECTED COUNTRIES**

Argentina. Domestic service is subject to discriminatory treatment, as it is regulated by a special statute dating from 1956 which means that the employment contract law covering other workers is not applied. Decree 326 governs the employment of workers providing domestic services that do not yield an economic benefit for the employer. Among other provisions, it establishes that all persons working as live-in domestic employees shall be entitled to nine hours off at night, three hours off during the day between their morning and afternoon work, a break of 24 consecutive hours or two half days per week, and one hour a week to attend a religious service. Although bills have been introduced to reform this statute, the measure that has had the greatest impact so far on the position of women employed in private households dates from 2005, when the Federal Administration of Public Revenues (AFIP) implemented a programme of tax incentives for employers to regularize undeclared employment. As of May 2007, this policy had resulted in 260,000 women in domestic service being brought into the pension and health-care system along with their families, reducing the high level of informal working in this area.

Bolivia. Law No. 2.450 of April 2003 amended the previous legislation under which domestic workers were entitled to eight hours off—the implication being that they might work 16 hours a day. The new law established that “the working day for remunerated employment in private households is as follows: 10 hours of actual work for those living in the household where they provide their services and eight hours a day of actual work for those who do not live in the place where they provide their services” (article 11). Article 2 establishes that “the rights conferred by the present law are inalienable”.

Costa Rica. Costa Rica’s Labour Code devotes a chapter to domestic servants (chapter 8). Surprisingly in the context of legislation that is quite protective of workers’ rights, it is permissible to work from the age of 12, entitling employers to engage children as domestic servants (article 104). The only safeguard in relation to this provision is that “servants aged over 12 but under 18 may work no more than 12 hours a day” and that under-14s shall be entitled to time off to attend primary school. It also establishes that “any serious breach by the domestic worker of respect or courtesy to those entitled to expect this by virtue of the employment shall constitute just cause for dismissal without liability on the part of the employer” (article 106). This is odd given that there is no matching provision for disrespectful treatment of the employee by the employer. Although the Household Workers’ Association (ASTRADOMES) challenged the constitutionality of the 12-hour day by invoking the principles of equality and non-discrimination guaranteed by the national constitution and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Constitutional Court did not support this view.

Chile. Chapter V of the Chilean Labour Code regulates employment in domestic service. Less than 10 years have passed since domestic workers became entitled to maternity rights with the implementation of law 19.591 in 1998. Prior to this, women employed in private households were the exception to the provision in the code that women could not be dismissed during pregnancy without the authorization of a competent judge (articles 201 and 174). Again, the monetary remuneration of workers in private households can be set at 75% of the monthly minimum wage, since the worker’s food and lodging is counted as part of the remuneration. However, this provision does not apply for the purposes of pension contributions, for which only the monetary payment is counted (article 151). Lastly, the Labour Code obliges the employer to keep the worker’s job open in the case of illness, but without pay and for up to 30 days only. If “either of the parties or any of the persons living in the household” contracts a contagious disease, on the other hand, the other party is entitled to terminate the contract (article 152).

El Salvador. The Labour Code now in force, Legislative Decree No. 15 of 1972, indicates, among other stipulations, that: (a) a contract of employment for domestic service may be entered into verbally (article 76); (b) domestic service workers do not have set working hours, but shall enjoy a rest period of at least 12 hours a day (article 80); (c) domestic service workers must provide services on their days off if the employer so requests (article 81); and (d) an individual domestic service contract may be terminated without employer liability for the following causes: (i) if the worker suffers from an infectious disease, unless this was contracted at the workplace, in which case the contract shall be suspended; (ii) if the worker has vices or bad habits that jeopardize or prejudice domestic order or affect the moral standing of the household; (iii) if the worker commits any serious breach of trust or act of insubordination against the employer or the employer’s spouse or relatives in direct line, or against anyone living permanently in the household (article 83).

Box II.4 (concluded)

Guatemala. Chapter IV of the Labour Code (articles 161 to 166) defines domestic worker status and regulates the rights of such workers, including pay, board and lodging, a compulsory minimum of 10 hours' completely free time a day (including a continuous break of at least eight hours at night and two hours for meals) and a further six hours of paid time off on Sundays and public holidays. The Support Centre for Household Workers (CENTRACAP) challenged the constitutionality of articles 164 and 165 with a view to establishing an eight-hour working day. Pending a final ruling, the Constitutional Court temporarily suspended these articles. As a result, domestic employees currently have an eight-hour working day like other Guatemalan workers. In addition, Decree 42-92 of Congress, the "private- and public-sector workers' annual bonus law", makes it compulsory for any employer, whether in the public or private sector, to pay an annual bonus equivalent to one month's normal pay. This benefit is additional to and independent of the annual Christmas bonus. Decree 78-89 of Congress (on the productivity bonus for private-sector workers), as reformed by article 1 of Decree 37-2001 of Congress, establishes an incentive bonus of 250 quetzals for all private-sector workers in the country irrespective of the occupation they work in, to be paid by their employers at the same time as their monthly wage.

Source: L. Pautassi, E. Faur and N. Gherardi, "Legislación laboral en seis países latinoamericanos. Avances y omisiones para una mayor equidad", *Mujer y desarrollo* series, No. 56 (LC/L.2140-P), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), May 2004. United Nations publication, Sales No. S.04.II.G.68; Argentina, National Women's Council, report presented at the fortieth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, October 2006; Bolivia, law 2.450 of 2003; Costa Rica, report by the Government of Costa Rica presented at the subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, May 2007; Guatemala, report of the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM), Indigenous Women's Ombudsman (DEMI), presented at the subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, May 2007.

E. EXTENDING THE CONCEPT OF WORK

Work is not employment. As a human pursuit, work includes both paid activities performed in the context of the market and unpaid activities undertaken outside it. Some authors refer to the sum of the two as the "overall workload", and societal well-being and economic growth depend on both the paid and the unpaid work done by women and men. Some economists (Benería, 2003) argue that, for the sake of accuracy and completeness, the concept of work should include the subsistence, domestic, informal and volunteer sectors as well as traditional formal employment. These analytical approaches clearly bring out the asymmetrical distribution of workloads within households, most particularly the excessive burden on women, amounting to a double working day.

The links between the different sectors accounting for the total or overall workload are also evident in the correlation between the sexual division of labour within households and the gender segmentation in the labour market. This becomes clear when paid domestic work in the market is analysed in conjunction with the unpaid work done in the home.

The difficulties women have in obtaining and keeping paid work largely arise from their domestic and care work. This is why those who cannot delegate this to other women through domestic service or family or community networks, or do not urgently need to earn money, tend to devote themselves exclusively to household tasks and do without earnings of their own. For the same reason, the average female domestic activity rate in Latin America is much the highest among married women (52.2%) and

those in rural areas (42.1%), where it is more difficult to delegate reproductive work and where support systems are much thinner on the ground.³⁷

The sexual division of labour has persisted and combined with changes in the world of employment such that the traditional form of work organization, whereby women take most responsibility in the family even when they work outside the home, has become unsustainable. The resulting conflicts generally have to be solved privately and are a source of major tensions in the absence of State action and public policies. Upon examination, it transpires that in over half of all cases where women aged 20 to 24 do not seek outside employment, the main reason is that they are performing unpaid work—housework—in their homes. In fact, more women from this age group are in this position than are in the education system (30.1% as against 15.9%), whereas when men are economically inactive it is because they are studying or for some other reason (ECLAC, 2007a).

Box II.5

GIRLS IN DOMESTIC SERVICE: OUT OF SIGHT AND OUT OF MIND

Child labour has been a fact of life in our societies at different periods in history, but a new awareness of its negative effects on children's welfare arose in the early 1990s. This recognition has been reflected in international instruments designed to protect children from any type of work that might interfere with their development. As part of this effort, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has laid down a set of objective criteria for quantifying the scale of child labour and defined concepts such as: light work that does not affect children's health or personal development, child labour, and worst forms of child labour. The criteria used for this classification are the number of hours spent on these activities and the extent to which children's health or physical safety is imperilled.

These definitions treat only "economic" activities (paid or unpaid) as work, so that most studies of child labour concentrate exclusively on analysing the causes and consequences of activities carried out for the market or for private consumption. There is no consideration of domestic work as something negative or harmful for children's development and health, irrespective of the number of hours spent on it, the amount of energy it demands or how much time it leaves children for educational or recreational activities appropriate to their age. The result is that no information is available on unpaid child domestic labour.

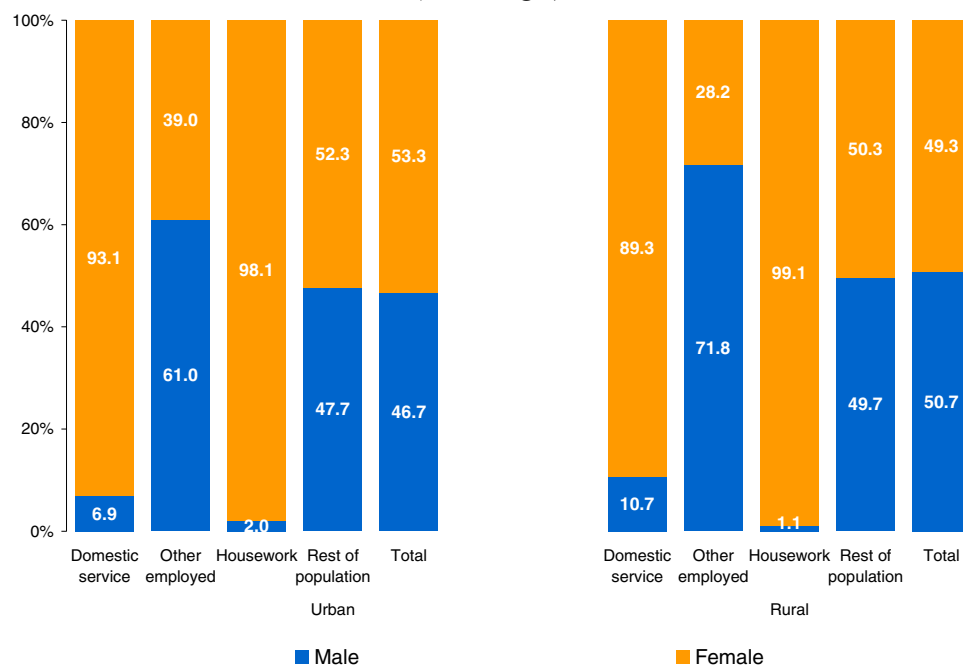
The low profile of this work means that public policies to address child labour leave out a large percentage of girls, upon whom most of these tasks devolve. According to information compiled by the Chilean Child Labour Survey in 2003, 67% of economically active children were boys, while 85% of minors spending over 20 hours a week on housework were girls (Silva, 2006). Information from the Brazilian Household Survey for 2001, 2002 and 2003 shows that when housework is considered, more girls than boys are working and studying at the same time, irrespective of socio-economic level. In Bolivia, data for 2001 likewise indicate that when housework is included in the definition of child labour, girls in a given age group who work are systematically less educated than those who do not (Zapata, Contreras and Kruger, 2007). The information available in Bolivia also shows that girls under 14 spend over 20 hours a week carrying wood or water and the same number of hours washing and ironing clothes, activities that are liable to have an adverse effect on health in the short or medium term.

Source: D. Zapata, "Trabajo, educación y salud de las niñas en América Latina y el Caribe: indicadores elaborados en el marco de la plataforma de Beijing", *Mujer y desarrollo series*, No. 82 (LC/L.2708-P), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), April 2007; D. Zapata, "Counting invisible workers: girls in domestic activities within their homes" (EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.9), document presented at the Expert Group Meeting on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child, Florence, Italy, September 2006.

³⁷ Covers women aged 15 and over devoted exclusively to unpaid domestic work.

All women, whether or not they are employed in the labour market, spend a large part of their time on domestic work. Only time-use surveys can fully capture this phenomenon; nonetheless, the information available from household surveys does provide some clues by identifying people's main occupation (see figure II.2). The first thing that emerges is that women have the main responsibility for domestic work, be it paid (domestic service, in which 6% of urban women work) or unpaid (housework, which is the main occupation of 43.6% of rural women) (see table 5 in the statistical annex).³⁸ It is interesting to note that the average age of women in domestic service is 32, although there are large variations between countries, as the average is below 30 in Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru and over 40 in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay (see table 7 in the statistical annex). Considering that the analysis centres on women aged 15 and over, the information suggests that in the former group of countries women begin this type of work at an early age, implying that they have less opportunity to study and that domestic service features prominently among the restricted employment options open to them. Women are generally educated for caregiving, and their education is discontinued so that they can continue to provide this service.

Figure II.2
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES, URBAN AREAS AND 12 COUNTRIES, RURAL AREAS): COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER BY SEX AND OCCUPATION, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

From the information in the following section it transpires that women's unequal access to the labour market does not make them a homogeneous group, as we see when we analyse the population by

³⁸ Information from the question about occupational status in the countries' household surveys.

sex and activity (see figure II.2). The gaps between men and women, particularly in the area of domestic work, make it safe to say that the region's society is unequal in numerous respects. More privileged women do not achieve equality with men of the same educational level; they are discriminated against even as, like them, they enjoy the benefits of income concentration, access to the labour market and protection of their rights. At the other extreme, paid domestic workers do not thus benefit indirectly from the work of their husbands or partners (when they have them), men who are poor like them but without necessarily being equitable. The situation of women employed in private homes for little pay is thus a prism revealing many of the inequalities that fracture society.

F. WHO ARE THE WOMEN DESCRIBING THEMSELVES AS DOMESTIC WORKERS, AND WHAT ARE THEY LIKE? “DOUBLY DOMESTIC” OR DOUBLE-SHIFT CARERS

Women's education levels have increased significantly in recent decades. Whereas in 2005, 35% of the urban female population aged 15 and over had 6 years of schooling or less, fully 56% of women working in domestic service had not completed primary education. In addition, 50% of “housewives” also had six years of education or less. This shows that lack of education among women is a decisive factor in reproducing the current pattern of care work.

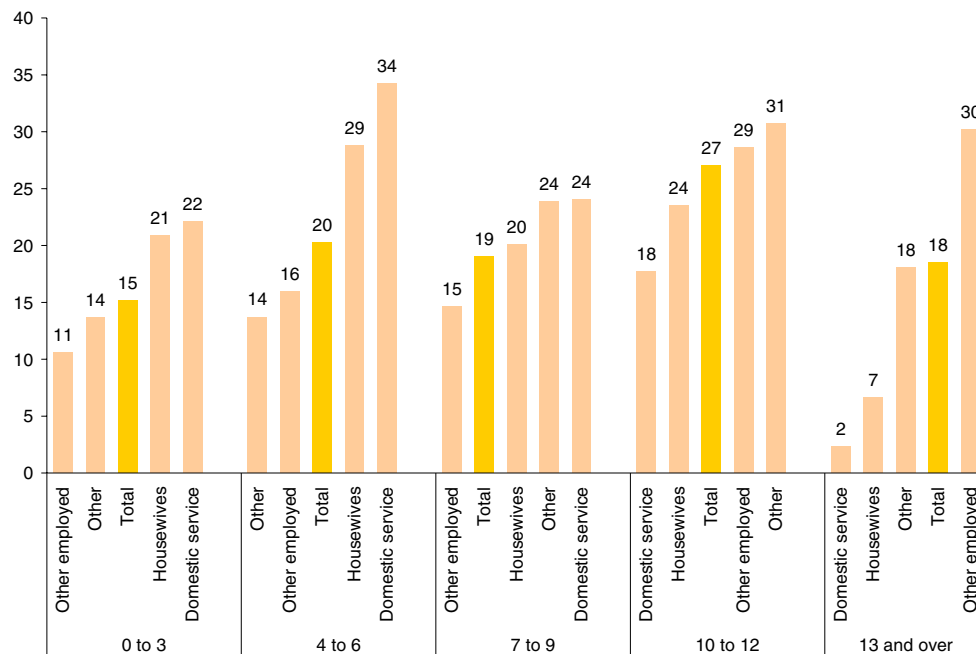
This link between lack of education and caregiving can be accounted for by the fact that domestic work, paid or otherwise, does not require any special qualifications other than skills derived from the gender socialization process. The concentration of women in care work and the lack of educational opportunities are mutually reinforcing, highlighting a market logic that requires a large enough mass of paid or unpaid carers to keep society functioning.

Conversely, analysis of the population of women with 13 years of education or more shows that most of these work in better-paid and more prestigious occupations (see figure II.3). In urban areas, women working in domestic service or exclusively as unpaid housewives have higher illiteracy rates than the rest of the female population, which matches the pattern observed (see table 10 in the statistical annex).

These data are important, first and foremost, for governments, since they show the difficulties that have to be overcome to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal: “promote gender equality and empower women”. The dropping of adult literacy programmes in almost all the educational reforms carried out in the recent past has heightened the vulnerability of many women, particularly Afro-descendants and members of indigenous groups in some of the region's countries.³⁹ The data analysed are also important for women's movements that have to take account of the divides between women themselves in the design of their equality agendas. Although domestic and care work is common ground for women from different social categories and income groups, it is clear that poorly paid domestic workers have to face a twofold burden as unprotected workers with family responsibilities. When the cultural divides between these different groups are considered as well, this challenge ultimately ties in with the needs of social cohesion and integration.

³⁹ At the national level, new large-scale literacy training efforts are beginning in Bolivia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, so that in future it should be possible to study their effects on the most vulnerable groups of women (information provided by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, May 2007).

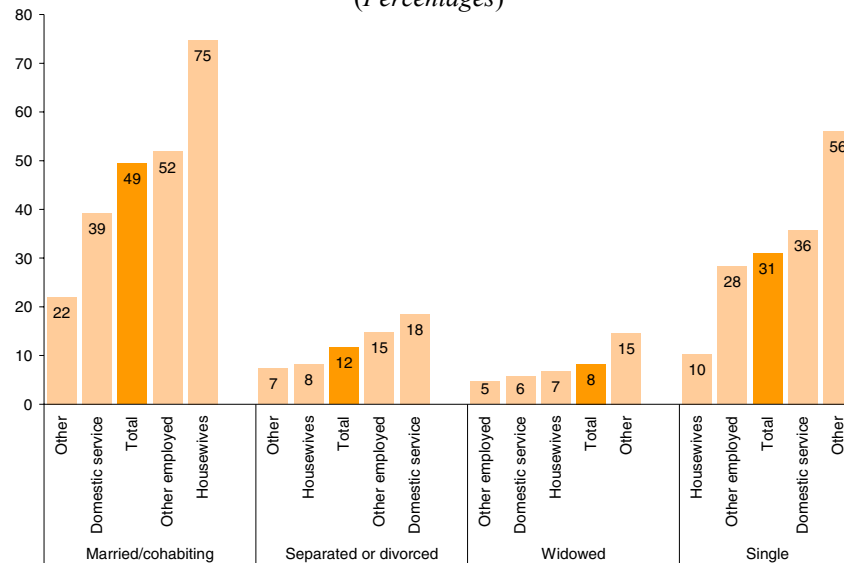
Figure II.3
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION AND YEARS OF EDUCATION, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

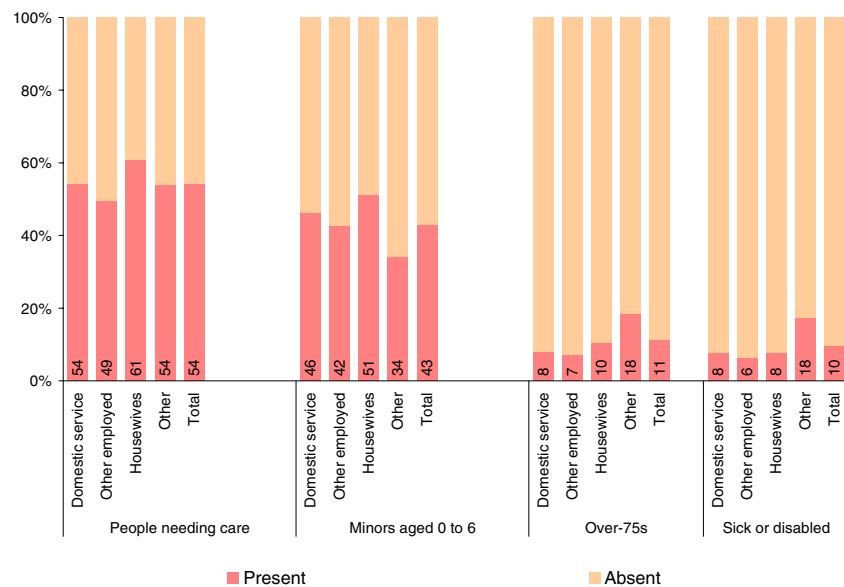
Most women employed on unpaid domestic work (housewives) are married or otherwise cohabiting (75% as against 49% for the population as a whole) (see figure II.4). Women carrying out unpaid work are more likely than others to be living with preschool-age children and with other people in potential need of care such as older adults, the sick and the disabled (61% live with one or more people requiring care) (see figure II.5). These data show what is concealed behind the concept of “family constraints”, which includes the need to look after the spouse or partner, children and other dependents who do not necessarily fall into the category of the sick, the disabled or the vulnerable receiving the benefits of unpaid care. The data also show that women in other occupations share their households with fewer people needing care.

Figure II.4
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION AND MARITAL STATUS, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Figure II.5
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY PRESENCE IN THEIR HOUSEHOLDS OF PEOPLE REQUIRING CARE AND BY OCCUPATION, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



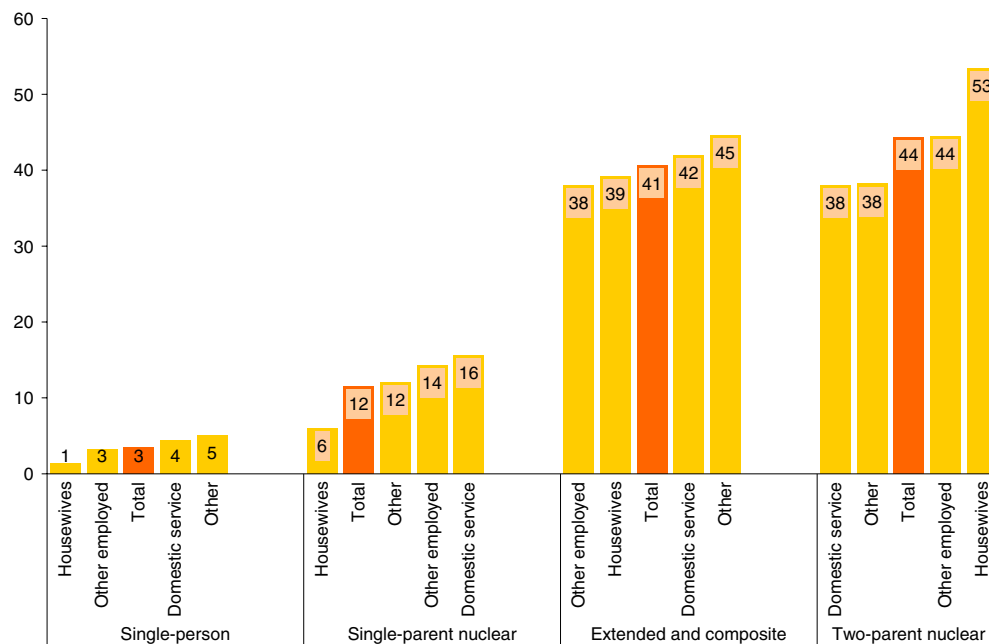
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Note: People considered to be potentially in need of care are minors of preschool age, over-75s and the sick or disabled. The estimates only include people who can be identified from the countries' household surveys and could therefore be too low, since there is no question directly asking about the number of people actually requiring care.

Following this same line of analysis, it is interesting to note that paid domestic service workers are over-represented in the “single” and “separated or divorced” categories (see figure II.4). In the case of the latter, it seems reasonable to think that many of them are women with a low level of education who worked as housewives during their years of married life or cohabitation, thus developing skills that the labour market does not value highly so that when they had to go out and seek paid work they had little choice but to carry out domestic service-related activities.

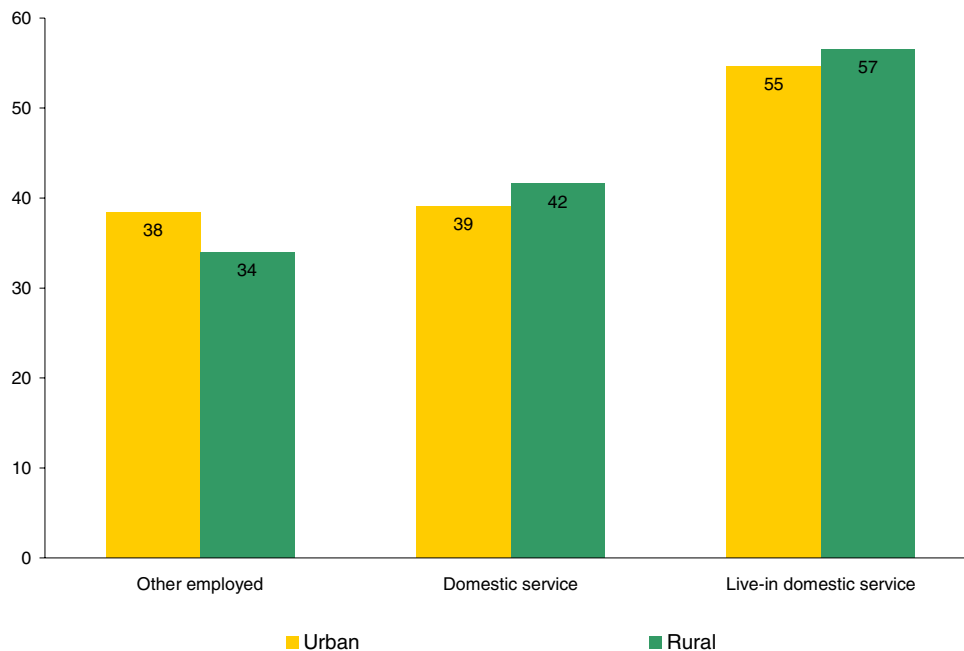
In 2005, 16% of women employed in domestic service lived in single-parent households. This is higher than the overall percentage of women in this situation (12%) (see figure II.6). For many unattached women with children, in other words, the only source of income is a poorly paid job with longer working hours (see figure II.7) than those of other working women and, where domestic service is concerned, usually without social protection. This reinforces the cycle of poverty from which they cannot escape. Regarding the working hours of women employed in private households, the situation differs by country. In Argentina and Uruguay, a high proportion of women work a half day or less, while in Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru over 50% of women employed in domestic service work over 48 hours a week (see table 16 in the annex).

Figure II.6
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND OCCUPATION, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Figure II.7
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): HOURS WORKED PER WEEK BY THE EMPLOYED FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



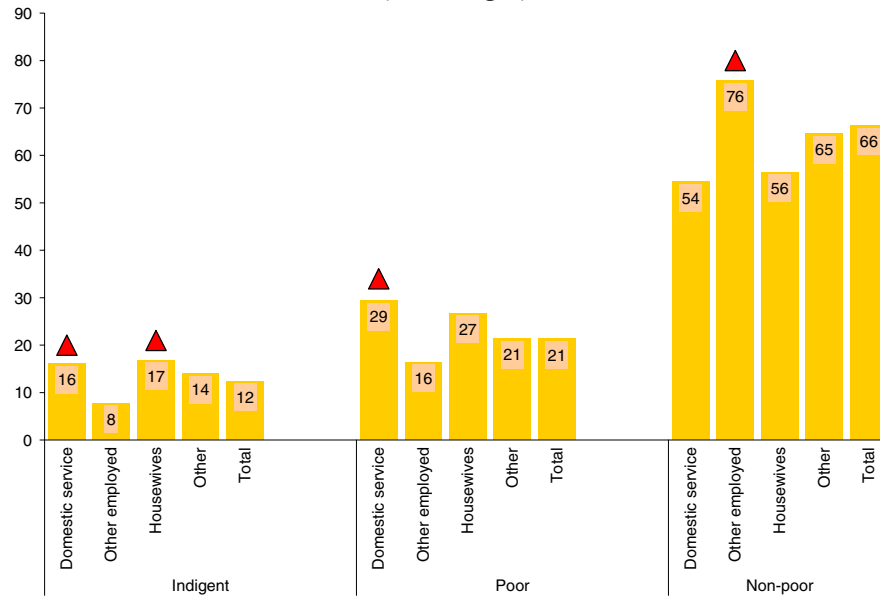
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

It might be thought that one income (the male spouse's) would be enough to maintain the household and that women would "not need" to take on paid work, but an analysis by poverty status reveals a different picture. Women in urban areas whose main occupation is unpaid housework are over-represented in indigent households. The female population in indigent households is 12% of the total population aged 15 and over, but women who are housewives and live in indigence represent 17%⁴⁰ (see figure II.8).

The information available for 2005 shows that while the urban female population in poor households is 21% of the total, almost a third of all domestic service workers aged 15 and over in urban areas live in such households, while 76% of women working for pay in other occupations belong to non-poor households (see figure II.8). The intra-gender pay gap is prominent again here, since in Latin America domestic service workers earn the equivalent of 40% of what women in other occupations earn (see figure II.9) and average earnings from domestic service are approximately 1.5 poverty lines, while earnings from other occupations are 3.7 poverty lines. This divide is found regardless of the actual level of pay for domestic service: Chile is the country where domestic service workers earn most on average, but it is also the country with the largest gap between earnings from this and other occupations. Gender inequality, a characteristic feature of our societies, reinforces other inequalities and fragments social solidarity, since women who appear to be well off in terms of earnings or stable employment are usually not well placed when compared with their male peers.

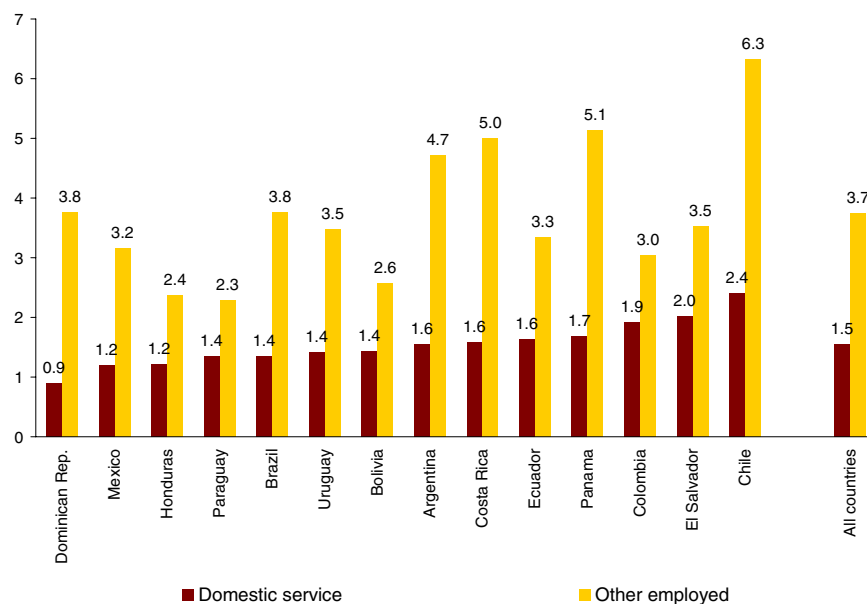
⁴⁰ Regionwide estimate for urban areas based on a simple average for 15 countries.

Figure II.8
LATIN AMERICA (SIMPLE AVERAGE FOR 15 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION AND POVERTY STATUS, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Figure II.9
LATIN AMERICA (14 COUNTRIES): EARNINGS OF THE FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
(Earnings in poverty lines)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Box II.6

HAITI. DOMESTIC WORKERS AND *RESTAVEK* CHILDREN

In July 2003, the non-governmental organization ENFOFANM conducted a survey of paid domestic work in three areas of Port-au-Prince (Haiti). The results show that 85% of workers in private households are female, 61% are immigrants, 60% are aged between 25 and 44, 67% are responsible for at least two children in their households and just 42% have a spouse or partner. Men are employed on gardening work while women mainly cook and wash clothes. 60% of those interviewed had never attended school.

Analysis of working conditions showed that there was a high rate of turnover, while for “live-in” workers accommodated in their employer’s private residence (less than half the total) the working day began between 5.00 and 6.00 a.m. and did not end at any fixed time; furthermore, days off or public holidays were few. Most workers were not paid for overtime and less than half had a clearly defined break during the day. 25% of those surveyed claimed to have had problems with their employers, the most common complaints being that they had been insulted or ill-treated, had not been paid, or had been subjected to sexual abuse.

On top of this situation of extreme vulnerability and rights violations affecting women employed in private homes, there is the predicament of the *restavek* children (*restavek* is Creole for “stay with”). These are poor children who are sent by their families to live in other people’s homes where they carry out domestic work under conditions of near-slavery and in flagrant violation of their rights. Although there is a law recognizing the existence of these children and requiring them to be paid at least half the normal wage for domestic workers once they turn 15 (which is itself discriminatory), when this time arrives employers choose to dismiss them and replace them with younger children.

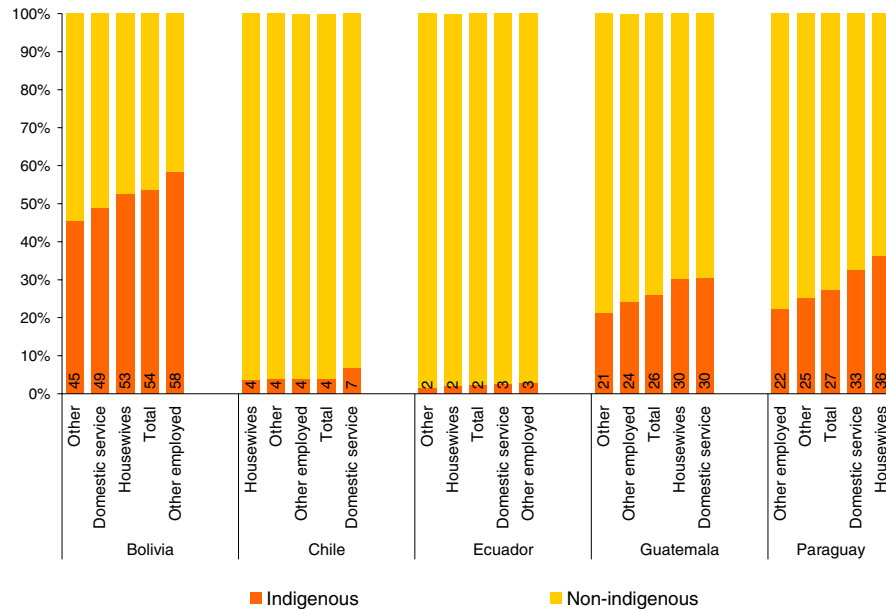
Source: Myriam Merlet, “Enquête ENFOFANM sur le travail domestique rémunéré”, *Ayiti Fanm*, vol. 14, No. 56, December 2003; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), *Internationally-recognised core labour standards in Haiti. Report for the WTO General Council review of trade policies of Haiti*, Geneva, June 2002.

When population structures in urban areas of Chile, Guatemala and Paraguay and rural areas of Bolivia are analysed, indigenous women are found to be over-represented in domestic service work. These countries are very different in their ethnic composition. The over-representation of indigenous women among domestic workers does not have the same connotations in Chile as in countries like Guatemala and Paraguay, where larger proportions of the population are indigenous. Notwithstanding this preliminary observation, such over-representation is not found in urban areas in Bolivia. A possible explanation for these differences may be found in the types of questions and definitions underlying the surveys (Calla, 2006).

In characterizing domestic employment in Paraguay, account has to be taken of Guaraní migration and monolingualism, since most women working in private households have migrated from rural areas to urban ones (Soto, 2004). This helps to make them the victims of the most widespread discrimination in the country, where, according to a May 2007 report by the International Labour Organization, the situation of female servants tops the list of employment discrimination practices, followed by the exclusion of Guaraní speakers. In the case of Brazil, black women make up the bulk of domestic workers.⁴¹

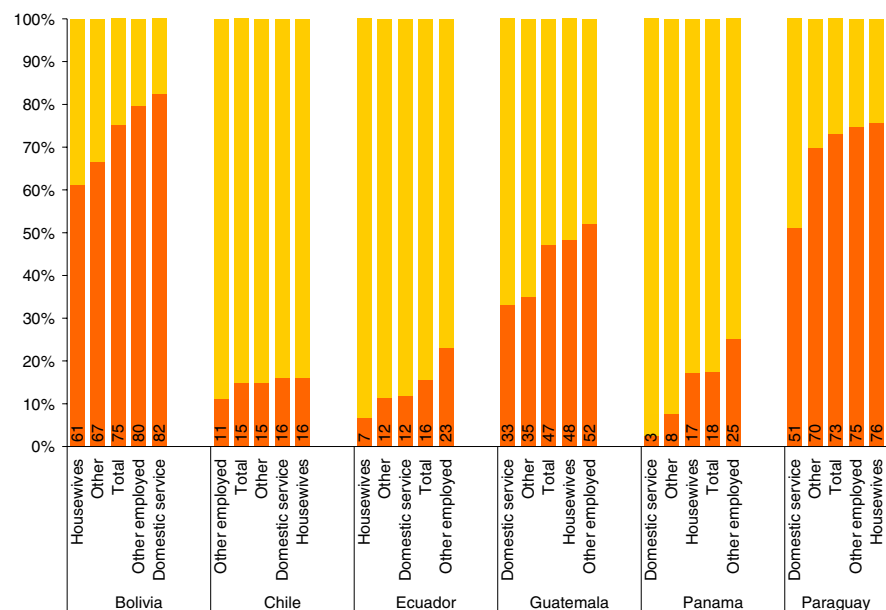
⁴¹ Report by the Government of Brazil presented at the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, May 2007.

Figure II.10
LATIN AMERICA (5 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION AND ETHNIC GROUP, URBAN AREAS, AROUND 2005
 (Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Figure II.11
LATIN AMERICA (6 COUNTRIES): FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER, BY OCCUPATION AND ETHNIC GROUP, RURAL AREAS, AROUND 2005



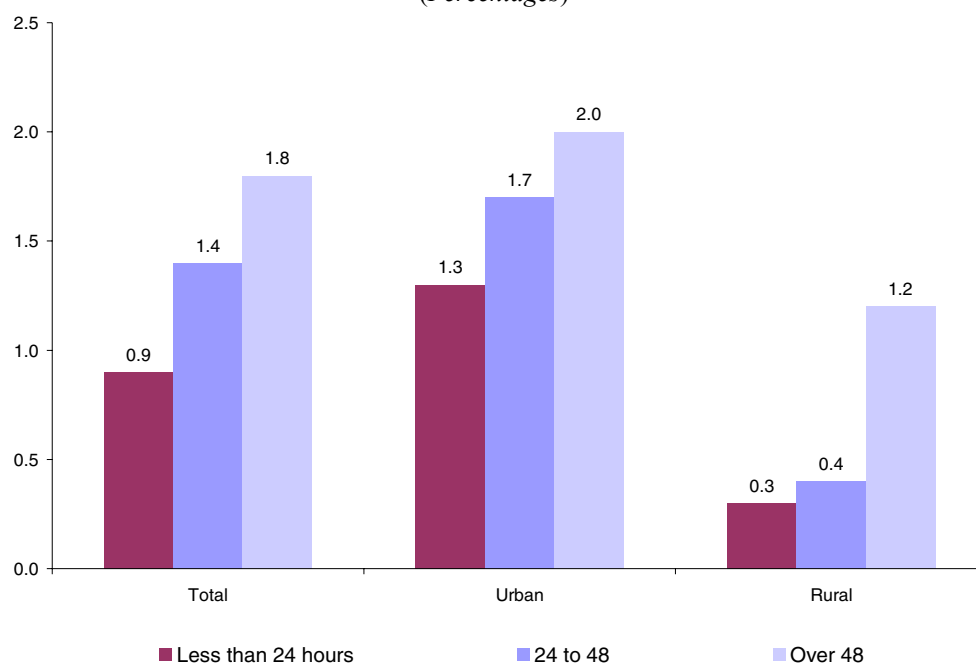
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

It is interesting to characterize the workplaces of women employed in domestic service, so as to identify the components making up the demand for this type of work and the conditions leading people to employ a woman from outside the household to do tasks that, under the current sexual division of labour, are considered the responsibility of the adult woman spouse. Household surveys can be used to obtain a picture of households where there are live-in domestic servants, so that female workers are interviewed as permanent residents.

The analysis shows first of all that there are evident care needs which are not met by households themselves or by external services (whether provided by the State or the market), since in-house domestic help is most often recruited in single-person households headed by a woman (usually an older adult), those headed by a man, single-parent households (a man with no partner but with children) (see table 23 in the statistical annex), those containing larger numbers of adults over 75 (see table 32 statistical annex) and those in urban areas containing larger numbers of minors aged 0 to 6 (see table 34 in the statistical annex).

In the case of two-parent households, live-in domestic staff are most likely to be recruited when the wife is in one of the following four situations: (i) she works outside the home (see table 25 in the statistical annex); (ii) her working day is long (see figure II.12); (iii) she is in the occupational category of employer or paid employee (see table 29 in the annex); and (iv) she has 13 years or more of education (see table 28 in the statistical annex).

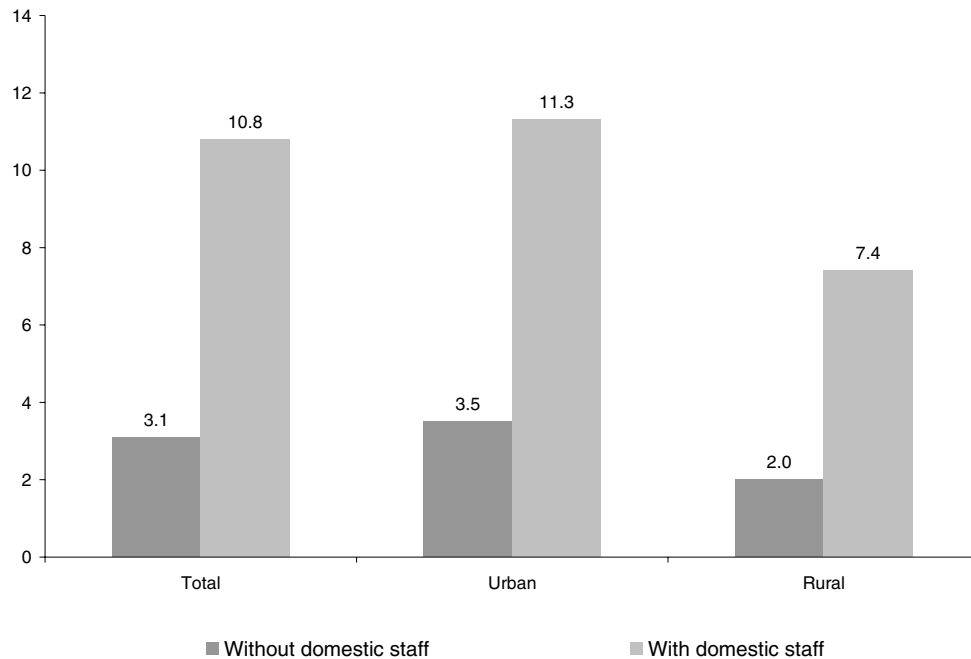
Figure II.12
LATIN AMERICA (14 COUNTRIES): TWO-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS WITH LIVE-IN DOMESTIC STAFF, BY WORKING WEEK OF THE FEMALE EMPLOYER
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

Lastly, the per capita incomes of households that employ live-in domestic staff are three and a half times as high as those of households that do not (see figure II.13).

Figure II.13
**LATIN AMERICA (14 COUNTRIES): HOUSEHOLDS WITH LIVE-IN DOMESTIC STAFF, BY
 HOUSEHOLD PER CAPITA INCOME**
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

G. THE DEMAND FOR CARE

In households, the demand for care has four main sources: (i) children, (ii) the sick, (iii) the elderly and (iv) those who work long hours in paid occupations (Durán, 2006), to which we should add the demand generated by the disabled. Some of these sources may change as the demographic structure alters.

To obtain a more accurate idea of the burden of care in the region's countries and have a tool available for carrying out comparative studies of the needs and resources of households at a given point in time, the "Madrid scale" has been constructed along the lines of the "Oxford scale" commonly used to analyse the monetary needs of households.⁴² The "Madrid scale" similarly allocates one point or unit of

⁴² Briefly, the "Oxford scale" assigns a value of one point to the first adult member of the household and lower scores to its other adult members and children.

care to the “productive” adult population aged 18 to 64 and progressively higher scores to adolescents, children and the elderly, whose care needs are greater.⁴³

Going by census-based population projections for 2005-2015, it can be estimated that the number of care units required in Latin America in 2005 was 24% greater than the total population (677,281,504 care units as against 546,663,682 people). The burden is not distributed evenly between men and women, however, and neither children nor the elderly are in a position to provide or care for themselves. By 2015, this burden or demand is expected to have fallen slightly where minors are concerned, mainly owing to lower fertility, but to have increased for older adults. The burden of care on the active population (aged 18 to 64) in 2005 was just over two units of demand per person, while by 2015 it is expected to have fallen slightly to two units (see table II.3).

This information has important implications for public policies, since it identifies the so-called in-between generation as the fundamental source of care. Again, if this situation is considered in the light of increasing labour market participation by women, who are the main carers, and of the absence or inadequacy of social care infrastructure, it can be seen that responses will have to be found to the needs of the population under these shifting scenarios in a quite near future.

Table II.3
**MADRID SCALE: DEMAND FOR CARE BY DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION,
LATIN AMERICA 2005-2015**

Age group (years)	Weighting factor (1)	Population (2)		Units of demand = (1) x (2)		Percentage distribution of units of demand	
		2005	2015	2005	2015	2005	2015
Preschool (0-4)	2	55 319 818	53 850 771	110 639 636	107 701 542	16.3	14.3
School (5-14)	1.5	108 346 418	108 847 599	162 519 627	163 271 399	24.0	21.7
School-age youth (15-17)	1.2	31 510 904	32 201 134	37 813 085	38 641 361	5.6	5.1
Adult (18-64)	1	318 140 174	375 439 709	318 140 174	375 439 709	47.0	49.9
Older adult (65-74)	1.2	20 701 834	28 553 239	24 842 201	34 263 887	3.7	4.6
Elderly (75-79)	1.7	6 540 955	8 567 239	11 119 624	14 564 306	1.6	1.9
Very elderly (80 plus)	2	6 103 579	9 076 823	12 207 158	18 153 646	1.8	2.4
Total population		546 663 682	616 536 514				
Total care units required				677 281 504	752 035 849	100	100
Care units required as a percentage of the total population				124 ^a	122		
Care units required as a percentage of the population aged 18 to 64				213	200		

Source: Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of projections from population censuses using the Madrid scale methodology.

^a 100 x (546 663 682 / 677 281 504).

⁴³ The per capita scores are as follows: 2 for children aged 0 to 4, 1.5 for those aged 5 to 14, 1.2 for adolescents aged 15 to 17, 1.2 for people aged 65 to 74, 1.7 for those aged 75 to 84, and 2 for those aged over 85 (Durán, 2006).

Box II.7

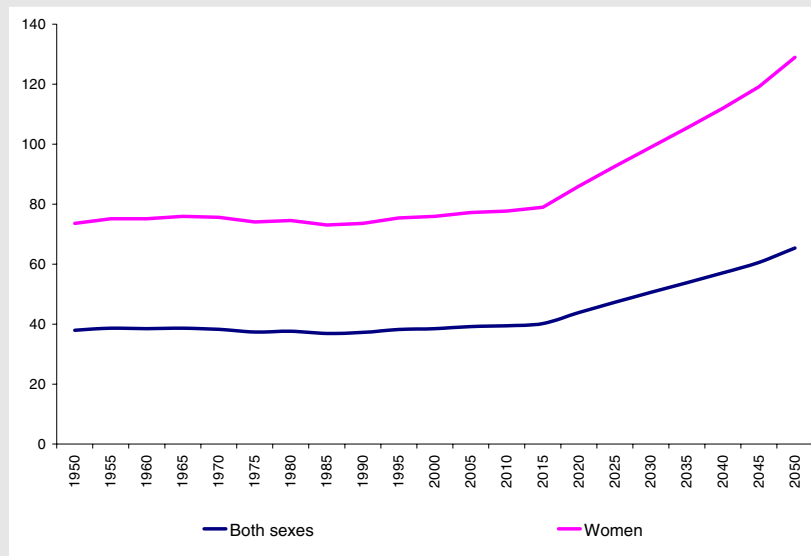
ECUADOR. THE FEMINIZATION OF AGEING AND THE GENDER DISADVANTAGES THAT ACCRUE OVER THE LIFE CYCLE

A striking feature of the population ageing process is feminization, owing to the fact that women live longer than men. In Ecuador, following the global trend, women's life expectancy is greater than men's at all ages and the difference in women's favour increases with age.

Paradoxically, women's longer life expectancy is not an indicator of reduced gender inequality. On the contrary, female ageing is accompanied by economic and social disadvantages deriving from gender inequities throughout the life cycle. Thus, women reach old age with more disabilities, less access to health care and social security, and special support and care needs.

The consequences of ageing also have an impact on women who are at other stages in the life cycle. The following chart shows the parental dependency index, which measures the relationship between the population aged 65 or over and the population aged 45 to 64, for both sexes and for women only.

ECUADOR: OLDER ADULTS FOR EVERY 100 PEOPLE OF BOTH SEXES AND FOR EVERY 100 WOMEN AGED 45 TO 64, 1950-2050



Source: National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC)/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC, *Ecuador: estimaciones y proyecciones de población, 1950-2050*, Quito, National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC), 2003.

Whatever age range is considered, we see that the parental care burden represented by older people will increase continuously in future and at a much faster rate than now. These data show that in future Ecuadorian women will be including their parents, parents-in-law and grandparents in their care work. Furthermore, the main demand for care can be expected to come from women, since they tend to survive their male contemporaries and live long enough to require practical support in their day-to-day activities as physical ageing takes its toll.

According to 2001 census data, disability in old age is more common among women (53.3%) than men (46.7%), and when the types of disablement are considered it transpires that psychiatric diseases, eyesight problems, difficulties of movement and multiple disabilities are more prevalent among older women than among men. These problems become more frequent with age, so women aged 75 and over can be expected to be the main sufferers from disability in old age.

Box II. 7 (concluded)

To sum up, population ageing is creating new challenges for Ecuadorian society. The current generation of older women is a particularly vulnerable group and requires attention from the agencies responsible for issues affecting women and the elderly. In the case of the latter, the challenge is essentially to prevent lifelong disadvantages from being perpetuated, while in the case of the former it is to expand and intensify efforts on behalf of women of all ages.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC and Technical Secretariat of the Ministry of Social Development of Ecuador, *Estudio sobre protección social de la tercera edad en Ecuador*, April 2007.

H. THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF CARE: MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Motivated by the hope of finding better-paid work to provide a higher standard of living for themselves and their families, millions of women migrate from rural to urban areas within their own countries or across national borders. In 2005, 191 million people (3% of the world's population) were living outside their country of birth (United Nations, 2006). Attracted by the growing demand for unskilled labour in the service sector of developed countries (Sassen, 2003), women form a major part of these international migratory flows, accounting for 49% of international migrants in 2000 (ILO, 2004). They thus become independent economic actors whose remittances help to reduce poverty in many households in their home countries.

A lack of job opportunities and low wages often leave women little choice but to migrate and enter another country's labour market, frequently under unsatisfactory conditions with little employment protection and limited access to social services (González Alvarado and Sánchez, 2003). A study by Barahona (2002) found that sending women migrants to the United States was a survival strategy for many families in the Caribbean. This situation has interacted with the sexual division of labour in households, labour market segmentation and female stereotypes that have resulted in the demand for female migrant workers being largely confined to domestic service and care for children and the elderly, along with cleaning and maintenance of buildings and urban infrastructure. Thus, the demand for cheap, flexible workers in developed-country labour markets is responded to with working identities built up around gender relations as a way of resolving the problems resulting from increasingly high dependency ratios, which in turn are attributable to population ageing, changes in family structures and rising workforce participation rates among women (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003).⁴⁴ Many destination countries now have labour markets that are highly segregated by gender and ethnicity. Gender and racial or ethnic stratification and segmentation in labour markets reveal the twofold marginalization of migrant women. Not only do they work in the most insecure and worst-paid sectors, but this very situation further reinforces gender roles, since they are needed to perform the domestic and care work that women native to the countries concerned prefer not to do because they have other employment options available (Rico, 2006).

Migrant women are highly vulnerable to violations of their human rights, labour exploitation and discrimination. In addition, the invisibility of domestic work and the low value placed on it by society

⁴⁴ Domestic work is the most easily accessible type of employment for female migrant workers in France, Greece, Italy and Spain (Reyneri, 2001). Over 10% of female migrant workers in the latter three countries are domestic workers and in 2002 almost a million Italian households were employing foreign nationals to care for children and the elderly within the home (OECD, 2003).

mean that migrant female workers in private households are at particular risk of falling prey to human trafficking, forced labour or degrading working conditions. Far from their own families and social networks, many female domestic workers tend to live in their place of work, i.e., in their employers' private residence. This creates the potential for employers to abuse their position by restricting time off, limiting social contact and failing to provide adequate living conditions. On occasions, domestic work provides a front for human trafficking. Amnesty International (2005) explicitly states that better protection is needed to prevent sexual harassment by employers.

While migrant women send remittances to their households in their home countries, other women in their family are looking after their children and home. Female migrants employed in domestic work therefore affect not only their employers' families, but also the structure and dynamics of their own. This is known as the "global (or transnational) care chain" (Hochschild and Ehrenreich, 2002), a term which alludes to the international division of care work and the emergence of transnational care economies that provide women from poor backgrounds with incentives to seek employment as domestic workers abroad. Hochschild (2000) describes a typical global care chain in which a woman from a developing country leaves her children in the care of her eldest daughter or mother (the family grandmother) while she "cares for" another family as a domestic worker in a more developed country. Hochschild argues that this constitutes a "human ecology of care", since the different actors in the chain are bound to one another by a high degree of dependence. Just as the female employer in the wealthier country relies on her domestic worker to do the housework or look after her sick parents, the migrant domestic worker relies on her relatives in the home country to look after her house and children. Although each woman's decision is part of a survival strategy in a labour market offering limited opportunities, the resulting private arrangements between them help to perpetuate the sexual division of labour and maintain the status quo that dictates that women have prime responsibility for reproductive work and caregiving.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the existence of an interdependent care chain is evident from the profile of migrant female domestic workers in the region, a striking number of whom are mothers with established families of their own. Some of the main flows of migrant women are from Nicaragua to Costa Rica and from Peru to Chile, both countries where a higher proportion of migrant women than local women are employed as domestic workers. According to a study by ECLAC (2004e), 42% of all female Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica work in domestic service, compared with only 9.1% of Costa Rican women. In Chile, 72% of Peruvian migrant women are employed in domestic service, as against a figure of 16% for the female population as a whole. These large differences in employment rates show that there is marked discrimination against female migrant workers, not least because many of them are undocumented, a problem which they often resolve by marrying nationals of the destination country to regularize their situation.

All this is happening in a region that is the world's largest destination for remittances. In 2005, remittances to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean represented 2.67% of the region's GDP and totalled US\$ 53.6 billion, or 24.5% of total remittances worldwide.⁴⁵ The remittance total is very difficult to calculate because of the large amounts sent through informal channels as remittances "in kind" (food, clothing and other consumer products), through the post or with friends or relatives who happen to be travelling, which are methods widely used by women. Accounting systems in most of the region's countries

⁴⁵ In 2005, remittances represented 27.56% of GDP in Haiti, 37.15% in the Dominican Republic, 16.26% in Jamaica, 16.67% in El Salvador and 21.02% in Honduras. Data from multiple household surveys show that in most of the region's countries remittances account for a large percentage of incomes in the households receiving them, and this is particularly true of countries such as Uruguay (45%), Paraguay (41.9%), Ecuador (35.9%), Mexico (35.6%), El Salvador (34.1%) and Honduras (33.6%) (IDB, 2006b).

are also inaccurate, which widens yet further the gap between the “real” and “recorded” amounts of remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean (Santillán and Ulfe, 2006). Although there are no precise estimates for the contribution made by women to their countries’ economies by way of remittances, research by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW, 2006) has shown that 60% of Latin American women migrants work as domestic staff in the destination countries. Some 44% of the 9.9 million Mexicans resident in the United States are women, and 68% of these are employed as domestic workers, nannies and carers for the elderly, while the remainder work in other occupations. In 2004, the annual earnings of Mexican women migrating to the United States were 30% lower than men’s, but they sent back 61% of all the remittances received in the country.

Box II.8

PERUVIAN WOMEN LOOKING AFTER CHILEAN HOUSEHOLDS: A CHALLENGE FOR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

Paid care work in Latin American households is changing. The case of Chile shows that, even as demand for care services in the home is driven upward by women’s rising labour market participation, the supply of these services is shifting as it comes to depend heavily on the labour of migrant women, most of them from Peru. This change is not only compromising the achievements of Chilean domestic workers in winning and exercising employment rights, but is also raising questions about a fairer division of care work.

Staab and Maher (2006) show that increased migration by Peruvian women and their employment in Chilean households partly reflect changes in the dynamic of the labour market for domestic services, following an increase in the bargaining power of Chilean “*nanas*”, as domestic employees are known. This is partly because a massive influx of middle-class women into the labour market has combined with a relative scarcity of care options outside the home to increase the demand for home-based care services, and partly because Chilean employment legislation has been amended over the last decade to give greater protection to the employment rights of female domestic staff. At the same time, the women who have traditionally undertaken paid domestic work have been enforcing these rights with greater security and confidence. But alongside this group of domestic workers another has emerged, one that is less empowered and more willing to accept difficult or even abusive conditions for the sake of improving the situation of relatives in their home countries. In the absence of alternatives, resources or support networks, these women put up with violations of their rights. In some instances, the migration legislation itself provides an incentive for this behaviour.^a

It is vital to safeguard and enforce the rights of both Chilean and migrant workers, in order to avoid creating a group of second-class carers (Maher and Staab, 2005). The challenge does not end there, however. The fact that women are migrating to care for other people’s families raises fundamental issues for a pro-women’s rights agenda. First, migration allows a group of privileged women to delegate household tasks and take up more highly paid jobs with better working conditions (Staab, 2003). Second, it has far-reaching consequences for migrants’ own family groups. Migrant female workers are often unaware of their employment rights. A qualitative study from 2002 showed that many Peruvian women in Chile had children in Peru who were looked after in most cases by other women (grandmothers, aunts, sisters and so on) and supported by their remittances. In these “transnational care chains” (Salazar Parreñas, 2001), two major actors are conspicuous by their absence: the State and men. What we see is the transfer of care work from one group of women to another.

Source: R. Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*, Stanford University Press, 2001; K. Maher and S. Staab, “Nanny politics: the dilemma of working women’s empowerment in Santiago, Chile”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2005; S. Staab and K. Maher, “The dual discourse about Peruvian domestic workers in Santiago de Chile: class, race, and a nationalist project”, *Latin American Journal of Politics and Society*, vol. 48, No. 1, 2006; S. Staab, “En búsqueda de trabajo. Migración internacional de las mujeres latinoamericanas y caribeñas”, *Mujer y desarrollo* series, No. 51 (LC/L.2028-P/E), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2003.

^a In Chile, the type of visa given to unskilled female workers is subject to contract and expires when the contract is terminated. After holding this type of visa for two years uninterruptedly, foreigners resident in Chile may apply for permanent residence. However, a woman employed in a private residence who resigns in order to change employer runs the risk of being left without a visa until she can obtain a new employment contract and regularize her situation. There is therefore some incentive to stay with the same employer for the full two years regardless of working conditions or the treatment received, in order to qualify for permanent residence.

I. VISIBILITY AND MEASUREMENT IN THE NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

For almost three decades, there have been calls from the United Nations and from academic and feminist circles for care and domestic activities in the home to be classified as value-generating work and as a measurable component of wealth. Few efforts have been made in this direction, however, not only owing to technical and methodological difficulties, but also because the statistical measurement of unpaid social reproduction work would require a conceptualization of the economic system that allowed the scale and quality of this work to be properly recorded (Picchio, 2001).

The system of national accounts (SNA) review adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1993 recommended that the concept of “production” should include not just goods and services produced for the market but also goods produced in the home for family consumption. These were left out of the classification, however, and activities associated with the production of personal and domestic services by household members for their own consumption were consequently treated as “non-economic”. One consequence of this is that these activities are not included in conventional censuses and surveys.

In 1995, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report* revealed that women were responsible for over half the total time worked in the world and that they carried out more work in total (in terms of physical units of time) than men. The report also highlighted the fact that three quarters of men’s working time was spent on paid activities, while only a third of women’s working time was paid. In other words, women do more work than men, but the current economic and political system does not record, measure, value or reward it. Studies dealing with household income, and particularly those concerned with poverty, explicitly consider the contribution of family members to income, but continue to ignore the contribution made by social reproduction work.

The inclusion of unpaid work —be it housework, caregiving or subsistence activities— in systems of national accounts has major consequences, given the importance of these instruments for policymaking and economic decision-making at both the national and the international levels. National accounts quantify all the areas deemed to be part of the national economy and resources are allocated on the basis of the information they provide. This means that any economic activities not included in this system or in the satellite accounts are not only invisible but will not receive the vital resources they need to improve their performance, while the policies and programmes that target them will not reflect their real needs or their contribution to national development.

To date, the region has had no experience of national accounts systems that bring out the non-monetary contribution of the social reproduction work done by women and some men, in the way that the Total Work Accounts System (TWAS) developed in Canada does. This system was created against a background of heated political debate about budgetary constraints on social security and social policies, and was based on three observations: (i) wealth-creating work is not confined to the activities measured by conventional labour market surveys; (ii) the strong links between paid and unpaid work make it difficult to isolate their behaviour when only the economically “active” population is considered; (iii) paid work is a subset of “work of economic value”.

The Total Work Accounts System was based on the 1998 General Social Survey on Time Use, which collected time-use data. One of its greatest contributions was to assign the estimated output of each activity classified as unpaid work to a specific beneficiary or group, thereby identifying its destination, while also allowing domestic responsibilities and the needs of family members to be taken into account in any studies dealing with labour issues (Statistics Canada, 1998).

Some progress has been made since the decision by the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to encourage governments to “include, as appropriate, in the National Health Accounts indicators for the unremunerated time devoted by men and women to health care in the home, as a function of the total expenditure of the health care system” (PAHO, 2005).

During the two virtual forums held in January and February 2007 in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, most of the countries’ mechanisms for the advancement of women agreed on the need to make unpaid work and its contribution to GDP visible in national accounts. Political will is critical to the development and sustainability of initiatives in this direction. One interesting example is the enactment of Law No. 1168 by the legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Argentina) on 1 December 2003, setting out the need to quantify the economic contribution of “housewives” and the determination that this should be done. The law stipulates that the city government statistics agency should periodically conduct a systematic survey to quantify the economic contribution made by women in the form of domestic work (Colli, 2006).

Some calculations and studies carried out in the region’s countries to assess the economic value of unpaid work suggest that its contribution to GDP is substantial. In Mexico, for instance, a study that used 2002 data to impute market wages to different activities conducted in the home found that these activities made a larger contribution to the economy (21.6% of GDP) than traditional sectors such as commerce, restaurants and hotels (20%) and manufacturing (18.5%) (Pedrero, 2005). A similar exercise carried out in Nicaragua using information from the time-use module of the National Household Living Standards Survey (EMNV, 1998) put the value of all reproductive work at the equivalent of almost 30% of GDP that year, with women contributing 78.5% of this value (Aguilar and Espinosa, 2004).

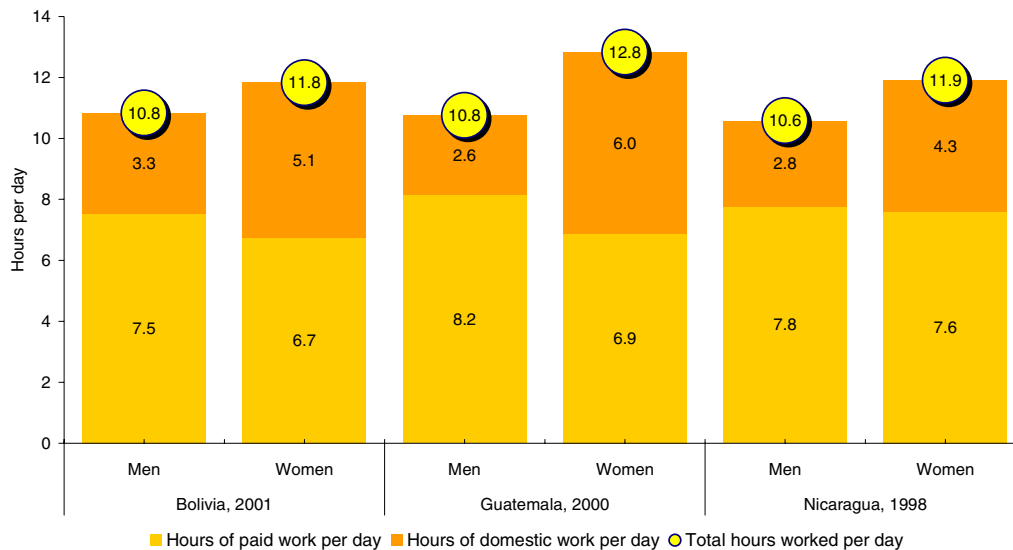
There are different views on the desirability of including unpaid household work in satellite accounts, which would alter the traditional composition of the national accounts. Another ongoing debate concerns possible methodologies for valuing domestic and care work. One of the most controversial aspects is the use of market prices to set a monetary value on unpaid work.

Viewing unpaid work from an economic perspective strips it of its exclusively “female” and family connotations and raises issues of efficiency and equity in the economic system as a whole (Picchio, 2001). The invisibility of women’s unpaid work is only part of the problem. The extent and economic value of such work are not easy to calculate because, as Budlender (2002) has pointed out, the very fact that it is unpaid means there are no obvious monetary measures, while it is generally undervalued in the market; nor are there obvious measures of output, as it is often intangible. This being the case, the most commonly used method has been to employ time-use surveys to measure the number of people carrying out such work and the time they spend on it.

J. TIME-USE SURVEYS AND THEIR POTENTIAL POLICYMAKING INPUT

Analysing labour market data in isolation from those relating to domestic work has prevented observation of the strong interrelationships between the two and has helped to perpetuate the erroneous and widespread belief that male and female workers participate in the labour market on similar economic terms, while family constraints and the sexual division of labour are relegated to the “non-economic” realm (Carrasco, 2001). The evidence shows that no category could be less appropriate than “inactivity” when applied to “housewives” (see figure II.14).

Figure II.14
**TOTAL WORKLOAD, HOURS OF PAID WORK PLUS
 HOURS SPENT ON DOMESTIC WORK^a**

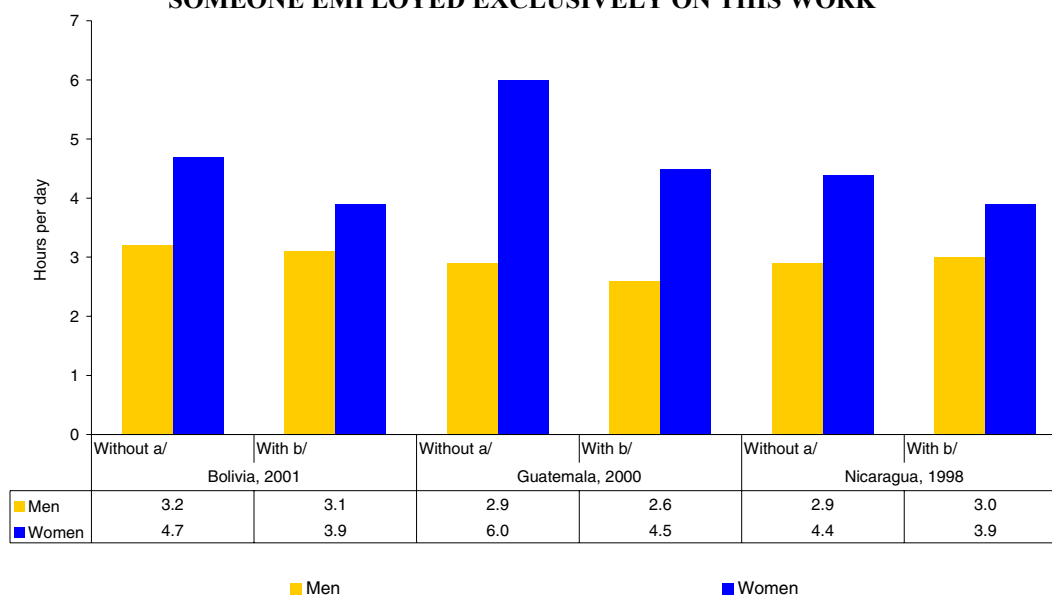


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of time-use modules in the household surveys of the countries concerned (Bolivia, 2001; Guatemala, 2000; Nicaragua, 1998).

^a Includes only people in paid employment stating that they had participated in one or more domestic activities the day before the survey.

Having someone in the household engaged exclusively on domestic tasks affects men's involvement in tasks of this kind very differently from that of the household's other women. Results from five countries in the region show that men spend almost the same number of hours on unpaid domestic work when there is a "housewife" in the home as when there is not. For other women in those same households, however, it makes a great difference: having someone else in the home carrying out domestic tasks substantially reduces the time they spend on these, which ought to make a great difference to the amount of time they are able to give to other activities or to rest and leisure (Milosavljevic and Tacla, 2007). This supposition is borne out by the answers to survey questions about what people did the previous day (Bolivia, 2001; Guatemala, 2000; Nicaragua, 1998) and the previous week (Ecuador, 2004; Mexico, 2002) (see figures II.15 and II.16).

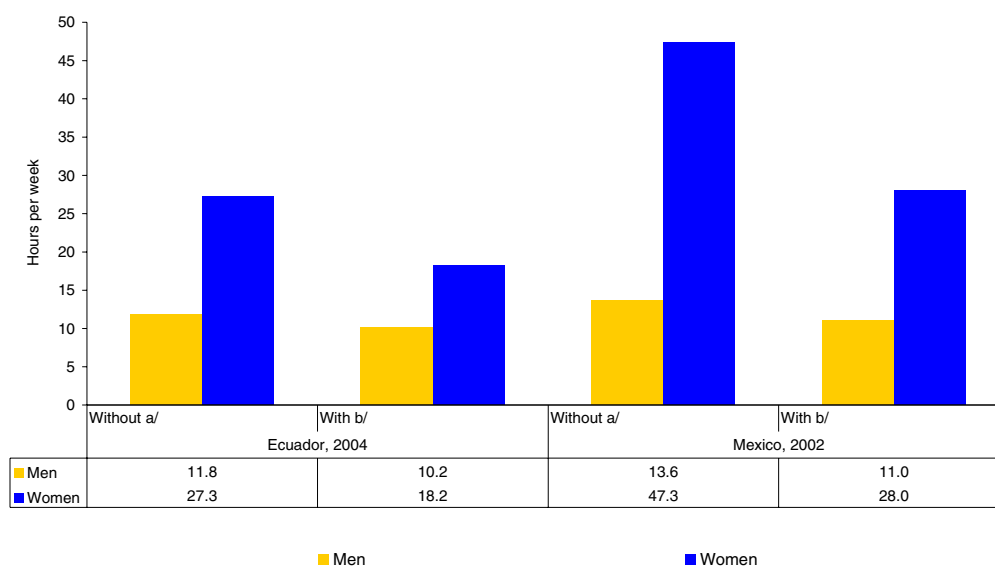
Figure II.15
**AVERAGE HOURS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS EACH DAY, WITH AND WITHOUT
 SOMEONE EMPLOYED EXCLUSIVELY ON THIS WORK**



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

- ^a There is no-one working exclusively on household tasks.
^b There is someone working exclusively on household tasks.

Figure II.16
**AVERAGE HOURS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS EACH WEEK, WITH AND WITHOUT
 SOMEONE EMPLOYED EXCLUSIVELY ON THIS WORK**



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

- ^a There is no-one working exclusively on household tasks.
^b There is someone working exclusively on household tasks.

Time-use surveys are a useful instrument for analysing work in the light of the links between the public and private spheres, and for studying the “social contract” governing day-to-day relations between men and women within the home and in society.⁴⁶ This information can be a very valuable input for those trying to formulate equitable public policies. The subject has risen to greater prominence in recent years and the region has been making much more use of studies of this type, which have become firmly institutionalized in Europe thanks to the Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (HETUS) designed by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT).

In recent years, Latin American countries have been making far more use than formerly of special time-use surveys or modules within other surveys (Argentina, 1998; Bolivia, 2001; Brazil, 2001; Costa Rica, 2004; Cuba, 2001; Ecuador, 2004-2005; El Salvador, 2005; Guatemala, 2000; Mexico, 1996, 1998 and 2002; Nicaragua, 1996; Panama, 2006; Uruguay, 2003). Importantly, some countries are now planning to move beyond the experimental or pilot stage that was typical of the region three years or so ago (Milosavljevic and Tacla, 2007) and these data-gathering instruments are gradually beginning to form part of the official planning of national statistical institutes, which implies an increasing likelihood of resources being obtained or allocated for surveys of this type. A good example is what has happened in Ecuador, where time-use information has been collected since 2003 with the inclusion of four variables in the employment and income module; since 2004, furthermore, a block of eight questions has been incorporated permanently into the household survey conducted by the National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC). In 2005, the first special survey was conducted for three ethnically differentiated geographical areas, while a national time-use survey with urban, rural and provincial representation and with a multi-ethnic and pluricultural approach is planned for the second half of 2007.⁴⁷ In Cuba, the National Statistical Office (ONE) and the Federation of Cuban Women have been conducting national time-use surveys in a staged approach, with regular updating. These have revealed that, for all the efforts made by the government, women still spend twice as many hours as men on housework, childcare and family health care.⁴⁸ No special time-use surveys have been conducted in the Caribbean as yet, but some interesting information has been obtained by analysing the latest censuses from the Cayman Islands (1999) and Dominica (2001) (ECLAC, 2007d).

Time-use studies are also carried out in academic circles (in Uruguay, for example) and by NGOs. An interesting initiative has been conducted by Red Thread, a women’s organization in Guyana, which researched the activities of Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese women during a typical day, linking their workload (an average of 14 to 18 hours a day) with the conditions they live in, with limited household access to electricity and water. In other words, social infrastructure and human settlement policies were related to the amount and intensiveness of unpaid domestic work.

⁴⁶ The field of application of time-use surveys extends far beyond domestic work. They can be used for town planning, analysis of tourism and the use of leisure time, and school management, among other purposes.

⁴⁷ Report presented by the National Women’s Council (CONAMU) at the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, May 2007.

⁴⁸ Communication from the representative of the Government of Cuba during the virtual forum in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, January 2007.

Box II.9

PROGRESS WITH STATISTICS TO INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF UNPAID WORK BY WOMEN IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ISTHMUS

Country	Measures
Costa Rica	A special time-use module was included in the 2004 Multi-purpose Household Survey. This survey is currently being redesigned and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses has made efforts to include the gender perspective when recording activities that are not easily identifiable, relate to domestic work and family production or are characteristic of women, children or older adults and are not traditionally recognized as work by the public at large. A National Time-use Survey is planned for 2008.
El Salvador	In 2005, a module on time use in households was included in the Multi-purpose Household Survey. The third specific objective of the Action Plan for the National Women's Policy 2005-2009 is to contribute to women's all-round development in the family by encouraging the sharing of responsibilities among family members. The actions associated with this objective include the production of statistics with a gender perspective and the incorporation into the social security system of women who perform unpaid domestic work.
Guatemala	In 2000, the National Institute of Statistics added a module on time use within households to its Guatemala Living Standards Survey (ENCOVI). This yielded statistics for analysing the distribution of unpaid work among family members. This module was included again in ENCOVI 2006.
Honduras	In 2003, the National Institute of Statistics and the National Women's Institute signed a cooperation agreement with a view to taking measures that would permit the proper collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information relating to gender statistics. In the framework of this agreement, progress has been made towards including two new modules in the Permanent Multi-purpose Household Survey in order to obtain information on variables specific to women, namely domestic violence and access to and control of social and productive resources. For the 2007-2010 period, one of the main items in the working plan of the National Institute of Statistics is to include a time-use survey in the Household Survey to assess the unpaid work done by members of Honduran households.
Nicaragua	In 1998, the first Nicaraguan time-use study was carried by including a special module in the National Household Living Standards Survey. Information was classified using the following categories: productive work, reproductive work, community work, and study and recreation (which includes leisure and free time). In 2001, the National Institute of Statistics again included a household time-use module in the National Household Living Standards Survey.
Panama	Section IV of Law No. 4 on equal opportunities for women and the corresponding Executive Decree 53 establish an obligation for the State to study the repercussions of unpaid work for the female population, encourage the analysis of options for changing cultural patterns that place an excessive burden of unpaid work on women, and set up programmes of action to promote the acceptance of joint responsibility by both parents for children's care and upbringing. Subsection 5 of the law also proclaims the need to design appropriate statistical instruments to give visibility to women's work in the home. In March 2006, the first Time-use Survey was carried out as part of the Multi-purpose Survey of the Comptroller-General of the Republic. This survey will be conducted again in 2007.

Source: Julia Evelin Martínez, "Avances y desafíos en la contribución del trabajo no remunerado de las mujeres a la economía en Centroamérica y México", Mexico City, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico, 2007, unpublished, on the basis of official information provided by government offices in the Central American isthmus with responsibility for the advancement of women and the production of national statistics.

K. CARE NEEDS AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES. CAN POLICIES TO "RECONCILE" WORK AND FAMILY LIFE PROVIDE AN ANSWER?

Even as governments from all over the world were proclaiming their desire to reconcile work and family life at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the policies actually being implemented in the region ran counter to the concept of protection and the rights-based approach characterizing the agenda of the United Nations. The prevailing tendency was to shrink the State, deregulate markets and increase

employment flexibility. The measures adopted in most countries redefined the relationship between these three elements and, although at the social level the stage was set for the creation of governmental mechanisms for the advancement of women, these were not given a central place on public agendas but developed mainly thanks to pressure from women's movements and the contributions of multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies.

The lack of debate during the 1990s on the issues identified in Beijing may have been attributable to the difficulty of finding common ground between dialogues based on apparently irreconcilable paradigms. It was not only the difficulties inherent in the interdisciplinary approach that complicated analysis of the linkages between the social and political realms; another contributory factor was the abandonment of the rights-based approach in the face of the urgent need to meet macroeconomic targets. In this context, concerns about relations between men and women seemed irrelevant. Financial sustainability was the main rationale for the reforms, and a comprehensive, socially-oriented perspective seemed incompatible with this.

ECLAC studies of pension reforms (Marco, 2004b) all concluded that unfunded systems failed to meet their objectives because of a combination of administrative, demographic and employment factors that not only put them beyond recovery but also, from a gender equity perspective, tended to reproduce the inequities of the labour market and failed to provide coverage for most women who had either not entered the workforce or had worked in mainly low-productivity, insecure and poorly paid jobs. These studies recognized the difficulty of comparing the old pension systems with those that emerged from the reforms, since the design of the latter had abandoned basic social security principles such as universality and solidarity, ultimately turning them into a system of individual saving governed by the laws of the market (Uthoff, 2002).

Furthermore, the reforms did not treat citizenship as the basis for entitlement to State protection. Indeed, employment-based pension systems limit access to social security for women who do not have continuous paid employment or who work in the informal sector. As this variable was not considered when most countries' pension reforms were being analysed, women were left out of policy design or were treated as secondary recipients, with lower retirement pensions and reduced coverage. In recent years, a start has been made on implementing initiatives to correct the distortions of the 1990s reforms and the advantages of the model resulting from these reforms have been increasingly questioned (ECLAC, 2006b).

In this context, various initiatives have been launched to comply with international agreements relating to labour issues (see statistical annex). In some countries, specific legislation has recently been enacted for this purpose, such as Law No. 28983 of March 2007 in Peru, which deals with equal opportunities for women and men and whose article 6 requires the executive to adopt policies, plans and programmes to harmonize family and employment responsibilities.⁴⁹ In most of the countries, however, the idea of "reconciling" family and work still refers to arrangements or mechanisms that rely on women to respond simultaneously to the demands of employment and those of the family in such a way as to achieve the best quality of life possible given the working conditions that obtain. In other words, reference is made to a "need" that appears to be peculiar to women and not to concern men or society at large. Thus, there has yet to be a serious debate about promoting cultural change so that responsibility for

⁴⁹ Report presented by the Government of Peru at the subregional preparatory meeting for South America for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, May 2007.

domestic life is shared between men, women, the State and the private sector. Be that as it may, the reconciliation of work and family is now finding its way on to the public agenda.⁵⁰

A genuine policy of reconciling work and family responsibilities must be aimed at men as much as at women and must firmly promote the active involvement of men in domestic and caregiving work, thereby contributing to a redistribution among household members of the time spent on such tasks and helping to banish stereotyped roles associated with the traditional sexual division of labour. Arrangements of this type enable more women to enter the labour market on better terms. In many countries, however, such policies target only women, and this can undermine their rights as workers and reinforce the cultural pattern that assigns social reproduction tasks to them.

Box II.10

RECONCILIATION OF FAMILY AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Strategic objective F.6 of the Beijing Platform for Action deals with the need to harmonize the working and family responsibilities of women and men. Among the measures to be taken by governments are the following:

- (a) Adopt policies to ensure the appropriate protection of labour laws and social security benefits for part-time, temporary, seasonal and home-based workers; promote career development based on work conditions that harmonize work and family responsibilities.
- (b) Develop policies, inter alia, in education to change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender in order to promote the concept of shared family responsibility for work in the home, particularly in relation to children and elder care.
- (c) Improve the development of, and access to, technologies that facilitate occupational as well as domestic work, encourage self-support, generate income, transform gender-prescribed roles within the productive process and enable women to move out of low-paying jobs.
- (d) Examine a range of policies and programmes, including social security legislation and taxation systems, in accordance with national priorities and policies, to determine how to promote gender equality and flexibility in the way people divide their time between and derive benefits from education and training, paid employment, family responsibilities, volunteer activity and other socially useful forms of work, rest and leisure.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

According to the countries' mechanisms for the advancement of women, it is recognized that there is a need to harmonize family and work through legislation and through public policies and programmes, and there is a concern about the proper functioning of institutions and instruments that support such harmonization, including childcare services and leave from work for breastfeeding mothers.⁵¹ However, this concern is not necessarily reflected in an adequate supply of services, programmes and funding. Furthermore, the concept of reconciliation policies is still a subject for debate and analysis, complicated by diverse policies designed to facilitate women's access to the labour market and those that actually promote the sharing of responsibilities between women and men. There is also a divide between countries that see this as primarily a matter for private negotiation among family members and countries that lean towards

⁵⁰ At the virtual forum in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, directors of women's offices made it clear that change in this direction had been extremely slow.

⁵¹ Virtual forum in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, January and February 2007.

giving the State a regulatory role reflected in employment legislation and even in the laws governing the operation of businesses.

The very different situations existing in the countries with respect to the care of young children, along with the relatively low proportion of women working in occupations covered by employment legislation, have created fresh childcare difficulties for families at a time when the State has withdrawn from several areas of social provision. The ideal model of social policies inspired by the welfare State was underpinned by the assumption that families contained a “male breadwinner” and a “housewife”, with childcare needs being covered by the woman’s domestic work. This system, where the “wage earner” was assumed to be the man, was promoted by income transfers in the form of family allowances or social insurance; in addition, it was the male worker’s formal employment that gave the rest of his family access to health and social security systems. All this was supplemented by universal health and education policies in many countries. Although this context was changed substantially by the sectoral reforms of the 1990s, laws and contracts persist in conferring on women both labour rights that are shared with men and other “gender-related rights” that entail a greater workload. The right to work is unthinkingly merged with the obligation of care.

The three key components for analysing caregiving capacity are “time to care, money to care and caregiving services”. Although the public policy implications of these components go beyond employment legislation and they concern more than the early months of the life cycle, they are indicative of the links between maternity and paternity leave, childbirth and adoption benefits and the regulation of day-care centres and crèches attached to parents’ workplaces (Pautassi, Faur and Gherardi, 2004).

The way these three components are structured will generate alternatives that in some way or other help to consolidate different models of care in the dynamic of gender relations within families. The role of the State is far from neutral, whether in formulating childcare policies or in regulating employment relations between the market and male and female family members.

In employment legislation, the first key element (time to provide care) ties in with the second, namely the availability of financial resources to allow adults to devote their time to caring for a newborn child. Most parental leave (meaning periods of time for which workers may absent themselves from their employment, whilst retaining the right to resume it, because of the birth, adoption or guardianship of a child or the need to care for a child, so that the availability of time and money is guaranteed) is granted to working women for periods that vary considerably in the different countries but are generally no less than 12 weeks. The situation for men is strikingly different. They are allowed only two or three days off from the day of the birth and do not have the option of taking more time off to look after the newborn child. Having said that, numerous initiatives have been put forward in the region’s countries in recent years (and many of them have now passed into law) to extend paternity leave to between 10 and 20 days, or else, as in Chile, the law clearly specifies that leave and protection against dismissal pass to the father in the event of the mother’s death. Again, the mother or father (at the choice of the former) is entitled to exceptional leave should the child suffer a serious illness during its first year of life. In Colombia, Law No. 755 of 2002, known as the “Ley María”, grants the spouse or permanent partner eight days’ paternity leave if both parents pay social security contributions or four days’ if only the mother contributes, while in 2005 the Cayman Islands adopted a law granting two weeks’ paternity leave to civilian workers (one week paid, the second unpaid). In Puerto Rico, Law No. 165 of 10 August 2002 amends the public service law to guarantee maternity leave for women and extend it to 12 weeks; in addition, Law No. 184 of 3 August 2004 establishes the right to special leave, such as five days’ paternity leave and leave to care for family members. In Grenada, it was agreed in 1999 that additional leave should be granted to any male or female

employee for family reasons. The duration of this leave is decided on in consultation with the employer, however, so that it may not always satisfactorily meet the worker's needs.

State provision of early childcare is inadequate in most of the region's countries, the exceptions being Uruguay and Cuba. Private provision caters only to an extremely small number of people. In these circumstances, the women in families with newborn children provide a *de facto* social safety net. The recipients of care, in this case children, pay the price for family adjustment and the lack of State provision. Differences in the care children receive exacerbate social inequalities, and the opportunity for and quality of care will determine their future. Despite this, most countries only recognize care needs from the age of six, when children begin school.

The existence of day-care centres or *crèches* is related to the third key component: childcare services for the children of working people. The regulations on childcare facilities attached to the workplace vary enormously from one country to another, but the great majority oblige employers to provide such facilities based on the number of female workers they employ. The law therefore not only assumes that it will be the working mother who brings her child to work, but also allows them to restrict the number of women they employ to avoid the extra burden of providing a new childcare facility.

In Argentina, article 179 of Law No. 20744 on employment contracts obliges employers to provide mother and baby rooms and day-care centres based on the number of female workers employed. No implementing regulations were ever issued for this article. Law No. 11317 established that this obligation applied to companies employing more than 50 female workers aged over 18; subsequently, Law No. 20582 provided for the creation of district nurseries for the children of mothers aged under 18. However, no implementing regulations were issued for either of these provisions and they are not applied in a coordinated way; nor is there any system for ensuring that a woman's children are cared for while she is at work. Some collective labour agreements recognize the right to use of a day-care centre or to financial compensation in the absence of such a facility.

In Costa Rica, employment legislation does not provide for day-care facilities in the workplace. It does, however, guarantee that "all breastfeeding mothers shall be entitled in the workplace to a break of 15 minutes every three hours or, if they prefer, half an hour twice a day during working hours so that they may feed their infants, unless a medical certificate can be produced to show that they only require a shorter break" (article 97 of the Labour Code). In Puerto Rico, Public Law 155 obliges government agencies in their capacity as employers to provide an appropriate place (not the ladies' room) for the extraction of breast milk.⁵²

Varied as they are, all these laws apply discriminatory criteria that differentiate the ability of men and women to look after small children, the sick and older adults. This is particularly striking in the case of older adults, since labour regulations make no provision for their care other than to provide for a pension if they have contributed to the pension system as wage-earning employees. However, there is no provision for male and female workers to care for their parents, although this is becoming increasingly necessary as the lifespan of older adults in the region increases. Other than in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, whose Constitution establishes that "the father and mother have a duty to raise, bring up (...) their children, and those children have a duty to assist them when they can no longer care for themselves"

⁵² Report of the Women's Procurator of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico presented at the subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, 17 and 18 May 2007.

(article 76), leave of absence (of between one and three days, depending on the country) is granted only upon the death of a parent or parent-in-law.

However, some countries have adopted policy measures that are worth highlighting. This is the case with Costa Rica, where the Policy for Gender Equality and Equity was presented on 8 March 2007. This policy is planned for a 10-year period and built around six core strategies. The first of these is “care for the family as a social responsibility and recognition of the value of household work” and it is laid down as a goal that by 2017 every woman requiring childcare services in order to be able to carry out paid work should have at least one high-quality public, private or mixed childcare option available. To this end, it was decided that efforts should be concentrated in two areas: (i) the creation of a social care infrastructure, which inevitably means expanding the coverage and improving the quality of the services currently on offer, and (ii) the promotion of cultural changes that lead to more responsibility being shared between women and men.⁵³

The National Action Plan launched by Cuba to follow up the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women contains 90 measures designed to mainstream the gender perspective in all areas of State action and to identify the agencies or ministries responsible. In this way, the country has addressed issues such as employment segregation, access to managerial positions, women’s integration into the labour market and shared responsibility for reproductive obligations. Regarding sexual and reproductive rights, there are 14 principal measures concerned with shared responsibility in sexual and family life and with training and adaptation measures for education and health service staff with a view to meeting women’s needs. The legislation guarantees working mothers 18 weeks’ paid maternity leave. After this they can continue to care for their child until its first birthday without forfeiting their employment, during which time they will be entitled to social security benefits equivalent to 60% of their former pay. They are also entitled to split the leave with the father, at the couple’s discretion. In the case of unpaid care work, mothers who have children with a disability will continue to be paid the same wage in recognition of the care they are providing (Aguilar, 2002; UNDP, 2005).

The European Union has devised a basic set of nine indicators, some quantitative and others qualitative, to follow up the Beijing Platform for Action agreements on harmonization of family and working life. As a report produced for the European Parliament (Almenara Estudios Económicos y Sociales, 2004) points out, the most interesting feature is that time use is the basic unit in six of the nine indicators, while others refer to aspects of care for children and dependent adults and one deals generally with integrated policies, especially those concerning employment. Although in some cases they would need adapting to the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the indicators proposed merit consideration for the region, as several of them can be calculated from information already available (see box II.11).

Experiences of successful policies in this area do not abound in the region, although there have been major advances such as the code of good practice for the public sector in Chile, the model for recognition of businesses as “family-responsible employers” by the Secretariat of Labour and Social Provision in Mexico, responsible fatherhood rules in Costa Rica and several occupational training programmes for women. International experience indicates that certain long-term measures introduced as part of a comprehensive gender equality strategy can narrow the gap between men and women.

⁵³ Report by the Government of Costa Rica presented at the subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, 17 and 18 May 2007.

In the private sphere, there has been an upsurge in recent years of what is known as corporate social responsibility, by which is meant an active, voluntary contribution by companies to social, economic and environmental development with a view to improving their competitiveness in the market and hence their value. Corporate social responsibility means more than obeying laws and regulations—indeed, strict compliance with these is taken for granted. It encompasses a whole set of practices, strategies and business management systems intended to strike a new balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of corporate activities.

Characteristics of corporate social responsibility include an interest in the sustainability of corporate governance practices, a spirit of cooperation with customers, suppliers, competitors and governments, transparency commitments made to society and followed up by accountability measures, usually in the form of annual reports that can be audited by outside agencies and, lastly, corporate citizenship, meaning the rights and obligations that belong to the firm within the community it is part of. Good practices designed to harmonize family and working life for male and female employees are conspicuous by their absence, however.

Box II.11

THE EUROPEAN UNION: RECONCILING FAMILY AND WORKING LIFE, QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS

The qualitative and quantitative indicators proposed by the European Union to measure the degree of reconciliation between family and working life include several that it would be interesting for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to calculate, especially the following:

1. Employed men and women on parental leave (paid and unpaid) as a proportion of all employed parents.
2. Allocation of parental leave between employed men and women as a proportion of all parental leave.
3. Children cared for (other than by the family) as a proportion of all children of the same age group:
 - before entry into the non-compulsory preschool system (during the day);
 - in the non-compulsory or equivalent preschool system (outside preschool hours);
 - in compulsory primary education (outside school hours).
4. Comprehensive and integrated policies, particularly employment policies, aimed at promoting a balance between working and family life.
5. Dependent elderly men and women (unable to look after themselves on a daily basis) over 75:
 - living in specialized institutions;
 - who have help (other than the family) at home;
 - looked after by the family;
6. Opening hours of public services during the week and at weekends.
7. Opening hours of shops during the week and at weekends.
8. Total “tied” time per day for each employed parent living with a partner, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependent:
 - paid working time;
 - travelling time;
 - basic time spent on domestic work;
 - other time devoted to the family (upbringing and care of children and care of dependent adults).
9. Total “tied” time per day for each employed parent living alone, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependent:
 - paid working time;
 - travelling time;
 - basic time spent on domestic work;
 - other time devoted to the family (upbringing and care of children and care of dependent adults).

Source: Almenara Estudios Económicos y Sociales, *Social Security Systems in the EU and Their Impact on Reconciling Family Life and Work Life*, Women’s Rights Committee of the European Parliament, April 2004.

The increase in the older adult population and the gradual rise in life expectancy have aroused interest in the workings of care systems and the role of women in providing unpaid care services, but there is not yet full public backing for social services to support the social reproduction of the older adult population, which means that the family and, to a lesser extent, the market act as the main absorption mechanism for risks associated with old age. This is a particularly sensitive issue in the region's countries, since the ageing process is more recent than in the developed countries and has been more rapid, while socio-economic conditions have not allowed them to introduce public measures on the scale required to cover the assistance needs of a growing older adult population.

In several countries, only a minority receive formal social protection in old age. These are older people with retirement pensions who exercise their economic rights fairly effectively, although their incomes are not always enough to provide them with financial security. The rest of the elderly population, most of whom are women, rural inhabitants and indigenous people or migrants, do not have easy access to institutional mechanisms that would fully meet their care needs. This is because access to non-contributory pensions is limited, the coverage of public health systems is low and poorly matched to needs, and the social services needed for independent living are unavailable. In practice, these groups depend almost exclusively for their survival on whatever care they may receive from relatives, and here women play a fundamental role.

According to ECLAC/CELADE (2003a), one major driver of future growth in the proportion of older people in the population is the shift in mortality patterns during the 1930-1990 period, owing to the decline in mortality associated with infectious diseases in the first 10 years of life. The cohorts reaching the age of 60 between 2000 and 2020 will experience the benefits of medical technology introduced in the period following the Second World War. Consequently, their "survival" gains owe more to the successful reduction of exposure to infectious diseases, better treatments and shorter recovery times than to improvements in living standards (Palloni, DeVos and Peláez, 2002).

The likelihood is that in Latin America and the Caribbean these generations will be in worse health in the future than older people in developed countries (ECLAC/CELADE, 2003a). The corollary to this is that the demand for care is expected to increase over the next 50 years, at a time when secondary ageing (the increase in the number of people aged over 80) will be experiencing faster growth than in recent decades (Huenchuan and Guzmán, 2004). The family is one of the most important sources of care in old age. Data from the Health, Well-being and Ageing (SABE) survey show that in 2000 or thereabouts a large proportion of older people in seven cities of Latin America and the Caribbean were assisted by their families in carrying out functional and instrumental everyday activities (see table II.4).

The data also show a higher proportion of women experiencing difficulty than men. Studies based on these data likewise show that women have greater health problems in old age than men. All the health indicators obtained bear out these results, after controlling for variables such as age or socio-economic level (Béland and others, 2007). The proportion of people receiving help with functional activities is twice as high in the Chilean sample (about 52%) as in the Uruguayan one (about 26%). Generally speaking, a significantly higher proportion of people receive help with instrumental activities than with functional ones, with figures ranging from just under 70% in Argentina to almost 92% in Brazil. Another aspect documented by this survey is that most support is provided by people living in the same household, followed by children living elsewhere (Saad, 2003).

Table II.4
**SEVEN SELECTED CITIES: PROPORTION OF OLDER PEOPLE HAVING DIFFICULTY
 AND RECEIVING HELP WITH EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES,
 BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS^a**
 (Percentages)

Characteristics	Functional activities ^b		Instrumental activities ^c	
	Having difficulty	Receiving help ^d	Having difficulty	Receiving help ^d
Age (years)				
60-64	13	26	15	75
65-74	15	33	21	79
75 and over	31	51	47	88
Sex				
Male	15	43	20	83
Female	23	42	35	84
Marital status				
Unmarried	23	43	35	85
Married	16	40	21	82

Source: Paulo Saad, "Transferencias informales de apoyo de los adultos mayores en América Latina y el Caribe: estudio comparativo de encuestas SABE", *Notas de población*, No. 77 (LC/G.2213-P), Santiago, Chile, Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC, 2003.

^a Mexico City, Havana, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, Bridgetown.

^b Functional activities: everyday activities such as washing and cleaning oneself, getting out of bed, dressing and eating.

^c Instrumental activities: everyday activities such as household cleaning, food preparation and essential contacts with the outside world (visits to the dry cleaner, post office or shoe repair shop; going out to buy clothes or food; using the telephone and public transport).

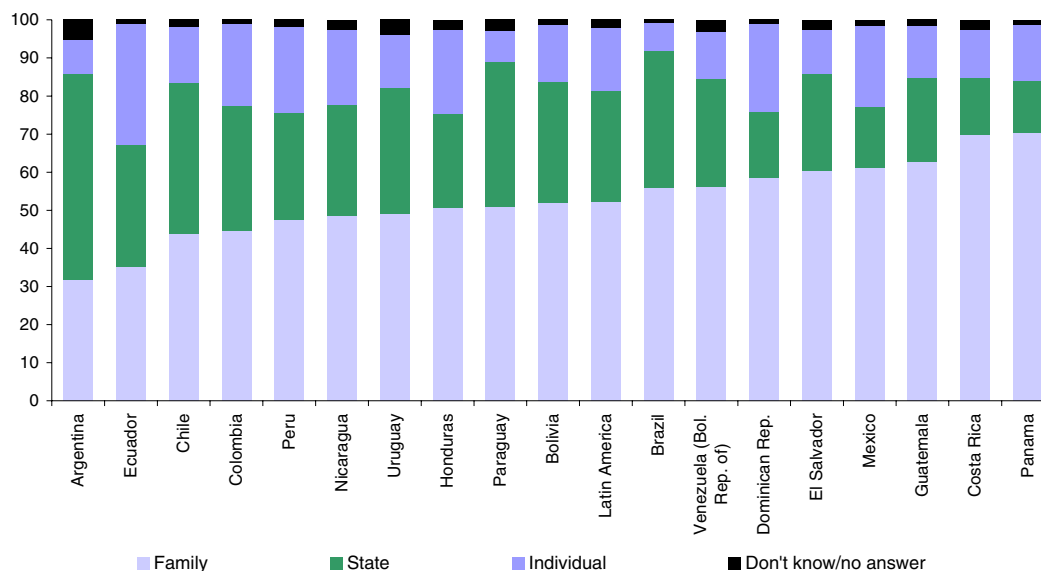
^d As a percentage of those experiencing difficulty.

These data show the extent of the family contribution to the social reproduction of the elderly population. As a number of authors have pointed out, however, when speaking of the family it is necessary to highlight the work done by women in providing care services (Sánchez, 1996).

Generally speaking, care is associated only with children and other types of care are therefore overlooked. In addition, it is generally thought that the burden of care falls mainly on the young, since it is young women who have to care for children. The evidence shows, however, that women can also be caregivers at other stages of life and that they provide care more than once in their life cycle, starting with their children, continuing with their parents and ending with their sick spouse. These three stages of care generally correspond to three different stages in a woman's life: youth, adulthood and maturity (Robles, 2003). The fact is that tradition, socialization and financial relationships combine to give women the central role in caring for older people (and indeed for other social groups), and this tends to hold true whether the woman is in paid employment or carries out domestic work only.

The problem for care systems is not the increase in the older adult population but the fact that societies have not created the optimum conditions for coping with this phenomenon and its consequences. In Latin America and the Caribbean, furthermore, there is debate as to whether care should be provided by the family, the market or the State (ECLAC/CELADE, 2003b). This is shown by data from the Latinobarómetro survey, which revealed in 2006 that respondents in most of the countries saw the responsibility for ensuring that older people enjoyed good living conditions as falling upon the family and, to a lesser extent, the State and the individual (see figure II.17).

Figure II.17
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING OLDER PEOPLE WITH GOOD LIVING CONDITIONS?



Source: José Miguel Guzmán, “Family support in old age in Latin America”, document presented at the Seminar on Ageing in Developing Countries: Building Bridges for Integrated Research Agendas, Santiago, Chile, 23-24 April 2007.

This agreement across different countries is worrying because, as the Division for the Advancement of Women (United Nations, 2002) has pointed out, when the family is made responsible for the welfare of older people the tacit assumption is that women can be counted upon as an available caregiving resource.

All the region’s societies assume it will be the woman who looks after the other members of the family without receiving any payment. Women may be trapped in a vicious circle: the expectation that they will carry out unpaid tasks interferes with the development of their careers and they then receive smaller pensions because their paid employment has been intermittent. Then the inadequacy of the financial benefits received by women increases their dependence on other family members—for the most part, other women. If the State or society do not intervene, the cycle will be repeated (United Nations, 2002).

Social services are strategically placed between the formal social protection system and family and community networks. They provide personal support and home or residential care, and they have their legal basis in social rights, which aim to ensure a basic availability of the services needed for the development of individuals and communities through State intervention in service provision and the distribution of well-being. More specifically, they are a response to the right to family protection (article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), which establishes that governments and non-governmental organizations have a duty to establish social services to support the entire family when there are elderly people at home and to implement measures especially for low-income families who wish to keep elderly people at home (United Nations, 1995b). With reference to this right, some countries’ laws include certain measures to increase the availability, sustainability and suitability of family protection systems for older people.

Box II.12

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

One categorization of social services divides these into two types: social care and health care. Social care consists of emotional and practical support, while health care is provided by trained personnel under the supervision of health professionals and consists of highly specialized activities. Among the advantages of services of this type are that they alleviate the emotional and financial burden of care often borne by women and that they help people to carry on living dignified lives and grow old in their homes.

CATEGORIZATION OF HOME CARE PROGRAMMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Type of service	Description
Volunteer home care services	Form part of home care programmes with limited financial and professional resources. Volunteers play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of life of older people by providing them with social care and friendship
Paid home care services	Include personal care, domestic tasks, clothes washing, household administration, shopping, preparation or home distribution of food, and companionship
Home nursing services	Provide short-term nursing care, often for a particular purpose such as the treatment of bed sores
Home medical services	Provide medical treatment to very frail elderly people on low incomes. This is an expensive service, however, and the supply of doctors for home care is usually limited
Case management services	Include a diagnosis of the elderly person's needs and coordination of a network of services (both formal and informal) to provide a basic care and support package

Source: HelpAge International, "La creciente necesidad de atención en el hogar", *Revista Horizontes*, No. 58.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the social services law of 2005 mandates the creation of home care programmes for older people to provide them with health, recreation, companionship and meals services. In Costa Rica, Law No. 7935 of 1999 is designed to help older people remain in their families and communities and provide social assistance in the event of unemployment, disablement or loss of their means of subsistence. In the Dominican Republic, Law No. 352-98 of 1998 establishes as a fundamental right that older people should be able to lead a dignified life alongside their families in an environment that fully meets their diverse needs. In El Salvador, the 2002 law on comprehensive care for older adults establishes that the family will have primary responsibility for caring for older people and that the State will be obliged to provide support through the relevant agencies; in the absence of family, however, the appropriate State institution will provide them with care. In Brazil, Law No. 10741 of 2003 stipulates that care for older people should be provided by their own families in preference to old people's homes, except in cases of need, and introduces new ways of enforcing this right (Huenchuan and Morlachetti, 2006).

All the countries give the family a fundamental role in the provision of care and guarantee the right of older people to remain in their homes. It is notable, however, that these laws do not create specific protection mechanisms and guarantees for women providing care and that, once again, they refer to the family in general terms without making any gender distinction whatsoever. The main gaps identified are as follows: (i) there is no mention of the economic rights of women providing care (it is assumed that care will be provided free of charge and that it is part of the network of filial reciprocity); (ii) there is no protection for the right to social security of women providing care and no compensatory measures are established to mitigate the effects of the interruptions to paid employment that arise when women are

occupied in providing these services; and (iii) there is no protection for the right to health of female caregivers. As has been well documented, caregiving is a task that involves major physical and mental health risks, and women who provide care are not covered by health provision commensurate with their needs and the limited time they have to look after themselves.

Approaching gender equality from the perspective of unpaid care work allows the world of work to be analysed from a standpoint that is usually ignored in economic and social analysis. This analytical perspective transcends the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, which leads to a focus on unpaid activities and assigns caregiving a subsidiary, complementary and natural role based on the prevailing gender order. This document has shown all the dimensions that affect gender equality, such as employment, unpaid work, social security and, most importantly, the essential and unrecorded contribution of work in the private sphere, which is a vital pillar of development. Although the dichotomy between the public sphere and the private one (the non-business family realm) has a very long history, it is only in the last few decades that the situation has begun to become critical because women have been entering the labour market in large numbers, have little choice but to remain there, and wish to develop their autonomy on the basis of financial independence, something that has also been driven by demographic changes, particularly their control over their fertility and reproductive life, their educational attainments and the growing demand for participation in democratic life, as discussed in the first part of this document.

This change in analytical perspective makes it possible to focus on women's contributions rather than on what is lacking to them, and reveals the non-monetary subsidy they provide over time in the form of unpaid care for children, the sick, older people and other family members. Not only that, but the excessive burden of work to which most women are subject yields earnings from employment that are essential for overcoming poverty and achieving well-being, but that result in situations which are extremely distressing for poor women who have to relinquish the care of their own loved ones to work in other households or leave their own countries. This represents a sort of informal social insurance that makes up for the lack of universal, solidarity-based public policies.

The introduction to this document argued that the women of the twenty-first century were facing up to the challenge of equality by winning their freedoms. The analysis presented in this second chapter reveals the public policy challenges that need to be addressed if the conquest of civil and political rights is to be accompanied by the conquest of economic and social rights in the private and public spheres.

III. TOWARDS A RESEARCH AND POLICY AGENDA

During the preparation of this document, it became evident that a research and policy agenda needed to be adopted for the short- and medium-term on the two issues under consideration: political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels and analysis of the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work performed by women.¹

The proposals set out below take into account the recommendations that emerged at the three subregional meetings held in preparation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: the subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico (held in Guatemala City on 16 and 17 May 2007); the subregional preparatory meeting for the Caribbean (held in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, on 23 and 24 May 2007), and the subregional preparatory meeting for South America (held in Santiago, Chile, on 28 and 29 May 2007).² What is being presented here is not so much a list of issues for research and public policy formulation as two strategic proposals which seek to:

- (i) Build bridges between knowledge and research, on the one hand, and public policies on parity and unpaid work, on the other;
- (ii) Respond to the needs of member Governments of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- (iii) Propose a multidisciplinary study in order to gain insight into complex problems relating to gender equality in the two thematic areas under consideration;
- (iv) Engage all the actors involved at the national and regional level in a cooperative study based on the exchange of best practices.

The research agenda proposed for policy formulation is based on the following goals:

- (i) To develop new knowledge that sheds light on the nature of the problems that have arisen in the sphere of gender policies in the region;
- (ii) To incorporate this knowledge into the institution-building strategy of countries and, above all, into the strategy of national mechanisms for the advancement of women;
- (iii) To enhance the active leadership of these mechanisms through their participation as Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference.
- (iv) To take into account regional specificities and promote intraregional interchange for the benefit of all women.

¹ This proposal is based on the research methodology for development prepared by the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO).

² See relevant reports.

A. PARITY IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

1. Identification of new subjects for research

At the subregional preparatory meetings for the tenth session of the Regional Conference and during preparation of this document, questions were raised concerning the way the gender system operates within political parties and the way women exercise leadership as well as on the correlation between political participation, representation and access to power, and poverty, ethnicity, age, the exercise of reproductive rights, levels and forms of violence and other variables that have a bearing on the exercise of citizenship, social and political participation and access to positions of power.

2. Policy or strategy objectives

The objectives pursued by the research proposal are:

- (i) To identify the most successful and sustainable strategies for promoting and maintaining women's political participation;
- (ii) To document the contribution of women in leadership positions in parliament, the executive, local government and other decision-making bodies, such as the judiciary, the business sector and social organizations;
- (iii) To analyse the links between participation and decision-making by women, on the one hand, and poverty, unpaid work and the exercise of their rights, especially reproductive rights, on the other;
- (iv) To recognize the contribution of unpaid work carried out by women within political parties;
- (v) To report on regional experiences underway, identifying the specific characteristics of parity in the region.

These prospective research studies will be directed towards decision-making. Most of them will be confined to the national sphere; a more limited number will have a regional comparative scope.

3. Instruments to be developed

Bearing in mind the current status of research, priority must be given to strengthening institutional capacities in order to:

- (i) Compile data on women's political participation and representation;
- (ii) Optimize the use of available sources, such as the database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which provides up-to-date information on women's participation in parliaments;

- (iii) Contribute to the maintenance of the ECLAC database on participation in the executive, in order to analyse long-term processes and trends relating to the presence of women in cabinet posts;
- (iv) Analyse available information with a view to providing arguments and solid grounds for the formulation of public policies—including legislative reforms—which will enable women to move forward towards parity as an attainable goal;
- (v) Prepare qualitative studies on the relationship between the cultural dimension of the sex-gender system and obstacles to women's political participation.

B. THE IMPACT OF UNPAID CAREGIVING ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

1. The identification of new research issues

One of the research areas that rallied the highest degree of consensus was that concerning the need to strengthen and refine the conceptual framework of caregiving, determining the scope of the concepts of reproductive work, the care economy, unpaid work, time reengineering and reconciling family life and work, among others, in order to obtain a clearer conceptual definition of the analytical field covered by these terms.

It was also suggested that public policies should be categorized to differentiate between those designed to promote child care, those designed to enable women to work outside the home and those that encourage the sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

2. Objectives of the policy or strategy

This research proposal includes the following objectives:

- (i) To evaluate the costs of universal social protection for all women (including domestic workers, housewives and agricultural workers) irrespective of their employment status. This study could be undertaken in countries where reforms are already underway;
- (ii) To document the legal status and the effective fulfilment of the rights of domestic workers in order to bring their rights in line with those of other workers;
- (iii) To assess the impact of child-care programmes on women and men's time;
- (iv) To carry out in-depth studies on issues that are increasingly important in the sphere of care giving: the additional burden of work for women caring for family members with HIV/AIDS; the transnationalization of care and the contribution of female migrant domestic workers to remittance flows;
- (v) To assess the impact of family law on women's economic independence.

3. Instruments to be developed

Given the current status of research, priority must be given to strengthening institutional capacities in order to:

- (i) Obtain appropriate and timely information on the labour market, including the informal sector and agriculture;
- (ii) Obtain sex-disaggregated information on social security;
- (iii) Carry out time-use surveys;
- (iv) Establish satellite accounts on unpaid work.

Appendix

TECHNICAL NOTES

The statistical information used to produce this document is from: household surveys, time-use surveys, census projections, the database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and replies to the questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation that the ECLAC Women and Development Unit sent out to Latin American and Caribbean countries in September 2006.

Household surveys

National household surveys were mainly used for the comparative analysis of women's domestic activities, both for those who undertake paid domestic work and those who carry out unpaid housework in their own homes (homemakers).

These surveys make it possible to identify those women who spend most of their day carrying out (paid and unpaid) domestic activities and to compare their situation with that of the rest of the female population. The following four categories were identified:

- (i) "Domestic service", those who carry out domestic tasks outside their own home in exchange for payment, either in the households of others or in businesses and institutions;
- (ii) "Homemakers", women who carry out unpaid housework in their own homes;
- (iii) "Other occupations", those in paid employment, other than domestic service;
- (iv) "Rest of the female population", women who do not come under any of the other categories.

"Activity status" and "occupational category" are used to distinguish between female domestic workers and homemakers. Domestic service workers are part of the economically active population (EAP), while homemakers are part of the economically inactive population (EIP).

This document includes information only from those countries that identify both domestic service and homemakers in surveys carried out around 2005. For the purposes of comparison, the population consists of those aged 15 and above, although the reference population in some countries may have included younger people. The following table shows the different ways in which the countries with information available categorize female domestic workers.

CLASSIFICATION OF DOMESTIC SERVICE

	Occupational category
Argentina (2005) ^a	Private households with domestic service
Bolivia (2003)	Household employee
Brazil (2005) ^b	Domestic workers
Chile (2003)	Domestic service (“live-in” and “live-out”)
Colombia (2005)	Domestic employee
Costa Rica (2005)	Domestic servant
Ecuador (2005)	Domestic employee
El Salvador (2004)	Domestic service
Guatemala (2004)	Domestic employee
Honduras (2003)	Domestic service
Nicaragua (2003)	<i>No such occupational category</i>
Panama (2005)	Domestic service employee
Paraguay (2005)	Domestic employee
Peru (2003)	Household worker
Dominican Rep. (2005)	Domestic service
Mexico (2004) ^c	Domestic service workers
Uruguay (2005) ^d	Private households with domestic service

^a Code 95 of the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC Rev.3.1).

^b In Brazil (2005), there is no category for housework or homemakers.

^c Main group 82 of the Mexican Classification of Occupations (2000).

^d Code 95 of the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC Rev.3.1).

The information provided by household surveys reveals the age, schooling, marital status, ethnic group, household type and characteristics, and level of poverty of women who carry out a certain activity. In the case of female domestic service workers, their working hours and wages can be compared with other working women. Having said that, surveys do not yet provide information on the characteristics of the households that employ female domestic workers, except for those of “live-in” domestic employees.

Data from the household surveys carried out by 14 countries in around 2005 show that, on average, about 1.4% of homes have “live-in” domestic workers, with figures ranging from 0.2% in Costa Rica and Uruguay to over 3% in Paraguay and Peru. To increase the sample capacity and achieve regional representativeness, this document uses the sum total of all countries (see tables 22 to 36 of the statistical annex).

Although the information on “live-in” female domestic employees in household surveys refers to a limited number of workers, it is nonetheless helpful in assessing the characteristics of the employers’ households and estimating the significance of the contribution of such workers, both in financial and qualitative terms. The data show that domestic workers are often taken on by households with care requirements and in which the woman in the employer family has paid employment and long working hours (see figure II.12 and table 29 of the statistical annex). Also, the households that hire domestic workers are those with the highest incomes. Indirectly, this shows that when there is no one within the household to carry out domestic work, it becomes necessary to use economic resources to pay for them in the market place (see table 30 of the statistical annex).

Household survey information also made it possible to devise an initial classification for certain groups requiring care, such as children, older adults and the sick or disabled. Children aged between 0 and 6 were defined as those needing care, while those aged over 75 were classed as older adults. These are used as proxies for being less likely to be able to look after themselves.

Although the situation differs across countries, household surveys often include disabled people as part of the economically inactive population. Some surveys have no question about disability, while others only refer to inability to work or fail to distinguish between disabled people and extremely older adults. Indeed, the usual questions on why the person did not work in the week preceding the survey only reveal why a person is unable to carry out paid employment, and reveal nothing about that person's care requirements. However, not all such people can be directly identified as potentially in need of care. It is vital for the statistical instruments used by countries to include specific questions on who actually needs care and which people or institutions are responsible for providing such care.

IDENTIFYING THE SICK OR DISABLED ON THE BASIS OF "ACTIVITY STATUS"

Country	Variable identified
Argentina (2005)	8: Disabled
Chile (2003)	6: Chronic illness or disability
Colombia (2005)	7: Permanently unable to work
Costa Rica (2005)	8: Permanently unable to work
Ecuador (2005)	8: Disabled
El Salvador (2004)	6: Illness or accident 9: Unable to work (disabled, older adult)
Guatemala (2004)	6: Disabled for life 9: Illness/convalescence
Honduras (2003)	9: Disabled
Mexico (2004)	8: Permanently disabled
Nicaragua (2003)	8: Disabled individuals
Panama (2005)	7: Permanently unable to work 8: Old age
Paraguay (2005)	5: Illness 7: Old age or disability
Dominican Rep. (2005)	6: Disabled 9: Old age
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of) (2005)	7: Disabled

In terms of the need for disaggregated information by ethnic group and race, censuses usually include questions about belonging to a particular ethnic or racial group. It is less common for national surveys to include such questions (given the low representativeness of samples), and this may affect the reliability of estimates. The present document therefore features no disaggregated analysis of domestic work by ethnic group, except in the case of the five countries that included questions on indigenous population in the household surveys carried out in or around 2005: Bolivia (2003), Chile (2003), Guatemala (2004), Panama (2005) and Paraguay (2005).

Information on people employed to provide care is important for raising awareness about how they are segmented, as well as for defining the various forms their work takes. Data on their working hours, contract arrangements, social security coverage and the households or institutions that employ them should provide a picture of one of the most common forms of work among women. Those details, along with information on level of income, will help to determine the market value of the equivalent unpaid services.

Although many household surveys collect data on the specific occupation of those surveyed, a lack of record standardization means that the information cannot always be put to good use. The categories vary wildly, and some even make it impossible to determine the nature or skill level of the tasks involved. At the conceptual level, there is a need for an operational definition of those who carry out care work, especially in the areas of education and health services.

There are certainly boys and girls who spend hours a day carrying out domestic and caretaking activities in their own homes. There is also known to be a high percentage of children (especially girls) who work in domestic service (as maids) in other households. However, it is difficult to obtain statistics on such population groups, due to the hidden nature of their work. As a result, the quality of information provided by mass, multipurpose collection instruments (such as household surveys and censuses) may be questionable. To overcome this shortfall, specific research into child labour must be used. Some countries, in conjunction with the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), have carried out surveys on child labour in the region.¹

Time-use surveys

At present, many countries in the region have or are in the process of carrying out time-use surveys, either independently from household surveys or as modules therein. Divergence in terms of definitions and compilation methodologies makes it difficult to compare countries and to estimate time spent on various domestic activities and identify the people involved in said activities. Developing a standardized classification of activities remains an ongoing challenge. A classification developed by the United Nations Statistics Division (ICATUS) is currently in its experimental phase, and must be reviewed prior to implementation.

Figures 15, 16 and 17 contain information from five countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua) and show the time spent by men and women on housework and their involvement in domestic tasks, as the relevant databases were available for the processing of some basic indicators. The criteria for “housework” varies among countries: in Bolivia, the variable used referred to total time spent on housework the previous day; for Ecuador, the database contained the variable “hours spent on housework”; in Guatemala and Nicaragua, time was calculated by adding together the variables in the

¹ As a result of ILO interest in determining the worldwide scale of child labour, research was carried out in over 220 countries in the early 1990s. The study showed that the main reason for a lack of statistics on the number of boy and girl workers was the absence of an appropriate survey methodology. Since 2000, thanks to an initiative of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the labour ministries and statistical offices of most Latin American and Caribbean countries have signed agreements to ensure the availability of reliable, up-to-date and comparable figures and data on the reality of economic exploitation in Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Panama. ILO is also promoting the inclusion of special modules to measure child exploitation in Paraguay and Uruguay, and is concluding agreements for the carrying out of surveys in Bolivia and Peru (see the IPEC website [online] <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Regionsandcountries/LatinAmericaandCaribbean/lang--en/index.htm>).

sub-module “home maintenance”; and in Mexico, the weekly time spent on activities within domestic work was added together.

Monetary value of unpaid domestic work

Some countries or academic institutions have attempted to establish the economic value of unpaid domestic work, but the practice has not become widespread to date.

Various methodologies have been put forward to measure the monetary contribution of unpaid domestic work to countries' economies. Nonetheless, the basic requirement is to have time-use surveys that identify the number of people involved and the number of weekly hours spent on each domestic activity, which must have a counterpart in each country's System of National Accounts. Information is also required on the income and working hours of people employed in domestic activities, so as to calculate the cost per hour.

Information on political participation

Timely and complete data to ensure high-quality information are essential for the follow-up of political participation in the executive branch and local politics. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) regularly updates its online database using official information from national parliaments. The database provides information on the percentage of women in parliament, as well as their situation and role (chairperson, committee member, etc.). The database also contains information on electoral systems and mandates of member countries, as well as their most recent election results. This report uses information updated up to November 2006.

Generally speaking, countries do not have systematized and regularly updated databases on the presence of women in the executive branch. To gain access to national data, in September 2006 ECLAC sent out a questionnaire to the authorities of national gender machineries of all Latin American and Caribbean countries, requesting information on the last three presidential terms.² The information obtained (see the statistical annex) was used to create a database, which led to an analysis of the presence of women in ministerial posts, the very subject of this document. This database is expected to be constantly updated, with a view to calculating the following indicators:

- (i) Duration of ministerial post, by sex;
- (ii) Cabinet composition by sex, according to ministerial area;
- (iii) Percentage of female ministers in a given month and year;
- (iv) Percentage of ministers at the beginning and end of the presidency.

Despite progress made, more information is still required on the participation and position of women in ministerial cabinets, political parties, regional parliaments, the judiciary, agencies monitoring State powers, various levels of power, the armed forces, social and business organizations and trade unions. To advance in this direction, ECLAC is considering setting up a gender parity observatory. The statistical annex shows the information currently available for each country.

² Questionnaire on unpaid work and political participation, sent out to Latin American and Caribbean countries on 15 September 2006.

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