

NATIONAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING
PLATFORM FOR ACTION

In fulfilment of the country's commitments, the Vice-Ministry for Gender, Generational Family Affairs, through the Office of Gender Affairs (DGAG), submits this report on trends and experiences in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Bolivia, on the basis of the National Plan for follow-up to the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

With a policy decision by the Bolivian State to introduce gender equity and equality as fundamental issues in public policy orientation as its basis, the Office of Gender Affairs sees its mission as "achieving equal opportunity for women and men in the framework of sustainable human development and strengthening democracy in politics, society, the economy and the family in accordance with the existing laws of the country and its cultural and regional diversity".

In the knowledge that discrimination against women has many causes, the Office has proposed a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary programme of action in the four dimensions of development: political, economic, social and cultural, under Supreme Decree No. 24964 of October 1997 on Equal Opportunity between Men and Women. This represents historic progress in the political will to adopt a cross-cutting approach to gender in State agencies, and shows that the State guarantees equal rights for men and women in the areas mentioned, as well as the mainstreaming of a gender approach in public policy in order to achieve true equality.

The following are priority areas for intervention:

- Legal rights and reforms
- Health
- Education
- Urban and rural employment and productivity
- Violence
- Political participation
- Housing

In each of these areas, the major problems to be addressed have been identified and objectives and management targets defined. Progress in the implementation of the Office of Gender Affairs Plan of Action has been made in the following areas:

Legal reforms

- Drafting and enforcement of Act No. 1674 on Family or Domestic Violence promulgated in November 1995, with the objective of punishing, eliminating and preventing violence against women. The practical impact of this law can be seen in the establishment of 36 comprehensive legal services offices and the creation of 11 Women's Police Squads for the Protection of Women and the Family in the country's 9 departments.
- The inclusion in the Elections Act of a requirement that at least 10 per cent of the candidates in the elections for deputy and 25 per cent in the case of senators - must be women.
- The mainstreaming of a gender equity approach in the Popular Participation Act and Educational Reform Act, thereby opening up new opportunities for women's greater participation in the full exercise of their citizenship.
- The adoption of the Supreme Decree on Equal Opportunity between Men and Women of 1997, which determines that the State guarantees equal rights for men and women in the political, economic, social and cultural fields, as well as mainstreaming of gender content in public policy, with the goal of achieving true equality by promoting specific activities in the areas of health, education, economic development, political participation and citizenship, violence against women, legal matters, communications and culture.
- The National Agrarian Reform Service Act (INRA), which established equal rights for men and women in the distribution, administration and ownership of land, 18 October 1996.
- The Act amending the Penal Code removed the term "decent women" from the Code: previously offences against women and girls considered indecent or perverted had gone unpunished - 10 March 1997.
- Supreme Decree of 27 March 1998 promulgating the Domestic Violence Act.
- Code of Criminal Procedure, March 1999.

In the process of adoption:

- Municipalities Act (Popular Participation Committee - Chamber of Deputies)
- Protection of Victims of Crimes against Sexual Freedom Act (Constitution and Judicial Police Committee, Chamber of Deputies)
- Domestic Workers Act (Social Policy Committee, Chamber of Deputies)
- Sexual Harassment Act (Social Policy Committee, Chamber of Deputies)

- Electoral Code (Political Parties Committee set up by the Office of the Vice-President)
- Political Parties Act (Political Parties Committee set up by the Office of the Vice-President)

Also under discussion are proposals to:

- Include domestic workers in the Social Security system
- Include cash benefits for temporary disability in the health insurance available to women teachers.

At the working group stage provisions were included in both the Electoral Code and the Political Parties Act requiring at least 30 per cent participation of women. We have proposed amendments relating to gender for the following:

- State Political Constitution
- Family Code
- General Labour Act

Health

This area essentially focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights. From this perspective, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, a "Plan for Life" was developed to reduce maternal, perinatal and under-5 mortality.

As a result of coordination with the Ministry of Health, a Strategic Health Plan was introduced in 1997 which includes the mainstreaming of a gender approach in all its components.

Education

The priority areas and processes for educational reform having been identified, a policy has been designed setting forth the strategic guidelines for mainstreaming of a gender approach in the process of teaching and learning.

In order to achieve gender equality in education, there must be results in five strategic priority areas:

- Curriculum innovation
- Teacher training and skill development
- Production and distribution of materials
- Research
- Special Project for the Prevention of Violence in School (PPVE)

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Difficulties have been encountered with educational reform; the availability and quality of education must be such that education becomes a factor in the empowerment of women and development of national potential. The problem is how to improve the process and establish an appropriate relationship between administrative and curriculum reforms at the national, departmental and municipal level.

However, the Programme for the Prevention of Violence in School has attempted to enable students to exercise their rights fully as citizens, empowering each teacher, man or woman, to generate renewed social consciousness and to make a lifelong commitment to the Project, undertaking to encourage new behaviours, habits and professionalism which lead to the development of skills.

The teacher is seen as an agent of equity, imbued with new methods meant to promote qualities conducive to coexistence, such as problem-solving skills and adaptability to change, which are relevant to the appropriate execution of the Programme as the basis for a new style of relating socially, a style which emphasizes respect for the differences of others, pluralism and the possibility of working out agreements. Without these elements, a Programme for the Prevention of Violence in School is not sustainable in the long run.

We are working towards change and planning interventions with the decision makers and technicians of educational reform, in order to promote a change in behaviour and greater openness between the Vice-Ministry for Gender, Generational and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Our publications express interest in beginning research in support of the educational reform for the purpose of assessing the true situation, in preparation for the dialogue between teachers and counterpart technicians. Despite many difficulties and limited visible progress, sustained efforts have been made to design curriculums for primary education and to include a gender perspective. The educational advisers to the reform have received training and the team responsible for designing the project "access to and continuation of girls in school in rural areas" has been formed.

Employment and productivity

Progress in this area is reflected in the definition of policies, programmes and instrumental methodologies which have been incorporated in the Strategic Plans of the Office of Gender Affairs since 1996. Efforts have been concentrated on production, and different strategies and activities have been proposed for urban and rural areas.

Urban employment and productivity

Policies and programmes in the area of urban employment and productivity have been based on two central aspects: (i) elimination of gender inequalities in the workplace; and (ii) increasing women's autonomy by improving their technological and management skills.

The Office has placed priority on the following areas:

- (a) Salaried jobs subject to legal norms and regulations;

- (b) Technical training for workers;
- (c) Work organized under small and medium-sized enterprise projects;
- (d) Trade organizations for salaried workers and producers in general and
- (e) Progress in legislation to establish labour standards.

The progress achieved in these areas has been significant but uneven. There are differing degrees of acceptance of the gender perspective in different economic sectors. Coordinating with various parts of the public and private sector with a view to fulfilling the management objectives has been important in helping us to achieve our objectives.

Progress made through operationalization of the policies and programmes in this area is represented by the:

Programme of Action for Women in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, which seeks to include a component of enhancing the environment for such companies from a gender perspective in the Development Strategy for Industrial Competitiveness of the Vice-Ministry of Industry and Trade, a division of the Ministry of Economic Development.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has undertaken to finance execution of the project "Strengthening of business management and technology of small and medium-sized enterprises focusing on the women of the sector" through the Technical Assistance Service (SAT). When the agreement with SAT is signed, the programme will be executed in various stages, beginning in the five urban areas La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz and Tarija, and expanding gradually to population centres with under 5,000 inhabitants.

In addition, there are methodological tools for applying programmes aimed at strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises that the Programme of Assistance to and Promotion of Small-scale Initiatives in Urban and Peri-urban areas (PROMU) and the Office of Gender Affairs are introducing in their approach in three areas: guides for training modules, technical assistance and access to credit from a gender approach.

Likewise, the Small Industry and Handicrafts Promotion Project (PROFOM) in coordination with the Office, has drawn up a proposal to incorporate gender in the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises in various locations and fields.

Programme for the Strengthening of Labour Inspections: designed to provide training to Government agencies on the legal aspects of the rights of women.

Programme to Raise Awareness and Training on Gender and Work: aimed at staff of gender units in the Departments and technicians of priority prefectures and municipalities.

Bills have been drafted and presented to the Chamber of Deputies for analysis and adoption.

- Framework Law on Economic Promotion. The Vice-Ministry for Gender, Generations, and Family Affairs, through the Urban Labour and Productivity area, participated in the drafting of a bill on economic promotion, which is on the agenda of the Bolivian Parliament. Its objective is to establish principles and create mechanisms to stimulate cooperation between the State and private economic actors, both men and women. One of the important principles of the bill is creating equal opportunity so that all Bolivians, men and women alike, can participate in economic development according to their abilities and skills.

Political participation

The purpose here is to redistribute political power between men and women. There have been results in the areas of organization, strengthening of political participation and representation and the exercise of women's political rights:

- At the local level, the principle of gender equality has been mainstreamed in the Popular Participation Act, broadening the areas for women's participation in the design and management of policies covering their interests.
- The organization of the National Association of Women Town Councilors and Departmental Associations of Women Councilors and their training in participatory planning, legislation and municipal management has enabled the gender perspective to be included in the development of municipalities.
- A proposal for the development of municipalities entitled "Women and Municipalities Plan of Action" is aimed at strengthening the management capacity of municipal governments and local authorities to mainstream the principle of gender equality in municipal policies.
- With the goal of strengthening the work of legislators at the national level, the Union of Women Parliamentarians has been established, in order to include a gender perspective in the various reform proposals or new laws and in oversight of policies which have an impact on the situation and status of women.
- The Office supports the work of the National Women's Political Forum and the Departmental Forums, composed of women leaders and members of political parties, parliamentarians, councillors, members of non-governmental organizations and independent women politicians, with whom proposals are elaborated for participation in the national political system.

Despite the diversity of each of the areas, the gender perspective has been mainstreamed in national social and economic policy as a whole.

In the context of legitimation of policies, we have employed inter-institutional coordination, a process of communication between the State and civil society which has led to the strengthening of women's organizations

and opened a public debate on the subject of gender equality in access to and exercise of power.

Inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination to ensure a cross-cutting approach constitutes a mechanism for legitimizing gender policies in governmental structures and administration.

The Office continues, as a matter of priority, to raise the awareness of individuals in the Government and in society as a whole about gender equity and equality. Information, dissemination and communications policies and activities have raised the profile of its activities.

Likewise, emphasis was placed on the decentralization of management at the level of prefectures and municipalities. The establishment of Departmental gender units has helped to create conditions for an efficient and effective management of gender equality policies, thereby contributing to the popular participation process.

Municipalities and housing

The Popular Participation Act marks a milestone in the way public policy is made. This municipal reform opens up a whole range of changes including greater transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in administration and a participatory planning process. Moreover, it allows women to participate in planning differentiated by gender, based on the reasoning that women and men have different needs as a function of their differing roles in society.

Thus, municipal projects and services are aimed at meeting the real needs of the local population. The area of the municipal reform process involving efforts to encourage women to exercise their rights as citizens is without doubt the ultimate goal or mission of the municipality. In the past, its purpose had been seen as carrying out physical projects, but it is struggling to transform itself into an authentic organ of local government that promotes planned and integrated development at the local level.

Integrated development, which is understood as human development aimed at increasing the range of choices available to individuals, necessarily entails a search for social equity and equality between the sexes. In this context, the municipality is transformed into a body whose mission is to act as a factor for change in social and gender inequalities.

Women are more often motivated to become involved in the public sphere of society and can more easily act on their interests within local districts, villages and municipalities. Local programmes, which emphasize access to services, planning and project control, promote women's practical and strategic needs and help to empower them for the future. Progress is being made in basic services, neighbourhood rehabilitation, participatory planning and municipal management.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

LEGAL ASPECTS

- Act No. 1100/89 ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Act No. 1599/99 ratifying the Inter American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women
- Act No. 1574/95 Against Family or Domestic Violence (Regulations)

These laws are supported by the State Political Constitution of Bolivia as the legal framework which ensures respect for fundamental human rights, including the right to life, health and security, without distinction according to sex, race, language or religion. The main public policies to promote gender equality are:

- NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT POVERTY 1997-2002 - it incorporates gender equality as public policy and considers violence against women a public policy issue.
- STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HEALTH: recognizes violence as a public health problem and includes it as an issue for the Ministry of Health and Social Security.
- NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE POLICE FORCE: The National Police has reached a milestone in combating the social problem of family violence. For the first time, it has established procedures to address the problem through Women's Police Squads.
- NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE MAINSTREAMING OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE, executed by the Vice Ministry of Gender, Generational and Family Affairs through all relevant government bodies.
- "VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS" PROJECT, A PROPOSAL TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES: The results obtained have been the fruit of efforts in various sectors, with the technical support of the Pan-American Health Organization and financial support from the Government of the Netherlands, through the Violence against Women and Girls project.
 1. Coordination activities have taken place with institutions and organizations of civil society, giving impetus to the establishment of mechanisms to combat family violence at the Departmental level.
 2. Local networks for prevention of family violence and care for victims have been formed which work through social participation and multi-sectoral coordination. The municipalities are the appropriate setting to promote the use of local resources, establish inter-institutional commitments and develop exchanges between municipalities in order to combat domestic and family violence.

3. In Bolivia, the project is executed through a tripartite committee made up of the Ministry of Health and Social Security, the Vice-Ministry of Gender, Generational and Family Affairs and PAHO/WHO, with the support of other institutions such as the National Police and the Ministry of Justice.
4. By institutionalizing the problem of violence we are trying to include in the ordinary work of various institutions, prevention and treatment activities relating to this problem which affects Bolivian women of all social classes. The development of technical instruments such as guides or manuals helps to further the process in such sectors as health, the judicial system, education and leadership.

2. Financial and institutional measures

Financing for gender policies comes mainly from external cooperation resources from the Government of Sweden and the Royal Government of the Netherlands under the Equality Plan, and from the limited resources allocated by the national treasury as counterpart financing for external resources. It is also important to mention that UNICEF, UNEPA and the Inter-American Development Bank have committed funds to finance various projects.

3. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action we have assumed responsibility for monitoring the process of following up on the recommendations of the Platform through various activities such as coordination with the national NGO Liaison Committee for Beijing follow-up at the national and departmental level, planning workshops and dissemination of the recommendations of the Programme of Action for Women; preparation of materials for its discussion throughout society and development and execution of the National Plan for Follow-up to the Recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

4. One innovative measure is the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in our country's Overall Plan for Economic and Social Development 1997-2002, as well as the promulgation of Supreme Decree No. 24864 on equal opportunity between men and women, which mainstreams the gender perspective in public policy in the areas of health care, education, economic development, political participation and citizenship, violence, the law, communications and culture.

Translator's note. The odd numbering of headings and paragraphs reflects the numbering in the Spanish text. That is perhaps a minor matter compared with the actual content of the text.