

Translated from Spanish

National implementation of the Platform for Action of the
Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995

Introduction

Political objective and purposes of the National Women's Office

The Panamanian State is committed to following up the goals established in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action through the National Women's Office (DINAMU) of the Ministry of Children, Women, the Family and Youth. As an executing agency, DINAMU coordinates with governmental, non-governmental and international organizations in order to "crystallize follow-up mechanisms which both monitor and actually promote the implementation of activities". (Project to follow up the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, DINAMU-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1997.)

Measures to achieve the objectives

The aims of this DINAMU follow-up project are:

- to identify strategic areas on a preliminary basis, in conjunction with both sectoral organizations for the advancement of women and organizations of civil society,
- to establish follow-up and coordination mechanisms that make optimal use of the available resources and activate various types of follow-up by providing training to actors in the implementation of the sectoral mechanisms elaborated, and
- to ensure the institutional strengthening of recently created sectoral and national mechanisms which do not have sufficient human or material resources to fulfil all their responsibilities.

It also seeks to establish a linkage between the proposals contained in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and activities under the Women and Development Action Plan 1994-2000, to provide information on the status and situation of women which helps to translate proposals into reality on paper and to generate new activities to promote gender equality.

Project evaluation: analysis and results

It was agreed that the organizational and preparatory phases of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, were characterized by the growing mobilization of women in the formulation and promotion of strategic plans, the preparation of progress reports on the status of women and participation in various events, both national and international, which influenced the preparation of the Women and Development Action Plan, whose promotion gave rise to successful negotiations with the new Government in 1994.

In fact, as from the early 1990s in particular, the women's movement was already actively putting forward proposals for satisfying needs on the basis of the international conventions that preceded the Beijing Platform, which facilitated the establishment of the proper climate for the Panamanian delegation to express strong views in Beijing.

The dissemination of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference within the women's movement, the various government sectors and civil and political society led to our participation in regional preparatory events, beginning in 1993, thereby facilitating the harmonization of our objectives and activities with those of other countries and helping to maintain a sense of unity without diminishing our local perspective. The framework for this local perspective was the Women and Development Action Plan, an interesting, creative and energetic input by the women's movement, well before Beijing, which is more heavily based on the Nairobi Strategies.

Although the Conference did not mobilize and unite women in the pursuit of common goals, it did help give focus to what was already being done. That process culminated with the Government elected in 1994 assuming responsibility for the women and Development Action. Under this Plan, the National Women's Office and, subsequently, the National Women's Council, an important body which strengthens the movement's public policy-making role and its participation in the implementation of policies, were created.

From the point of view of agencies of the United Nations system in Panama, Beijing provided the women's movement with drafting guidelines and uniform "language" for the presentation of results and desired goals. Another achievement was the establishment of an inter-agency committee of the United Nations system to support the movement in the light of Beijing. Among the significant contributions of the United Nations system to this process was awareness-building in sexual and reproductive rights, given the effect the topic had produced during the Conference. Parallel to the holding of the Beijing Conference, meetings were organized at the local level to analyse and disseminate the Platform, creating an encouraging and participatory climate.

Strengthened by the Platform, the women's movement has made a major effort to provide the country with legal frameworks, particularly with regard to violence and equal employment opportunities. With regard to the latter, the women's movement was able to negotiate additional funding with the European Union in order to advance a gender training project (FORGEN), through which not only many elderly women in the movement but also "new members" received training for over a year in gender and development issues as preparation for carrying out the Equal Opportunities project. With regard to violence, one achievement in the area of health is the visibility the girl child is acquiring as a focus of Panamanian health policy. Nonetheless, sexual abuse against the girl child continues to be a topic that must be examined in depth in order to take strategic and practical measures.

Progress achieved under the Women and Development Action Plan in the area of violence, with emphasis on domestic violence, has led to the organization and provision of resources for primary, secondary and tertiary health care (Amanda Blanco, Women, Health and Development Programme). Although, in 1995,

the women's movement obtained the adoption of Law 27 on the characterization of crimes of violence, its enforcement by the judicial authorities is limited. The law constitutes a major stride, however, which has increased the number of complaints about such incidents.

In connection with the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, the National Women's Office has analysed and updated results and obstacles with respect to, inter alia, national mechanisms for the advancement of women, the extent of participation by special groups in the implementation of Agenda 21, strategic and practical crime prevention and criminal justice measures for the elimination of violence against women and support for the preparation of Panama's periodic report for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

One conclusion is that the growing impoverishment of the working classes has considerably expanded the scope of the critical area of poverty. Statistical data (Panama, steps towards a better future, 1997) from the United Nations Population Fund show a feminization of poverty and a migration of rural women to urban areas, bringing their poverty with them; the data tend to confirm that gender inequality in the distribution of economic power and family responsibilities still poses a serious difficulty in the implementation of the Platform for Action. It should be noted that, in interviews in both the urban and rural areas during the evaluation, progress in this critical area of concern was deemed to be unsatisfactory.

The establishment of the new Ministry, which is the umbrella for DINAMU, reflects the Government's commitment to the Beijing 1995 agenda. As part of the mechanisms introduced, high-level ministerial officers and the Office of the President of the Republic were given gender-awareness training in an effort to create an environment conducive to the implementation of the agreed activities.

Beijing gave impetus to promotional, training and follow-up activities for the advancement of rural women, in coordination with the Office of the First Lady, which strengthens and empowers the women's movement, particularly in the area of public policy.

Panamanian women improved their access to education; however, illiteracy persists among indigenous and rural women. In general, women have attained high levels of education and more women graduate from universities; however, the ratio of such data to available managerial positions in both the private or government sectors is low and women tend to remain in middle management. Prior to Beijing, the women's movement had made progress in negotiations with the European Union, resulting in the above-mentioned Project on Equal Opportunities and its priority sub-project on education without gender discrimination. It is hoped that that project will reduce gender inequality, which explains the gap between the high level of education and limited access to decision-making positions.

The Beijing Declaration, as a convention, has the power to change because women are familiar with it and it has come to guide activities that establish rights and forge new relations between women and men. Learning to speak the language of a society of equal rights is a process which all of us, men and

women, must develop; thus, we should ask ourselves whether, three years after its conclusion, the Declaration is known to women and has been an inspiration in the defence of rights and a guide for moulding personal and social behaviour based on equitable gender relations.

A partial answer seems to be that militant women's organizations have become aware of the need to enforce laws concerning women's right to equality. A large number of women, not only from the working classes, but also professional women, still have insufficient knowledge of the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action. Their organizations generally do not formulate their plans within the framework of the Platform.

As mentioned above, government and non-governmental activities to implement the Platform are many and simultaneous. Nonetheless, there is no strong connecting thread that integrates the Beijing commitments in the movement or draws attention to them; hence, the evaluation showed some of the components concerning decision-making power and institutional mechanisms to be unsatisfactory.

It is proposed that DINAMU utilize the evaluation questionnaire prepared for this report as a follow-up instrument, since it contains the strategic objectives set forth in the Platform, plus indicators prepared as part of the evaluation.

Design of the evaluation: objectives and methodology

This evaluation was carried out three years after the Fourth World Conference on Women was held and may show greater results in some critical areas of concern than others.

In accordance with the terms of reference prepared by DINAMU, the general objective of the evaluation is to prepare a document which analyses Panama's national implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gives a general indication of instruments for follow-up and future evaluation.

Specifically, it is hoped that it will serve as both a comprehensive diagnosis of the degree of national implementation of Panama's commitments under the Platform for Action and an instrument that enables DINAMU and the National Women's Council (CONAMU) to follow up and carry out future evaluations of national implementation.

The comprehensive diagnosis will determine what commitments, commensurate with Panama's level of development, should be made regarding the status of women. It will also review what has been done by governmental and international organizations and provide a quantitative and qualitative reflection of national progress in implementing the Platform's various critical areas of concern.

Since the activities proposed in the Platform cover various national sectors and organizations, the design included a phase of mainly qualitative participatory evaluation by female leaders, programme coordinators and activists in the urban and rural areas. One participatory evaluation was carried out in

the province of Veraguas for the rural area and three, in various parts of the Panama City metropolitan area (see Methodological strategies).

Prior to the participatory evaluations, the design included an initial phase of interviews with 10 outstanding members of the women's movement as regards the promotion and consolidation of entities such as, *inter alia*, the Women and Development Forum, the Coordinating Office of Organizations for the Advancement of Women (CODIM), the Women and Development Action Plan and meetings to prepare the preliminary report for the Fourth World Conference. Coordinators of programmes for the advancement of women in governmental organizations and international agencies were also interviewed.

The information provided in this initial phase constituted an input for the preparation of the evaluation instrument, consisting of a questionnaire (see annex A) based on the strategic objectives and actions established in the Platform for each critical area of concern, which was then completed individually and collectively.

In order to achieve the desired objectives and results, fundamental criteria, quantitative and qualitative follow-up indicators and a follow-up and evaluation model that is, inasmuch as possible, simple and feasible to administer are being recommended to the National Women's Office through the evaluation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION 1995

The aim of the following questionnaire is to obtain:

- Your assessment of the implementation in Panama of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.
- Your comments, which will contribute to the design of an instrument to facilitate the follow-up of the implementation of the Platform by governmental and non-governmental organizations dedicated to the advancement of Panamanian women and the attainment of equality and equity.

The strategic objectives of each of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform are given below, followed by questions and/or statements which you should evaluate according to the following scale by placing the corresponding number next to each question or statement:

1. Extremely satisfactory
2. Satisfactory
3. Unsatisfactory, with some positive elements
4. Unsatisfactory

Please provide the following general information below:

1. Organization of which you are a member _____
2. Your position _____ Number of years you have been a member _____

Please mark the appropriate space with an "X":

3. Age bracket: 20-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50 and over _____

4. Level of education:

Primary school _____ Secondary school _____

University: Technical _____ University degree _____ Postgraduate _____

5. Occupation _____

Descriptive evaluation:

1. What are the main achievements of the Platform for Action in Panama (in terms of its general objectives, some of its critical areas of concern, etc.)?
2. How has it strengthened the women's movement in Panama?
3. What are some of the less successful components or areas of action? Please state reasons.
4. How should these questions or problems be resolved? Please explain any action you recommend. Specify who should be in charge of such actions.
5. Thus far, what lessons, either positive or negative, can be drawn from the Platform for Action as a guiding instrument for the women's movement?
6. In your organization, is the Platform for Action consulted in formulating your annual work plan? On which of the Platform's critical areas of concern does your organization focus?

Specific information by critical area of concern:

The following components correspond to the critical areas of concern of the Platform. Under each area are the strategic objectives (in boldface) and the strategic mechanisms given in the Platform for Action. In the proper space, evaluate the objectives and mechanisms according to the above scale of 1 to 4.

Poverty

_____ Adoption of macroeconomic and strategic development policies taking into account women's needs.

- _____ Reallocation of public spending to increase economic opportunities for the poorest women.
- _____ Specific economic, social and agricultural policies in support of female-headed households.
- _____ Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the design and implementation of lending programmes.
- _____ Policies for the promotion of equal access by women to productive resources.
- _____ Basic family shopping basket accessible to female heads of households.
- _____ Policies for the promotion of the equitable distribution of food in the home.
- _____ Administrative laws and practices to guarantee women equal rights and equal access to economic resources.
- _____ Policies to promote women's access to affordable housing, particularly heads of household.
- _____ Policies relating to women's access to land ownership, technology and better productive infrastructure, particularly rural and indigenous women.
- _____ Women's access to credit and loan mechanisms and institutions.
- _____ Specific policies to ensure women's access to financial, technical and marketing services.
- _____ Policies to afford women access to free legal services.
- _____ Active and linked networks of governmental and non-governmental organizations and savings and loan institutions.
- _____ Recognition and motivation of young women's participation in savings and loan programmes.
- _____ National capital to enable finance companies to increase the availability of credit for rural, indigenous and urban poor women.
- _____ Special credit and loan windows for women, including young women.
- _____ Simplification of banking procedures for the opening of accounts by the poorest women.
- _____ Government incentives to the private banking sector to extend its services to a large number of low-income women.
- _____ Gender-based methodologies and studies on the problem of poverty eradication among women.

_____ Data disaggregated by gender and age in order to arrive at quantitative and qualitative statistical indicators on economic output from a gender perspective.

Indicators:

Below you will find indicators for the poverty component, designed to follow up the implementation of objectives and mechanisms established in the Platform for Action.

- (1) Please rate each on a scale of 1 to 4 (see ratings above).
- (2) Please review and change the indicators or propose new ones on a separate line for the sake of clarity.

_____ Number of female heads of household broken down by family size, income and level of education.

_____ Increase in the number of women homeowners, broken down by civil status and level of education.

_____ Increase in the number of women with savings accounts and business loans.

_____ Increase in female-headed micro- and small-scale enterprises which have been operating for more than two years.

_____ Increase in female members of cooperatives.

_____ Increase in female leaders of cooperatives.

_____ Increase in women bankers at the managerial level.

_____ Integration of Platform for Action in the plan of work of the National Women's Council (CONAMU).

_____ Integration of Platform in the annual plan of work of organized women's groups by critical areas of concern.

Please suggest other indicators below:

Education:

_____ Equal access of girl children and women to education.

_____ Ensuring universal access of girl children to primary and secondary education.

_____ Establishment of a gender-sensitive education system that ensures equal educational opportunities to girl children and women.

_____ Education system that ensures equal participation of women in the administration and adoption of policies and decisions in the field of education.

_____ Increase in enrolment of girl children and numbers who remain in school by offering incentives and scholarships.

_____ Promotion of a school climate free of impediments to school attendance by pregnant teenagers and young mothers.

_____ Elimination of female illiteracy.

_____ Increase in women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education.

_____ Policies on education, training and retraining of women with a view to improving their job opportunities.

_____ Lesson plans, teaching materials and positive action to guarantee women greater access to the technical and scientific sectors.

_____ Diversification of vocational and technical training for girl children and women in the fields of science, mathematics, engineering, high technology and management.

_____ Promotion of women's role in research, extension and educational programmes in the food and agricultural sector.

_____ Establishment of non-discriminatory education and training systems.

_____ Non-sexist lesson plans and textbooks.

_____ Non-sexist language in teacher-student interaction.

_____ Teacher training in the gender perspective.

_____ Lesson plans and teaching materials that guarantee the education of rural, indigenous and upwardly mobile urban poor girl children.

_____ Introduction and promotion of training in leadership and conflict-resolution through peaceful means.

_____ Positive action to increase the percentage of female teachers at all levels.

_____ Human rights education programmes.

_____ Incorporation of sex and reproductive health education in curricula.

_____ Gender-sensitive recreational and sports facilities.

_____ Allocation of resources for educational reform.

Indicators:

{1} Please rate the indicators on a scale of 1 to 4 (see scale above).

- (2) Please review and change the indicators and/or propose new ones.

_____ School enrolment of rural, indigenous and upwardly mobile urban poor girl children.

_____ Participation of adolescent women in vocational school at the secondary level.

Methodological strategies:

The Platform for Action is an instrument which, by establishing guidelines for action for the advancement of the status of women, helps the Government and the women's movement to undertake follow-up and evaluation. Thus, the Platform is a gauge of the local plans of action and programmes being implemented.

Since women's experience shows that neither protective nor restrictive legislation is sufficient to translate our rights and aspirations into reality, but rather that we must organize in order to disseminate and ensure the implementation of legislation, a basic question in undertaking the study has been whether, and to what extent, the Beijing Platform is known to the women's movement and has been inspirational.

Preliminary interview guide

In order to obtain information on these questions, a preliminary interview guide (see annex B) was prepared. It is designed to elicit information on how the organizational phase of the Beijing conference helped to strengthen the women's movement, as well as the views of those interviewed as to whether the Platform for Action has been an inspiration or guide for programmes and projects for women.

Preliminary interviews were conducted with women who are prominent in organizations which promote, coordinate and implement activities to improve the status of women and with some of those who participated in the preparatory meetings for Beijing. Interviewees offered comments on designing an evaluation instrument and historical data to supplement the findings of the survey. They received copies of the Interview Guide before and during the interview; most of the interviews were taped.

Evaluation questionnaire

In developing the evaluation questionnaire (annex A), the specific scope of the strategic objectives established for each critical area of concern in the Platform for Action were taken into account and were to be rated by the women on the above scale of 1 to 4. At the same time, a number of the international conventions of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organization of American States (OAS) dealing with women's human rights to which Panama is a signatory, were consulted. The agenda of the Government of Panama on women's issues, prepared in 1994 as Panama's national report to the Fourth World Conference on Women, was also reviewed.

Indicators

The questionnaire was further improved by the inclusion of a number of indicators taken from the documents consulted. It was completed individually and in focus groups.

Conceptually, a monitoring and evaluation plan is advisable, since it results in greater progress and overall achievement of the desired objectives. It is hoped that the elaboration of indicators will bring out this progress.

The indicators were elaborated on the basis of the answers to the following questions:

- What are the objectives of the Platform's various critical areas of concern?
- Who are the target groups and the direct beneficiaries of the programme; what are their needs and expectations?
- What changes are expected as a result of the Platform?
- To what extent and how effectively are the objectives being achieved?
- How is the work necessary to obtain the expected results being carried out?
- What are the desired outputs?
- How do these outputs contribute to national objectives?
- What are the criteria for determining the success of the Platform in Panama? What impact do they have on the target groups? How sustainable are the effects? How do these effects contribute to building the capacity or self-sufficiency of the target groups?

Monitoring and evaluation

Experts on monitoring and evaluation systems agree that, in order for a system to be applicable, it must have a relatively simple and low-cost means of collecting data. From the methodological point of view, once the indicators have been selected, data should be elaborated in chronological series and should facilitate analysis of the changes which have occurred or the results of various actions. In other words, indicators constitute proof of the progress of a programme's activities in terms of the achievement of objectives. On that basis, there are indicators of relevance (adequacy), impact (effectiveness and efficiency) and, of success or achievement of objectives.

As a methodological measure, it is recommended that the interested parties be consulted in selecting the indicators, with the aim of not only involving them in the identification of expected results but also of strengthening their sense of responsibility for achieving those results.

There are quantitative, qualitative and departmental indicators. Efficiency is best measured by quantitative indicators; sustainability, meaning the beneficiaries' constant adaptability to a changing reality, requires qualitative indicators, which are more a measure of attitude and behaviour. It should be noted that methodologies involving evaluation by the beneficiaries and structured interviews can be used to convert qualitative into quantitative indicators.

Departmental indicators are used when the complexity, cost or timing makes it impossible to collect data to quantify results. For purposes of this investigation, interviews with authorities relating to the implementation of the Platform are an example of a departmental indicator.

Collection and analysis of data on the basis of the indicators:

As a support to the monitoring and evaluation system, data were analysed in chronological series: the data analysed here correspond to the 1995-1998 period. In the future, they should be collected for the period ending in the year 2001, when the Equal Opportunities project is scheduled to conclude.

The data analysis took the following into account:

- Types and sources of necessary data (reference is made to the analysis of the documents consulted).
- Who will be responsible for the collection and analysis of data: DINAMU, CONAMU, forums and networks.
- Who will use the resulting information? Women, governmental and non-governmental organizations, international agencies.

Thus, the data were compared to the data in the documents consulted, such as the Government's agenda for women and the Women and Development Action Plan.

In this evaluation, the indicators were to reflect the following:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Can be documented

The women interviewed were also requested to describe or evaluate the relevance of the indicators, propose new language to improve them or new indicators.

In conclusion, the first part of the evaluation questionnaire contains questions which should be answered in writing. They are designed to elicit

information on the interviewees' general perception of the problems and situations addressed by the Platform. The second part consists of questions elaborated on the basis of strategic actions identified in the Platform under each critical area of concern with the aim of quantifying the relevance and impact of the Platform's components. The questionnaire includes indicators which were evaluated by the interviewees and can be changed, reformulated or replaced by new indicators.

Evaluation report

In the evaluation report, relevance, success and impact were discussed in terms of the answers to the following questions:

- (a) Which factors had a positive impact on the implementation of the programme and which ones had a negative impact?
- (b) Results and impact for target groups and female beneficiaries and administrators.

Thus, it must be taken into account that the recommendations contained in this report constitute a proposal for specific action to be undertaken in specific circumstances, with a view to enhancing its relevance, success and impact. The parties responsible for the action should be indicated.
