

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE BRASILIA CONSENSUS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, AN ANALYSIS BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY

SUMMARY OF BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR,
PERU & VENEZUELA SUB-REGIONAL REPORT*

Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela are undergoing a process of reconfiguration from which they have proposed structural reforms that lay the groundwork for the modification of democratic spaces, understood from a development perspective as “good living” or “living well”; and in the case of Bolivia, as decolonization. These processes are based on the perspective of social inclusion and the elimination of inequalities in the distribution of wealth. Governmental actions have privileged displacing the predominance of the market and private initiative, in favor of a strong state interventionist presence and social protection based on state participation in economic strategic areas, with the state in the role of redistributor¹.

Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela have made legislative advances in all areas of the Brasilia Consensus, although legislation regarding the economic, physical and political autonomy of women still has a long way to go. These advances were made within the framework of persisting structural inequalities that prevent the full enjoyment of rights by the 65 million women in the Andean sub-region.

In spite of favorable indicators of economic growth, the reduction in poverty (10.3% on average), the increase in exports, the improvement of state finances with an increase in tax collection in five countries of the Andean sub-region, labor markets remain dependent on a model that privileges extractive activities –mining and hydrocarbons– particularly in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

In the five countries, the reproduction of the pattern of the sexual division of labor prevents the incorporation of women to the labor market under conditions of equality that would permit the exercise of their rights, and their participation remains restricted to unpaid, non-commercial domestic work and caretaking.

The necessity of caretaking is not yet recognized as an important field within public policy. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the weak governmental institution and the process of institutional transition at the national and sub-national levels are barriers to the application of laws regarding the advancement of women’s economic and labor rights. Labor and social protection policies still have limitations and are gender-biased, and women’s economic autonomy



remains a great challenge for governments and the State as a result.

Advances in legislation aimed at equality, the increase in women’s political participation at all levels of decision-making in all countries, is a phenomenon that demonstrates the great paradox of democracy and socialism in the twenty-first century: the absence of an effective commitment to the agenda of gender equality by a great deal of women and almost the majority of men in positions of power. The patriarchal culture dominating state institutions, political movements and parties remains intact and is a field of dispute for the most profound cultural transformations towards equality.

The lay State in the five countries of the sub-region show many weak points in daily reality. People in decision-making positions privilege their religious beliefs when evaluating and deciding on various public policies and legislation (abortion, sexuality education, adolescent pregnancy, contraceptive methods). Their political behavior is driven by religious moralism rather than the protection of human rights, which permits us to affirm that up until now, the separation of Church and State has not yet occurred.

The weak institutionality and hierarchical structure of mechanisms for the advancement of women in all the countries impede the cross-cutting management of public policies for gender equality, a situation that is reflected not only in instances of national management, but also in autonomous entities at all levels. Unless it is conducted at the ministerial level (the highest level), State action will always be limited and specific advances in addressing public policy management will be hard to achieve.

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¹ Women Coordinator. Carmen Sánchez: Informe Nacional sobre Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, Justicia de Género y Papel del Estado Bolivia. 2011.

The lack of financial resources awarded by states and governments, as well as shifts in cooperation due to their status as middle-income countries of the region, makes the systematic processes of policies of equality unsustainable in the medium and long term.

The five Andean countries have developed legislation aimed at preventing and punishing violence and promoting the elimination of violence against women and girls; however, legislation on sexual violence, which is included in the penal codes, has not been the subject of specialized legislation and only Peru has a classification for femicide. Despite legislative advances on the right to a life free of violence, public policies and current plans do not have sufficient resources or the political support to confront this calamity. The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a growing phenomenon that remains invisible due to the lack of regulatory policies and because the demand for and consumption of sex work is concealed, as a cultural factor rooted in the perpetration of violent, colonizing, and predatory masculinities upon women's and girls' bodies. The impunity in the administration of justice is disproportionate and is part of a cultural phenomenon of tolerance towards all forms of gender violence.

In the field of sexual and reproductive rights, there remain sociocultural barriers that limit access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, in particular for adolescents, the LGBTI population, indigenous people and those of Afro descent. Moreover, the lack of a comprehensive approach to health that allows for the identification of the relationship between lack of autonomy and empowerment of women and sexual and reproductive rights, translates into fragmented public policies.

On the other hand, cultural obstacles in legislators and decision and policy makers contribute to the criminalization of sexuality, abortion, HIV and to the evasion of the task of carrying out systematic policies to facilitate access to comprehensive sexuality education from infancy. They are also a barrier to the provision of information and establishment of sexual and reproductive health services to guarantee access to safe and free abortion, and the full exercise of desired motherhood.

Regarding access to ICT, the processes of constructing the National Digital Agenda for the Society of Information constitute effective, cross-cutting advocacy spaces on gender; this includes the development of gender content in digital education programs and the promotion of its use for two types of programs that contribute to women's empowerment: political participation and productive enterprises. On the other hand, the production of disaggregated statistics at the territorial and ethnic levels to gather input for the formulation of inclusive policies, remains a challenge.

October 2013

To see the complete report, please visit: www.feim.org.ar/consensobrasilia.html

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