

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

REGIONAL SUMMARY¹

In July 2010, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed on the Brasilia Consensus, by which the participating countries pledged to adopt a series of actions to achieve gender equality, focusing in autonomy and economic empowerment of women. This Consensus, as well as the previous one from Quito, is a significant input to advance in equality between men and women. In view of the barriers that limit these advances, a group of feminist organizations in agreement with UN Women Regional Office developed the evaluation and analysis in order to promote strategies to overcome the obstacles.

This document summarizes the advances and obstacles in the countries in order to achieve the goal of the Brasilia Consensus. The methodology used was based on the analysis by sub-regions; the four sub-regions are: Southern Cone and Brazil; Andean; English-speaking Caribbean; and Mexico and Central America, and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. For the analysis, a matrix was elaborated, based on the six main topics: Economic autonomy and equality in the working sphere; Strengthening of women; Participation of women in the decision-making processes and in power spheres; Elimination of all forms of violence against women; Easy access of women to new technologies and promotion of equal, means of communication that are democratic and free-of-discrimination; and Promotion of women's comprehensive health and sexual and reproductive rights.

The richness of this report lies in the collection of updated data evaluated, selected and completed with the knowledge of key stakeholders in direct contact with the reality of women, making visible and giving voice to the obstacles and challenges they have to face every day. With these contributions, we hope to advocate in the decision of governments so that women's rights, their autonomy and equality between men and women are a constant variable in the policy agenda.

Although all the countries refer to concrete actions towards economic autonomy and equality of men and women in the working place, women are still in a situation of disadvantage compared to men. Public policies have not improved the quality of employment, because the access to it is not equal and the wage gap prevails in all the countries, and unemployment is higher in women than in men, regardless of their education level.

The reproduction of the pattern of sexual division of work is limited to the exclusive responsibility of working at home and in the care service. The regularization and inclusion of women household workers in the social security system was a great advance.

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Despite the considerable increase in the participation of women in the labor market, this participation is focused on services and the informal sector.

Overcoming the palliative measures of reconciling work-family and implementing effective social services that guarantee the rights of people who depend on other people's care and the support and that encourage a better life quality for the families with more or one people in charge, especially women, who assume the role of caregivers. Implementing national surveys of the use of time² would make visible the redistribution of time between men and women, the household burden assumed by women and the use of free time.

The countries have a broad body of regulatory standards that alludes to international agreements and conventions; only Chile did not ratify the Facultative Protocol of the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, implementation does not always align with the spirit or content of the laws due to deficiencies in their application, different levels of compliance to the law based on jurisdiction or the political interests of diverse stakeholders, and sufficient budget allocation. The principal challenges are not related to the expansion of the regulatory and legislative bodies of the countries in this region that deal with the autonomy and advancement of women, but rather the effective implementation of their laws for the common denominator is the lack of their application. We point out the scarce human, material and infrastructural resources impede the exercise of rights and advancement of women; and the lack of data, information and research disaggregated by sex and

² The methodology of Mexico and Costa Rica used in surveys of the use of time has been design models for Latin America and the Caribbean. In the case of Mexico, it has a satellite account, however, the results are not yet seen in the employment public policies of any country.

gender not only renders invisible the status of women as limitations shared by the countries.

The situation of indigenous and Afro-descendant women is completely overlooked in political decision-making. Their cultural notions and practices are constantly questioned, often because of their liberal nature, which impedes their free exercise.

Patriarchal culture strongly claims that the main beneficiaries of inheritance are men. This is reflected in the elaboration of public policies on equal access to land, as well as agricultural bylaws. Daily life of rural women is characterized by the invisibility of their work, at home and in the fields, and the low wage they receive, which is lower than men's³.

The migrant population, and especially women migrants, faces great difficulties due to the lack of public policies that protect their rights and punish abuse, racism and xenophobia.

Although the civil and political rights and the extension of democracy extended the inclusion of political actors who were previously excluded, the androcentric and sexist character of political institutions prevails. The persisting sub-representation of women in the power sphere promoted affirmative action measures in most of the countries. However, the political system has recently adopted measures for the equality between men and women.

In most of the countries there are laws and instances in the different national, provincial and municipal bodies that develop a wide range of activities to address violence against women and girls. But the shared problem is the scarce or poor budget allocation that limits the scope and the results of actions, as well as the centralization of resources in big urban areas. Violence against women is so naturalized it is made invisible and it prevents women from denouncing it. The lack of registers gender-based violence is a common denominator.

Penal recognition of femicide is partially covered in the legislation of the countries of the region. Although this represents important advances, there are still no specific reparation mechanisms for indirect victims of gender violence, nor are there statistics on gender-based homicides of women, which would allow for the adoption of public policies – based on official data – to combat violence against women.

The access of women to new ICTs is real but is not part of specific projects, except for some exceptions, but as a consequence of the actions oriented to the population in general. Specific actions are not enough; they should be extended and promoted.

Sexual and reproductive rights still show serious deficiencies. The advances observed mainly refer to the access to sexual and reproductive health, not to rights. The obstacles are based on the resistance to the right of people to decide over their sexuality and reproduction, but especially of women. The barriers are present at the level of health care services, political decision-makers, the media and the education system. The latter limits the application of comprehensive sexuality education at schools, a key mechanism to produce changes. The decriminalization of abortion, and the attention of this serious health and human right problem, still faces limitations in most of the countries and constitutes one of the main causes of maternal death.

In this context, we have to question ourselves how to elaborate consensus, in which the governments and women's organizations set goals to achieve and also how to overcome the real and persisting obstacles. This proposes the challenge that allows the governments to advance, without limiting the goals. In order to achieve that, women's organizations have a key role in monitoring the implementation of measures and their impact, pointing out how to do it. Now, it is equally important to analyze how we achieved the goals than go on improving them. This is the challenge of this XII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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³ IBGE, (2010)