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### **EXPERIENCES WITH ANALYSIS AND MONITORING OF GENDER EQUITY IN HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **EXPERIENCE IN ECUADOR**

by

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The National Council of Ecuadorian Women (CONAMU) was created in 1997. Since that time, CONAMU has given priority to the need for information. CONAMU's efforts in this regard have been channeled toward the development of an information system with gender indicators that would facilitate the detection of gender inequalities, the preparation of diagnoses, the monitoring of activities, the evaluation of results, and the analysis of the impact of different policies on women's lives. For this purpose, with support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the system's component areas were identified, based on the different roles that women play (e.g. private, public, and social well-being), defining health indicators for each.

The main indicators used in the area of reproductive and sexual health/rights are: maternal mortality, adolescent pregnancy, the incidence of cervical cancer, the leading causes of female mortality and morbidity, health insurance coverage, care during childbirth, access to health care services, as well as knowledge and use of contraceptives.

With a view to promoting the use of gender indicators, CONAMU has signed agreements with several ministries and governmental institutions. This effort has been successful given the country's growing demand for information from a gender perspective. However, there is still a need for information on Ecuadorian women and men in terms of aspects that have yet to be considered. One such important example is the study of the use of time by gender, which will shed light on the origin of inequalities and the population's well-being.

## **1. Institutional Framework**

In order to achieve development that incorporates gender equity, an equitable distribution of the benefits of society, and economic, social, and political autonomy, policies must be based on real conditions. Since its creation in 1997, the National Council of Ecuadorian Women (CONAMU) has given priority to the need for information. CONAMU recognizes that information, in the form of quantitative and qualitative indicators that incorporate the gender perspective, facilitates:

- Development of complete situation analyses that help to clearly identify social inequalities, interpret their causes, and propose actions aimed at reducing existing gaps;
- Implementation of follow-up or monitoring activities to take any required corrective action needed during the policy implementation process and achieve the expected results; and
- Evaluation of end results and analysis of the impact on women's lives.

## **2. Information System**

The objective was to design a system of indicators capable of demonstrating the inequalities affecting all women, with different characteristics and scope depending on the socioeconomic and geographical context. This information will have applications in the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of policies that promote gender equity, which is a necessary condition for achieving sustainable democratic development.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), provided technical assistance and identified the information system's component areas based on the different roles that women play. Among the factors considered were those that give rise to inequalities linked to society's productive and reproductive functions, aspects that determine economic and social life, as well as factors related to well-being and social equity. Accordingly, indicators were organized around three conceptual categories:

- *Private sphere.* The role that women play in the private sphere affects their participation in the public sphere. Topics considered in this sphere include demographic issues, as well as those pertaining to the home and family.

- *Public sphere.* Work in the labor market is the principal manifestation of public life. Data on women's participation in the labor market and on income differences by gender are helpful in revealing some inequalities. Indicators on education are also included, since these constitute an important input that societies either provide or deny the female population, affecting their autonomy and participation in the development of equal opportunities.
- *Social equity or distribution of social well-being.* Equity has its principal manifestation in daily life. Included under this category are indicators pertaining to health and disease, violence, women's participation in government and elected political posts, as well as access to housing and land.

To date, these indicators have been disseminated through a publication and a compact disk (CD). New versions of the CD and updated publications are foreseen, drawing on the latest survey data.

### **3. Gender Indicator System**

CONAMU's involvement in developing a system of gender indicators focused on two areas: data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

CONAMU signed an interinstitutional cooperation agreement in February 1999 with the National Statistics and Census Bureau (INEC), the agency that manages official statistics and censuses. The agreement was designed to incorporate the gender perspective in institutional research activities. Initially, a workshop for INEC staff, CONAMU specialists and other users of gender statistics was held to firmly establish the gender approach as a basic component of official statistics and to set up processes to ensure that data did not conceal real conditions. CONAMU subsequently financed graduate studies for an INEC staff member in the area of gender and held a roundtable on the topic, targeting the principal technical staff at INEC. As a result, CONAMU has served on interinstitutional commissions for various types of research. Noteworthy in this regard is its participation on the Special Commission on Agricultural Statistics, which resulted in the incorporation of the gender perspective in the Agricultural Census, completed in January 2001. CONAMU will also participate in the Population and Housing Census, to be carried out at year's end.

In addition, work has begun on several activities aimed at preparing and disseminating quantitative indicators on the situation of women and men in the country. A publication entitled *Ecuadorian Women and Men in Statistics (Mujeres y hombres del Ecuador en cifras)* includes indicators that reveal existing inequalities between women and men in the private and public spheres, as well as those associated with well-being and the social equity. Updated information in this regard will be published later this year. In fact, some of the most recent INEC publications include gender indicators. Likewise, members of the new administration at INEC have also expressed interest in forming a gender unit within that institution.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

In this area, CONAMU works with the Integrated System for Social Indicators Project (SIISE), of the Technical Secretariat on Social Issues. Together they developed an associated gender indicator system (SÍMUJERES) along the same lines. The latest version of SÍMUJERES (currently being disseminated) includes some gender indicators for monitoring and evaluating the Regional Program of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean (1995-2001) and the Beijing Platform for Action, proposed by ECLAC. For the first time, an international consultation has been included.

CONAMU has been working closely with the new leadership at the National Planning Office to ensure that national and local planning indicators, as well as emerging programs under development, incorporate the gender perspective. This cooperation is facilitated through an agreement signed in December 2000.

CONAMU has also collaborated with the International Union of Municipalities and Local Authorities (IULA) to achieve the proposition of urban development and municipal management indicators. These indicators are based on the available data in the country. It is, however, important to note that data are still insufficient for analyzing certain topics of interest, which prevents some aspects affecting women and the gaps present in society from coming to light.

## **4. Use and Application of Indicators**

There is a growing awareness in Ecuador of the need for gender indicators with the capacity to reflect the true situation and position of the various population groups.

With a view to promoting the use of gender indicators, CONAMU has signed agreements with the Ministries of Education, of Health, of Government, of Foreign Affairs, of Urban Development and Housing, of Labor and Human Resources, as well as the Technical

Secretariat on Social Issues and the Social Emergency Investment Fund. Through these agreements, CONAMU has committed to providing technical assistance to incorporate the gender focus into the plans and programs of these agencies. Accordingly, this involves the use of gender indicators and, when necessary, their creation. Moreover, through agreements signed with municipios involved in the development of Participatory Strategic Plans with the Gender Approach, indicators developed in accordance with this vision were made available under the condition that the municipios integrate them into their situation analysis and plans.

Because there has yet to be an evaluation of the use and application of social indicators in policy development and monitoring, and due to the political problems of the country caused by continuing changes in leadership, institutionalizing the use of such indicators becomes complex. For example, emerging plans (including development plans) designed by the current government in 2000, without CONAMU's participation, did not include the gender perspective. However, upon offering observations with respect to these documents, the gender perspective was later incorporated. Another current problem surrounding the application of indicators concerns their diverse scope, given the different methodologies employed to calculate them. Nevertheless, all reveal the dramatic situation of the Ecuadorian population. Despite these limitations, gender indicators have been employed to support certain programs and social projects. The Law for Free Maternity Services constitutes an especially noteworthy example in this regard and is currently being implemented within the framework of the Healthy Motherhood Program, which was substantiated by maternal mortality and other indicators associated with reproductive health.

## **5. Principal Health Indicators**

### *Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights*

- Maternal mortality in Ecuador ranges between 130 and 150 per 100,000 live births;
- In 1998 the incidence of adolescent pregnancy was 7% among the population under 20. According to a recent survey, 20% of women have been pregnant before the age of 20;
- The incidence of cervical cancer in the city of Cuenca is 26.53 per 100,000 women;
- With respect to this area, indicators are also available on the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in women, health insurance coverage, care in childbirth, access to health care services, knowledge and use of contraceptives, and others. In many cases, indicators with a national and regional breakdown have been constructed for the first time in the country.

### *Education*

- Illiteracy rates are higher in older population groups and rural areas. Among the population between 40 and 64 years of age, 19.4% of women are illiterate, in the population over 65, this figure is 42.7%. In rural areas, the illiteracy rate for women is 21%, as opposed to 6.3% in urban areas. These rates are significantly higher than those estimated for men;
- In terms of years of schooling completed, there are significant differences between rural and urban areas for both women and men;
- Dropout rates have increased over the past year.

### *Formal Participation*

- As a result of the implementation of the Act to Reform the Electoral Law, which requires that at least 30% of candidate lists be comprised of female candidates, in an alternate and sequential manner women's political participation in elected posts increased. Between 1996 and 2000, women's participation increased from 6% to 20%, and from 8% to 30% on provincial boards and town councils, respectively. For the first time, women comprised 25% of parochial boards.

### *Domestic Violence*

- The number of incidents of domestic violence reported to the 20 Commissariats on Women and the Family average 500 per month; 95% of these involve attacks on women.

### *Employment and Access to Resources*

- Women's participation is ever-increasing; however, women are more affected by unemployment, reaching a rate of 20% in 1999. Additionally, women in Ecuador tend to migrate abroad, due to limited opportunities within the country;
- Average income is lower for women, especially in rural areas;
- Segregation in the labor market confirms that women continue to work mainly in the service sector.

## **6. Future Plans**

CONAMU is working to ensure that gender indicators are incorporated as basic elements of the entire public policy cycle. To this end, the preparation of a new Equal Opportunity Plan is envisaged as a joint effort between the State and civil society. In this regard, planning will make use of indicators to ensure that the proposed actions are established as commitments for achieving goals. Also crucial to this process is information on the situation of women and the exercise of their rights in areas that have not yet been studied in Ecuador. Pursuant to this objective, coordinated preparation of research projects on the time use and the situation of women who have migrated (especially women who have emigrated to Spain) is foreseen. An understanding of how time is distributed among the productive and reproductive areas of the different groups in society will shed light on the origin of inequalities, the population's state of well-being, and the degree of joint responsibility for domestic affairs between women and men. Information obtained from this research will make it possible to propose actions geared to the full exercise of women's rights.

Plans are afoot for a project to construct a gender indicator system for monitoring, evaluation, and analysis. To this end, interinstitutional networks will be established to work in each sector; these will be coordinated by the different specialized areas of CONAMU.

Working jointly with UNICEF and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), CONAMU has begun an analysis of the general State budget and certain municipal budgets from the gender perspective. This effort has been undertaken within the framework of the Economic and Social Rights Program that UNIFEM has launched in the Andean Region.

The goal of institutionalizing a complete information system that incorporates the gender perspective will require international cooperation. Having a bank of indicators for diagnoses, monitoring, evaluations, and impact studies will help to facilitate policy-making and demonstrate the effectiveness of the measures implemented on behalf of women. In addition, it is important to underscore the need for basic agreements among institutions that develop indicators to avoid the duplication of efforts, and instead optimize resources geared to the development of complementary systems.

During its three years of operation, CONAMU's efforts have been successful overall, given the enormous demand from numerous sectors of society for information on the reality of the country in terms of the gender perspective—a fact which has encouraged CONAMU to continue working toward its goal.