

GENDER TRAFFIC LIGHT OF PUBLIC POLICIES THAT PROMOTE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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- * Este ejemplar contiene versiones en Español, Inglés y Portugués.
- * It contains versions in Spanish, English and Portuguese.
- * Ele contém versões em Espanhol, Inglês e Português.

This research was conducted under the project "Promoting economic empowerment of women through better policies", supported and financed by the International Centre for Development Research (IDRC) of Canada and UN Women. The project coordinator is in charge of the Interdisciplinary Center for Development Studies-Uruguay (CIEDUR) and the Center for Distributive, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS), based at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina.

The purpose of the project is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies to promote gender equity in labor markets and improving economic opportunities for women through research. Participating research teams from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

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Design: Alejandra Balboa. 13 Communication.
Printing: Gráfica Natural.
October 2016.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes the effort focused on the design of public policies from eight countries in Latin America in order to face the consequences of one of the most important changes during the last decades in the regional labor market: the significant increase of female participation. Evidence is provided to demonstrate that these policies are still not able to modify the conceptual basis of this market: the “ideal worker model” which excludes women, limits their access or generates and reproduces inequalities once they are inserted. The analysis delves deeper into the issue: the current situation is creating differences and inequalities among women themselves, between those who can develop strategies to get closer to that model and overcome the restrictions to access and remain in the labor market and those who do not have the opportunity to do this.

Therefore, policies need to deal with the difficulties that may lead to their ineffectiveness and inefficiency to operate in favor of women in the labor market, and providing them with jobs and child care services is not enough. It is essential that policies do incorporate a gender approach during its development and implementation in order to tackle the basis of inequality. This study shows that, particularly, the policies which are most frequently implemented are the ones which have more difficulty in introducing the gender approach, thus, the recommendations are focused on actions which would allow to achieve this.





INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, one of the most important changes in gender gaps in the labor market of Latin America is the significant increase in female participation. However, this increase has not modified the characteristics of a labor market grounded on the “ideal worker model” which refers to a male worker with no family responsibilities because women provide the support needed in terms of care and household chores.

In order to access paid work on an equal basis with men, women are facing different kinds of restrictions which are based on custom, beliefs and traditional values. At the same time, those who break into the labor market are affected by different forms of discrimination. These forms of discrimination are reflected in less job opportunities, concentration in few activities and predominance of low productivity jobs; as well as higher participation in poor quality jobs, reduced working days, and fewer possibilities for promotion and for pursuing economic undertakings. This leads to affirm that the way in which the market operates reproduces and creates new gender inequalities.

As the gender gap is internalized in the different forms of discrimination and labor segregation, the expectations created by women may lead to reinforce gender roles. The clearest example of this situation is the high proportion of women who stay out of the labor market, i.e. women who have no personal income, because paid work is not part of their life project or because they are not able to cover the costs of maternity or other care responsibilities this work would entail.

The confirmed reduction in gender gaps with respect to labor participation is based on the effort of women who incorporate non-paid work at home into their usual working day. This fact contributes to determining inequalities also among women, among those who have more possibilities of lessen-

ing their non-paid workload by hiring services from the market (child care services, dependent seniors care services and housekeeping services) and those who try to combine their timetables with the scarce services offered by the State or who try to delegate these activities to other family members (generally other women, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, daughters, etc.). While in some social classes women are overloaded with work when they participate in the labor market, in other classes they cannot have access to paid work. As a result, the reduction in gender gaps with respect to labor participation has been accompanied by an extension of inequalities among women, a consequence of the different career paths and differentiated social conceptions depending on the socioeconomic class.

This situation warns about the importance of introducing public policies which implement a gender perspective throughout the whole cycle, from its design and introduction to its monitoring and assessment. Reverting gender inequalities and promoting women's economic empowerment means to consider that reality is different for women and men. Thus, labor policies cannot be gender neutral given the fact that they need to address situations and circumstances that are different for women and men. The starting point of these differences is the rigid sexual division of work which has persisted throughout time, regardless of the modifications in roles due to a higher female incorporation into the labor market.

Policies should transform the grounds on which gender gaps are founded, which may become wider during the upcoming processes of low economic growth. The process of increasing female labor participation seems to be reaching an end. The ratio of female participation grew 0.9 points per year on average during the 1990s. However, this mechanism got slower during the 2000s showing an increase of 0.3 points per year. (Gasparini and Marchionni, 2015)

Policies that do not include a gender perspective lead to the persistence of labor discrimination and the deepening of social inequalities.

The analysis herein is based on a mapping process of public policies which aim at promoting women's economic empowerment. This process was carried out within a project known as "Promotion of women's economic empowerment through better policies,"¹ which has been supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and UN Women of eight regional countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay). As part of the project, a regional analysis was made about tendencies and determining aspects of women's labor participation². In addition, two studies were carried out in each country to identify the restrictions faced by women when entering the labor market and taking a job which allows them to go through a process of economic empowerment³.

Policies for economic empowerment

Empowerment refers to a process through which individuals gain greater capacity to take decisions about their lives, home and community. The process of female economic empowerment implies that women shall move forward in the following dimensions:

- Capabilities and resources to compete in the market, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions, as the basis for **success** and the **possibility of economic progress**.

- The possibility of defining and getting involved in the decision-making process, and of controlling the resources and benefits obtained, as the basis for **power** and **agency to benefit from economic activities**.

These dimensions are connected to each other: success and economic progress promote women's power and agency and, at the same time, when women are able to get involved and to control the use of resources (power) and define and take decisions (agency), they are in better conditions to make progress in terms of economy.

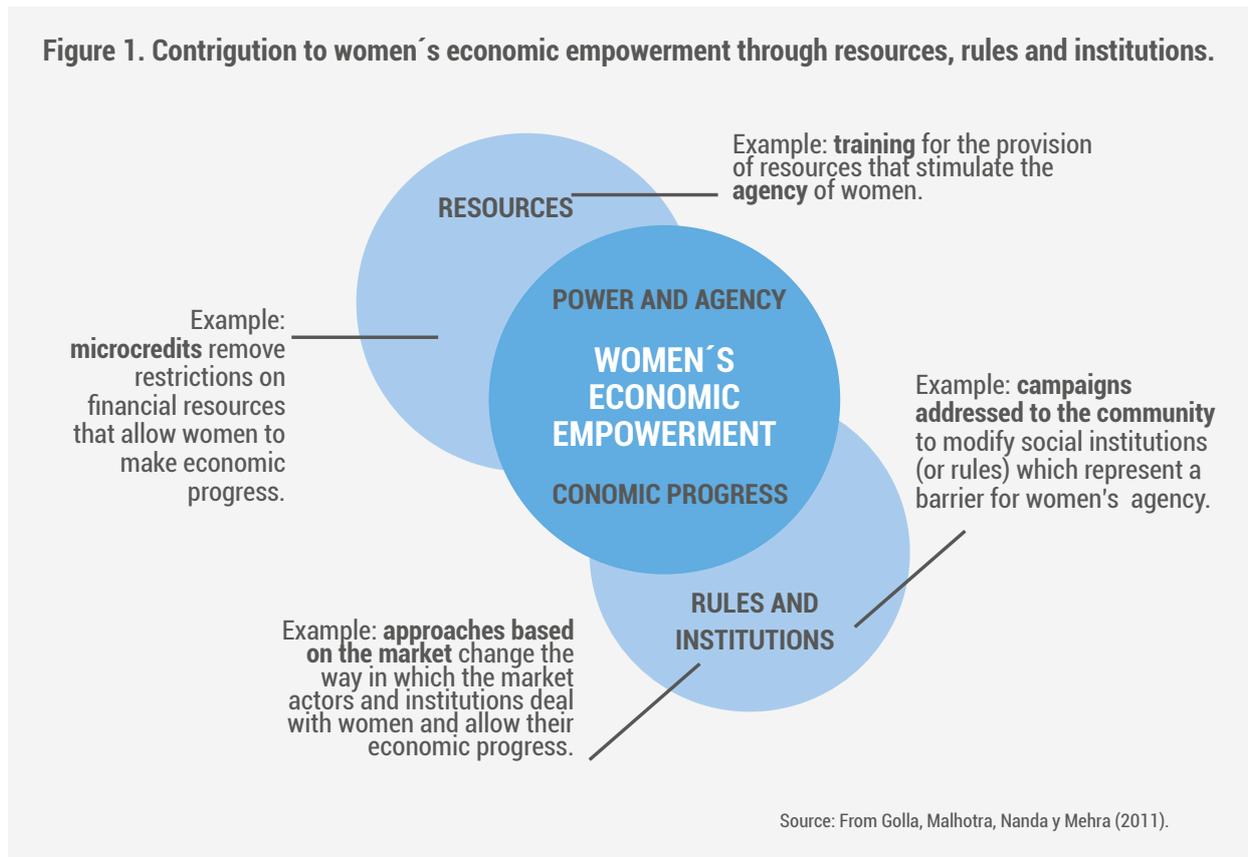
Actions towards economic empowerment need to be focused on increasing the available resources—human capital, financial capital, social capital and physical capital—and/or redefining rules and institutions. In other words, they need to modify "the rules of the game" or the social and organizational systems that rule the activities and intercede between individuals. These rules and institutions determine the way in which resources are distributed and used, as can be seen in Figure 1.

¹ Visit http://www.ciedur.org.uy/proyecto.php?id_proyecto=98

² Visit <http://labor-al.org/participacionfemenina/>

³ <http://www.ciedur.org.uy/publicaciones.php>

Figure 1. Contribution to women's economic empowerment through resources, rules and institutions.



There is no single program, project or policy able to cover on its own all the factors that contribute to women's economic empowerment.

The inclusion of a gender perspective in policies means to consider the differences between men and women from the starting point and throughout the different stages they may have to overcome in order to achieve their economic empowerment.

For instance, the inclusion of a gender approach in employment policies means that the policies which are being developed must promote equal opportunities and treatment for men and women in the labor market (Lupica, 2015; OIT-CEPAL-FAO-PNUD-ONUMUJERES, 2013).

ANALYSIS AND PRINCIPAL RESULTS

Women are still at a disadvantage with respect to all labor indicators and have to face explicit or covert discriminations. To what extent have we made progress? Which are the pending issues?

The purpose of the work is to analyze the policies which are focused on increasing the available resources or redefining rules and institutions with the aim of achieving women's economic empowerment and gender equality. Among them, the following are considered:

- Active employment policies which include the systems of labor intermediation, labor training and direct and indirect creation of employment⁴ (See Chart 1).
- Rules which regulate the existence of child care services for those who work or look for paid work.
- Legislation on maternity, paternity and parental leaves.
- Regulation of working days and hours which may have an incidence in the market insertion of those individuals who are in charge of the care duties at home.

As part of the project, Veza (2015) carried out a study for the group of Latin American countries to provide an overview of the current situation of laws and policies that promote the economic empowerment of women during their active age. The author classifies the policies according to three principal objectives: to reduce restrictions throughout time, to improve women's agency and to create fairer labor markets. Furthermore, she analyzes the progress on the introduction of these policies and provides the following conclusions about the possible impacts that they could have on economic empowerment:

- Some effects of the policies are still not clear. More time, more evidence and more complex analyses are required to come to a conclusion.
- In respect of the alternatives between leaves and care services, international evidence is provided to justify that the services would have more impact on the insertion of women into the labor market and leaves, and would guarantee the return of mothers to their jobs.
- Programs of conditioned transference which may be used to promote labor participation of women should be addressed to the same target population as employment policies. A joint strategy may thus be adopted, which would be more effective than acting separately.

⁴ The programs of direct and indirect creation of employment in Latin America basically consist of public programs of emergency employment, programs of indirect creation of employment, legal incentives granted by the State to promote the hiring of female and male employees, public and private programs for low income entrepreneur women, and non-traditional financial services.

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During the 1990s, the countries of Mercosur and Chile already showed poor employment policies (Espino and Salvador, 2007):

- The structural heterogeneity of these economies was not taken into account, they only addressed formal companies and their definition and implementation were rigid (this made their adaptation to economies that were in constant recession and expansion difficult).

- Policies addressed to women as a "vulnerable group" prevailed over those which promoted gender equality.

- Difficulty in introducing a gender perspective in all policies, creating a confusion with those policies that were addressed to women, basically developing positive action strategies.

CHART 1

The gender approach in public policies: The Gender Traffic Light.

To achieve equality between men and women⁵ it is necessary to include a gender approach in the definition and/or assessment of public policies. Their potential to transform preexisting inequalities shall be considered in the design, introduction, monitoring and assessment of such policies. When policies do not incorporate this perspective, they tend to reproduce or reinforce these inequalities.

Policies focused on economic empowerment shall incorporate actions to promote the increase of available economic resources and to redefine and deconstruct rules and institutions. Bianchi (2014) created the Gender Traffic Light with the purpose of classifying policies and programs, which may fall into the following categories:



* Policies that introduce the gender perspective are identified with the GREEN LIGHT, because apart from increasing the available resources for women, they also promote the deconstruction and redefinition of rules and institutions in favor of gender equality, planning actions to achieve those results.



* Policies that introduce some positive action are identified with the YELLOW LIGHT: they work in favor of gender equality because they slightly promote the deconstruction and redefinition of rules and institutions. These actions, apart from increasing the available resources, recognize some of the problems faced mostly by women that prevent them from fully developing, for example: payment of child care services, training on human rights, selection of participants that favors the female heads of household and benefits to encourage the hiring of female labor force.



* Policies that do not have gender perspective are identified with the RED LIGHT, because they only contribute to increasing the available resources but they do not promote the deconstruction and redefinition of rules and institutions in favor of gender equality.

⁵Gender equality refers to equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for men and women. Equal opportunities “determine that differences between men and women shall not have a discriminatory nature, thus, the concept of real equality that is being promoted, is opposed to the idea of unequal treatment in identical situations, it does not refer to a different treatment in situations that are, in fact, different.” (CEDAW, 1979).



Research studies carried out in the 8 countries which are part of this project not only identify the legal improvements and loopholes in regard of women's rights and facilities to cover care needs (leaves and services), but also analyze in depth the active employment policies (training, intermediation and direct and indirect creation of employment) and their possible impact on gender equality. The reason for this is that the kinds of policies which are mostly developed are introduced on the assumption that they will have an impact on women's economic empowerment, and the studies reveal that these policies present the most difficulties for the incorporation of a gender approach (in some cases just because they are "gender-blind").

Results of national studies

The national studies carried out within this project tend to coincide with the results shown for the region, having some peculiarities.

Result 1: Greater progress is perceived on legislation rather than on its effective application and compliance. Weak gender institutionalization.

In all the countries analyzed, it is shown that there is a wide legal framework for the development of policies, which to some extent is accompanied by the institutional development of mechanisms for women's progress; but the financial and human resources are not enough to turn laws and rules into effective policies.

The official mechanisms for the progress of women have different hierarchical levels and limited financial and human resources, and therefore, limited effectiveness in the monitoring and influence on public policies and in the mainstreaming of gender at all levels.

Some of the deficiencies shown by the national studies are the following:

- **"Nicaragua** has adopted laws and legal instruments that, at first sight, seem to favor women's rights. Additionally, it has an institution of ministerial rank to control the compliance and development of women's rights. However, generally the country lacks the mechanisms or provisions to guarantee their effective enforcement. This is why most of the laws are just passed but not enforced" (Álvarez, 2014).

- In **Argentina**, "monitoring mechanisms—whether from the state or from trade unions—apply no pressure to ensure the rights of women which are recognized in the existing legal system. Women rarely use the trade unions' quota and have limited participation in collective negotiations with employers, so they have little opportunities to make claims. Generally, the leading role of women is not strong enough to encourage initiatives regarding their social and labor life" (Foti and Sanchís, 2014).

There are still legal deficiencies in terms of rules that promote joint responsibility for care duties:

- All the countries show a deficit to cover maternity, paternity and/or parental leaves for those who are not formal employees. And formal employees do not always have all of these benefits (parental leaves are almost inexistent) and paternity leaves are extremely limited.

- In **Argentina** there are "legal gaps in relation to the equality status of men with respect to women, as the law only recognizes the rights (and responsibilities) of women to devote time to care duties (maternity leaves, care of children and relatives who are ill and disabled, etc.). Bills have been proposed and drafted in the mentioned tripartite institutional levels, principally promoted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, but the political path for them to become laws is still unclear" (Foti and Sanchís, 2014).

• Also in Argentina, “most of the companies do not comply with the regulation that determines that their employees and workers shall be offered care services for their children inside or outside the workplace; this occurs in 91% of cases according to a survey involving 464 private companies of different sizes (UNICEF and MDS, 2012)” (Foti and Sanchís, 2014).

• In Chile there is a need to revise the legislation on “nursery rooms” in the workplace with the purpose of providing equal conditions for employees and promoting the care of children as a responsibility of both parents. It is necessary to avoid labor discrimination and wicked effects, such as those observed in the application of Article 203 of the Labor Code about nursery rooms, for instance, under which employers are forced to provide a nursery room when 20 women are employed, and so they only hire 19. This article only mentions female employees, so changing the wording to “employees” would be a solution to the problem.

• In El Salvador, even though the Constitution establishes that employers have the obligation to provide cradles and nursery rooms for the children of employees, as this provision is not regulated in the Labor Code, only few companies offer these spaces for their employees' children.

• In El Salvador “the rigidity of the working day” represents a constraint for women (or men) who prefer a flexible schedule and this is also typical of other countries. “One of the main reasons why some women prefer to stay out of the labor market is the long working day of formal jobs.” The Labor Code includes some provisions which inhibit the negotiation of flexible days, since the full-time working day is considered to be the rule and any deviation from it is regarded as an irregularity. Besides, as the employer is obliged to pay the minimum salary for a full-time day, when the employee works fewer hours, this clearly discourages this kind of negotiation” (Beneke de Sanfelíu, Gindling, Vásquez, Oliva and Delgado, 2015).

• In El Salvador there is a deficiency with respect to the labor rights of domestic workers because their registry in social security is voluntary.

• In Chile there has been a proposal to eliminate Article 349 from the Commerce Code, which establishes that a married woman needs the authorization of her husband to perform commercial activities—e.g. to incorporate a company—in case of joint property.

Result 2: Programs are more focused on increasing the available resources for vulnerable populations than on redefining rules and institutions.

In general, active employment policies keep focused on the women who are considered more vulnerable (generally living in poverty). In this regard, the programs are the instruments with the widest scope and tend to tackle the poor economic status of women rather than increase their “agency power.”

Results per country:

• In **Chile**, 14 programs were analyzed, developed by the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), aimed at promoting women's autonomy and employment (with special emphasis on poor and urban women), principally focused on removing barriers to labor market insertion by providing training:



• Training programs including job training and job placement, support and other nurseries are a very small scale.

• There are few programs aimed at increasing the demand of labor force and reducing employers' prejudices in respect of female labor supply.

• There are also few programs with the purpose of considering the barriers to remaining in the labor market, especially of reducing the wage gap, of providing women with opportunities to be trained and promoted on equal terms as men.

• In **Nicaragua**, of the 21 analyzed policies and programs, it was found that the principal focus is on addressing and removing financial, economic and educational barriers:



• Only the PPA⁶ program known as Zero Hunger is aimed at addressing aspects such as the redefinition of roles and rules, and the reinforcement of self-esteem.

Anyway, researches carried out by social organizations, like Venancia⁷ Group, question the effectiveness of these programs to redefine gender roles. The study of assessments and interviews to key actors in the design and implementation of policies allows to conclude that “the programs have contributed to a certain extent to improve the economic situation of participating women, as they have provided them with access to the control of resources (such as a cow or pig) and they have lowered certain barriers, especially those related to financial capital and training. These programs have not contributed to improving women’s power and their agency for the renegotiation of their relations; neither have they contributed to removing intrinsic barriers related to gender roles and mandates and in most of the cases, on the contrary, they have reinforced them. This may be explained because, although most of the programs identified women as their target population, the analysis of their statements revealed that the programs’ central focus is not necessarily on women, but family and particularly their children. In conclusion, programs are proposed as having incidence in women, but in practice they are principally focused on family well-being” (Álvarez, 2014).

• In **Uruguay**, 22 programs were analyzed at different government levels and the results showed that in general they are committed to addressing economic vulnerability, but they are

not focused on transforming the rules and values of society or the rigid division of labor by sex.

• In **Mexico**, 24 programs were analyzed, in relation to gender equality and women in the work environment. Generally, “it is observed that the idea of women as “vulnerable” people who need special attention, in particular poor women, is still quite extended. Programs that seek to promote or encourage the insertion of women into the labor market are part of the strategies to tackle poverty and to generate incomes through the implementation of small-scale productive projects” (Salazar y Salazar, 2014). These programs have considerable potential for the promotion of economic empowerment processes, but as it happens in other regional countries, they should seize the opportunity to work on the structural restrictions faced by those women (lack of support with care and household duties, poor job opportunities, low education level, more traditional cultural standards).

• In **El Salvador**, there are programs which include trainings to promote gender equality, self-esteem and leadership, among other things, in order to help women to transform social rules that limit their economic autonomy so that they can fully develop⁸:



• This is the case of “Ciudad Mujer”, “Banca Mujer” and “Comunidades Solidarias Rurales.” Regarding the latter, “its impact assessment indicates that the participation in trainings and other social interaction activities offered by the program produces an increase in the empowerment of women who are direct participants in these activities” (IFPRI/FUSADES, 2010 from Vásquez, 2014). In addition, there is a Training School for Substantive Equality whose purpose is to provide public servants with training in gender equality issues.

⁶ Productive Food Program.

⁷ Women’s Organization focused on economic empowerment.

⁸ In El Salvador, the cultural role of women as heads of household remains. Besides, due to the fact that men generally take the key decisions at home, some of these directly affect the labor insertion of many women (they are not “allowed” to study or work). Furthermore, maternity is considered as a valid reason to stay at home (Beneke de Sanfeliú et al., 2015 from Vásquez, 2014).

Result 3: The gender perspective is poorly included in programs addressed to women and in programs in which women are a considerable percentage of the beneficiary population.

Regarding policy-makers, certain confusion is perceived in relation to programs: if they are addressed to women and if they contain gender perspective. Programs which are not addressed to women, although women are a considerable percentage of the programs' target, are "gender-blind:" they are neither aware of what it means to introduce a gender perspective nor of why should they do so.

- In **Chile**, "the first confirmation which arises from the analysis of information about programs addressed to women is the persistence of difficulties to incorporate a gender analysis in public policies and programs. Moreover, some of the interviewed experts point out that women are still considered as vulnerable and in their role of mothers rather than in their economic role as workers. This is not the way to make progress towards achieving a balance in the participation of both genders, in the area of productive as well as reproductive work" (Arriagada, 2014).

- In **Argentina**:



- "the series of measures designed and implemented by the State to tackle the international crisis of 2008-2009, by supposing to be gender neutral, reproduce preexisting inequalities in the labor market. Policies focused on favoring new recruitments and disfavoring dismissals and policies addressed to unemployed people (System for the Promotion of Recruitment of Registered Work, REPRO Program of Productive Reconversion) have not included diagnoses or objectives about the labor conditions of women and, additionally, they are principally addressed to the formal sector of economy, even though women are overrepresented in the informal work sector" (Foti and Sanchís, 2014).



- This issue also applies to promotion programs for the generation of incomes and employability or self-employment for this social sector ("Argentina Trabaja" Program, Microcredit for Entrepreneurs, etc.), whose beneficiaries have resulted to be mostly women, and it is also observed in those programs which are specifically addressed to women, such as "Ellas Hacen" Program (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011 from Foti and Sanchís, 2014). This program was recently carried out (April 2014) and has explicit objectives aimed at achieving women's empowerment, and the gender perspective is evident both in the statements which are part of the background and presentation papers of the program and in the on-site technical assistance and training instruments already prepared. However, the operational rules lack mechanisms to ensure the provision of support in relation to child care tasks and household duties for beneficiary women/mothers for whom, given their specific profile, these represent an overload, and as a consequence, a barrier for the continuance of their participation in the different training and work activities proposed. From the opinions collected on how the program is being carried out on site, it can be deduced that, although in some cases women themselves are getting organized within their communities to solve this problem, there is still no comprehensive institutional answer in this respect and this implies a big risk for the effective achievement of the program's expected results (Foti and Sanchís, 2014).



- Social economy undertakings in charge of women as beneficiaries of these programs carry weight but, nonetheless, this kind of public policy does not introduce a specific gender perspective, not only regarding their approach to problems but also the profile of the beneficiary population and the proposed objectives.



• The social inclusion policy carried out by the Ministry of Social Development is the other principal strategy addressed to vulnerable population and it is focused on the "Familia Argentina" Program, which is comprised of some assistance actions that have an impact on the quality of life and resources handled by women, such as "Plan de Seguridad Alimentaria", "Pro Huerta", "Plan Ahí" and "Primeros Años." However, and even though the promoted activities are mostly developed for women (they are the means through which families have access to benefits), the majority of these initiatives do not specifically introduce a gender perspective either.

• In the case of **Ecuador**, although there is an agenda for gender equality, it should be mentioned that the gender approach is not present, neither in the proposal of policy issues nor in the series of developed programs or interventions.

• In **El Salvador**:



• the "Ciudad Mujer" program has a unit of economic autonomy which provides training and vocational skills for women, apart from offering technical guidance so they can undertake their own projects. At this stage, the program solves the care needs of participants.



• but then this support disappears and women have to deal with the issue of getting a job and taking care of their children. This represents an obstacle as the program does train women but then they cannot enter the labor market.



• In Nicaragua, at the political-institutional level, there is neither a gender policy nor an office or department to deal with this issue. This is really important to ensure progress in

the fair access of women to formal training. It was found that, although certain support mechanisms such as grants, accommodation and transport do exist, there are still two unattended fundamental issues. The first one is the lack of a care policy. This is an obstacle for women who want to attend courses, particularly long-term ones. The second one refers to the cost of registration fees: although grants are provided, women not always have access to them (Álvarez, 2014).

There is no gender mainstreaming approach to guide the programs in practice. This leads to the dispersal of initiatives and confusion in the institutions or ministries when it comes to putting into practice the guidelines and objectives related to women's rights (Álvarez, 2014).

• In **Mexico**, the situation is that "the series of programs focused on gender equality is rather limited compared to the prevalence of actions aimed at women in which the underlying idea is that if they are the "target population," then the incorporation of a gender approach has been successfully fulfilled" (Salazar and Salazar, 2014).



• "Only 7 out of 24 of the selected programs mention equality between men and women, the insertion and continuance of women in the labor market, their economic empowerment and the balance between labor and household responsibilities in their objectives and/or actions for gender equality.



• The other programs (17) do not take into consideration gender equality or the economic empowerment of women; however, they do focus some of their actions on contributing to the latter. There is a prevalence of programs aimed at the generation of incomes through productive projects, mostly through microcredits. These programs are principally aimed at poor women, from rural areas and with limited access to job opportunities. These productive projects represent not



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The specific factors which determine the progress towards women's economic empowerment may vary according to the different contexts and also throughout time as the countries or regions undergo changes.

The project has identified **significant progress in the adoption of laws** which contribute to promoting equality, **but there is still a long way to go in order to ensure that all women**, and not only formal female employees, **have access to their rights**.

In regard to active employment policies, it seems that a **bigger effort has been made to incorporate a gender mainstream approach in the programs, but it is still not enough**. As proposed by Salazar y Salazar (2014), "the common denominator of the programs aimed at gender equality is the lack of attention to the problems and difficulties caused by household and care work which acts as a restriction to the labor insertion of women; in other words, the development of programs does not take into account one of the key aspects of inequality." **The principal difficulty lies on the redefinition of rules and institutions**.

National studies agree on mentioning that programs with the purpose of gender equality are relatively reduced and their scope and impact are quite limited.

The focus still remains on policies aimed at poor or socially vulnerable women regardless of their specific gender problematic. For some women, these programs represent an opportunity to have an income, to get organized and to have social relations beyond the household area, but they do not modify the structural bases of inequality. This means that

women are still mainly responsible for household duties and they experience situations of domination based on a patriarchal system which keeps them submissive and having less power of decision. Therefore, the promotion of women's labor participation in labor markets where there is a prevalence of androcentric standards means assuming that women are willing to increase their amount of work (by adding paid work to the non-paid work done at home) and that the kind of employment they obtain will generate opportunities for empowerment.

Finally, **it is necessary to reject the idea of "gender neutral policies"**. The gender perspective needs to be present during all stages, from the design to the implementation, monitoring and assessment. "The region is characterized by the lack of assessment in order to study the impact and results of current employment policies as to gender equality. The lack of objective evidence to analyze which actions favor and disfavor the economic autonomy of women represent a barrier to making suggestions for the improvement and modification of public policies in favor of gender equality. In addition, this deficiency may contribute to a reinforcement of inequality in the labor market arguing that policies and programs whose beneficiaries are mostly women are implemented, but the truth is that many of these actions do not contribute to a real equality of opportunities between men and women" (Lupica, 2015).



Recommendation 1: To define a general framework in which a strategy for women's economic empowerment may be established.

Access to employment is one of the bases to promote women's economic empowerment, but this requires overcoming occupational segregation, ensuring their continuance in jobs and facilitating a positive career path according to their qualifications. To achieve this, is necessary to define a comprehensive approach of policies which transcends the sectorial organization of States.

The general framework for the economic empowerment shall include the following:

- **Adjusting rules and regulations for the promotion of equality:** inheritance law, procedure to establish a company, determination of minimum salaries and salary adjustments.

- **Promoting practices in favor of equality in companies:** companies' behavior codes, quality standards.

- **Enabling equal access to education, training and practices:** middle and higher education, vocational and technical education. It would be necessary to revise if training and skill-building strategies take the barriers women have to face at labor level into consideration and if the training programs are aimed not only at meeting the needs of work demand, but also at reducing the occupational segregation (both horizontal and vertical).

- **Enabling access to facilities, technology, credit and marketing:** independence to move outside the household, technology that enables access of women to the

market and services, access to marketing channels and credit, and reduction of the costs of looking for a job.

- **Promoting joint responsibility for care:** programs to extend the access of men and women to social benefits like maternity, paternity and parental leaves, facilities for the assistance and care of dependent people, availability of child care services and outside school hours, infrastructure for the reduction of household work.

- **Challenging gender stereotypes:** work on cultural change within companies, organizations, public institutions and families. In this respect, in Chile there is a proposal to work with business people and work colleagues and develop programs aimed at mass communication means.

- **Organization and voice:** women's networks for marketing activities, self-help groups, trade unions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the opportunity to renew the commitments made by countries to promote gender equality in the labor area and to strengthen them through policies and programs which favor the economic empowerment of women.

Recommendation 2: To improve the diagnoses for defining policies and including a gender perspective.

The revision of policies and programs suggests the need to determine the scope of the issue in order to define the kind of programs and their coverage. For example, discrimination at work affects most women, but there are specific problems, like the ones of migrant workers, which call for a selective approach. Generally, it is observed that general problems which affect large groups of women are only considered in programs of low coverage.



It is also important that the statistics based on programs be disaggregated by sex, and that information useful for assessing the impacts of programs from a gender perspective be collected (e.g. economic situation, race-ethnicity, level of education, people in charge, etc.).

Having this information will enable to measure the impact, making it possible to improve the effectiveness of policies for the promotion of gender equality and sustainable development.

In some countries (like Uruguay) there is an effort made by almost all institutions in charge of programs to identify the background and progress of the beneficiaries as a way of providing them with options to continue the process they started in some program and contribute to the development of working life projects together with them. The strengthening of inter-institutional interaction is a key aspect to comply with this objective, as well as the constant updating of information.

A fundamental instrument for the incorporation of a gender perspective in public policies is the development of time-use surveys which allow evidencing the relation between paid and non-paid work. The effort for the collection of this kind of information has been principally supported with international collaboration (UN agencies such as CEPAL, UN Women, UNFPA). However, it has not been possible to incorporate this into the national institutes of statistics in order to keep data updated on a regular basis.

There are other initiatives that may contribute to the purpose of economic empowerment, such as gender-sensitive budgets, to the extent that they introduce a gender approach to the allocation of public expenses, which may encourage

the development of actions aimed at alleviating the load of non-paid work done by women. But these initiatives are not clearly institutionalized in the processes of defining local and national budgets. There are only a few experiences that have institutionalized this gender mainstreaming approach in public budgets.

Recommendation 3: To include the gender perspective in all the developed policies and programs and to carry out regular assessments to identify progress and obstacles.

It is essential to include the gender perspective in all the developed policies and programs in order to effectively promote women's economic empowerment. This has already been satisfactorily justified and Chart 1 provides an explanation of the concept of "mainstreaming policies and programs with a gender perspective."

At the same time, given the fact that economic empowerment is a complex issue that requires a learning process on the go—because social rules and traditions are not easy to modify and neither are institutional practices—it is important that, during the implementation of programs, regular assessments be done so as to collect useful information for the possible redefinition of the strategy if the desired results are not being achieved. In some cases, this means redefining nonexistent instruments, but in other cases, the gender approach may be included in the assessments which are already carried out.



CHART 2

Policies which promote the economic empowerment of women: “Good practices”

The institutional status of gender in the definition of policies and programs which are being implemented in Latin America is a key aspect to guarantee that they are including a gender approach. In this sense, it is very common to find among “good practices”, programs which are developed by such institutional status. Among them, it is worth mentioning the “seals of quality” that have become widespread across most of the regional countries seeking for the inclusion of the gender perspective in the actions introduced by companies to promote employment. In Uruguay it is the **Model of Quality with Gender Equity** (*Modelo de Calidad con Equidad de Género*), in Chile, the **Seal of Good Labor Practices** (*Sello de Buenas Prácticas Laborales*) and in Mexico, the **Certification Program of the Gender Equity Model** (*MEG: Modelo de Equidad de Género*).

In addition, programs have been developed to guide and improve the employability of youths and are willing to solve the care needs of the beneficiaries' children (*Jóvenes en Red* in Uruguay and *Jóvenes con Más y Mejor Trabajo* in Argentina). The same happens with the *Barrido Otoñal*⁹ Program of the Municipal Government of Montevideo (Uruguay) which, with this purpose, is implemented with other programs and public services.

Chile has developed the **Care Facilities for Children of Temporary Female Workers** which provide solutions for mothers, fathers or caregivers so they can have access to seasonal jobs during January and February of each year as they have an alternative for the care of children aged 6-12 under their charge. The program known as **De 4 a 7 Mujer Trabaja Tranquila**, has a similar objective. It aims at contributing to the insertion and continuance of mothers and/or women who are responsible for the care of children aged 6-13 by offering education and recreational support after the school.

In El Salvador, the level of violence and insecurity faced by women has led to the development of **Ciudad Mujer**¹⁰ program which consists of specific services and programs in different parts of the country. The women who access these services and programs are allowed to use the child care facilities which are offered within the area of Ciudad Mujer. The deficiency that was observed is that the beneficiaries do not receive that support once they complete the training or counseling for the labor insertion. Additionally, with the purpose of providing public servants with training in gender equality issues, the Training School for Substantive Equality was created.

⁹The Barrido Otoñal program offers temporary employment to women who are in a situation of high social vulnerability.

¹⁰For more information visit <http://www.inclusion-social.gob.sv/ciudad-mujer/>