



POST 2015 • The future we want

Regional online consultation “Gender equality and women’s empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean”

April 8 • May 3, 2013



1. Executive Summary

In the last fifteen years, the promotion and adoption of global and regional policy frameworks that promote gender equality and empowerment of women has resulted, among many other achievements, in a number of gender equality policies, plans and programmes, national legislation and institutional reforms sensitive to gender equality (including national assemblies and political parties), the passing of laws that promote gender equality and empowerment of women (equal opportunities legislation on quotas, on violence against woman, reforms to the family code, etc.), greater existence and use of information and gender-disaggregated statistics, as well as research on gender inequality.

However, despite the progress, gender inequality still persists. Data show that women continue to face discrimination in the access to universal services, quality education, sexual and reproductive health and other social services, as well as obstacles to access to decent work, economic goods and political participation. Violence against women continues to undermine efforts to achieve all development goals, increasing barriers to access and enjoy their rights.

Experiences and lessons drawn from the MDG process leads to recognize its limitations - of form and content- to address the inequality between men and women, preventing any progress around the MDGs and broader development agendas.

The objectives of the upcoming post-2015 agenda in the region require more complex endeavors to address priorities such as violence against women, social and political leadership of women, economic empowerment and promotion of gender equality legislation and public policies.

Moreover, any new development framework to be built must meet older and newer challenges in the region. On the one hand, it should focus on addressing the structural factors that are the basis of gender-based inequality, including social norms and attitudes that discriminate against women. On the other hand, it must encompass economic and financial but also political, environmental, cultural and social changes that are being affected by the crisis of the current development model.

The post-2015 agenda setting is a unique opportunity to further promote real political commitment to generate new development models in LAC region.

Gender equality and women's empowerment must be at their core and materialize into action plans with targets, indicators and resources to make it happen.

2. Background

With less than three years to go for the 2015 target date established for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, work around the objectives continues to meet its stages while the process to shape the new agenda is already underway.

The Secretary General of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) are working on an open, inclusive and transparent discussion process to define a new set of development goals after 2015. For that, an agenda has been launched around 11 priority areas that are defining the global and national discussions. These discussion topics focus on: Inequalities (across all dimensions, including gender), health, education, economic growth and employment, environmental sustainability, food security and nutrition, governance, conflict and fragility, energy, water and population dynamics.

Activities already underway seek to promote the meeting and discussion among various stakeholders. These are: the launch of the website worldwewant2015.org open to interaction and exchange of information; global meetings with civil society, dialogue and consultation processes organized at national level. These consultations are being conducted on a sample of 5 continents with a total of 50 countries participating. In Latin America and the Caribbean the countries selected are: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and Santa Lucia.

Gender equality in the post-2015 debate

In its strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, UN agencies are working to make them a priority, both within national debates and within other planned activities, to make it part of the post -2015 development framework in a clear and forceful way.

Since September 2012, different spaces of debate, dialogue and exchange are being organized at national and regional level. At the start of 2013, a

“Global Thematic Consultation on Inequalities” was organized by UN Women and UNICEF, which included a “Global Consultation on Gender Inequalities”. It identified six priority areas for action to address the structural factors that are the basis of such inequalities.

Preliminary findings show that overall inequality is increasing worldwide, and this increase has negative consequences in economic, social and political terms affecting the whole population. It is also noted that despite sustained efforts to reduce gender inequalities, women still feel less safe, less heard and less important than men.

Regional Online Consultation

As contribution of the consultation process for the post-2015 agenda, the Interagency Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women of the United Nations System in Latin American and the Caribbean launched an online consultation in order to generate and provide space for diverse regional actors to share and exchange their perspectives on how the next development agenda should include gender equality as a priority.

This initiative complements the work that the group has carried out elaborating and disseminating thematic notes for gender mainstreaming in various agenda items and positioning gender equality issues in thematic consultations, such as the one held in Panama (January 2013) on violence and citizen security.

The results of this exchange will contribute including diverse voices to the process and to the reports prepared by the same United Nations System.

The online consultation, held from April 8th to May 3rd 2013, was conducted simultaneously in Spanish and English. The debate was boosted initially by several questions on specific topics and adopted a prioritization strategy in which inputs collected could be presented strategically to influence decision-makers at the highest levels in the construction of the post-2015 agenda.

The consultation could be followed on the [worldwewant2015](#) website, and through [America Latina Genera \(UNDP\)](#), [UNWomen](#) and [PAHO](#). By [Twitter \(#igualdad2015\)](#) and Facebook accounts, and was also widely disseminated through other channels and media.

3. Main topics

Advances and limitations

The debate started discussing about the progress in the region in terms of legislation aimed at promoting gender equality and how it translates into policies, plans and programs. Despite the recognized achievements in some areas, participants warned that the progress is limited and gender gaps still exist. Some even mentioned that there have been setbacks.

While the Millennium Development Goals have served, in the opinion of many people, to support and drive regional priorities, the reality is that they offer a narrow vision that marginalizes other realities and gender-specific vulnerabilities and power relations.

Among the structural factors that underline these inequalities and influence this advancement, participants identified: the lack of women’s and gender equality agenda in positions of power and decision-making, the unequal distribution of paid and non-paid work between men and women, occupational segregation of women (horizontal and vertical), job insecurity, along with the various social and legal norms that limit women’s physical autonomy and their ability to choose and enjoy their rights. Also, the vast majority of comments have referred to violence against women as the greatest expression of discrimination and inequality, and the greatest constrain to achieve gender equality.

Participants also recognized that the major limitation in the region is that laws are not accompanied by profound social and cultural changes, or are equipped with sufficient resources for implementation.

Challenges

In the post-2015 setting, participants identified some general challenges for the consolidation of the progress made in the region and for the future work ahead.

For most, it is crucial to address the ideological and cultural barriers that hinder social and cultural change through gender equality based education and an extended social awareness work in order to modify gender relations. They also find it necessary to address the existing and growing discrimination, understanding how it intersects with gender inequalities producing different experiences on access to rights and opportunities for women and girls.

They believe that it is also essential to continue consolidating the public agenda on gender equality

and women's rights through the execution of legislation, strengthening existing programs and the implementation of commitments and recommendations of global and regional rights instruments (CEDAW, Belem do Pará, Quito and Brasilia Consensus, Beijing Platform and MDGs).

*"Violence against women is one of the key issues impeding the exercise of equal rights."
Tomy (Perú)*

But mostly, they all agreed that there is a lack of real commitment, leadership and political will of States to achieve this social transformation, especially in the following areas:

Violence against women and girls

Participants highlighted the urgent need to address violence against women, given its multidimensional nature, which continues to undermine efforts to achieve development goals and increases gaps for access and fulfillment of women's rights.

For its prevention and eradication, legislative and budgetary changes are not enough. Participants agreed that it is crucial to implement a comprehensive approach to address the problem promoting public standards and policies to strengthen the multisectoral work from a multidimensional perspective. Protection measures are needed in the short term accompanied with a sustained work for cultural transformation and change in all areas.

Decent work, co-responsibility and social protection

As stated by several people, the pursuit of gender equality is not only about gaining equal access to paid employment but it is necessary to remove the most "invisible" discrimination forms that place women in a vulnerable situation: informal work, discrimination wages, occupational segregation, unequal burden of unpaid work (domestic and/or care, etc.).

As proposed, this means transforming work and care work through an equitable distribution of reproductive tasks and responsibilities (domestic and care work) between women and men. Also, women's work in its various forms and its contribution to the micro and macro economy must be made visible. Strategies must include the promotion of gender sensitive employment policies and social security programs in order to eliminate the burdens that

maintain women economically and socially in disadvantage.

These policies should take account of the care economy, promote co-responsibility and work-life balance, as well as enhance the recognition of time deficits. At the same time, it must generate quality infrastructure and social support services

Social and political participation

Several contributors recognized the efforts carried out to establish - in different countries of the regions - procedures, structures, and political practices that encourage women participation and the representation of interests related to women's rights. But they also admit that ideological and cultural barriers still exist and hinder further progress for a full and equal participation of women in society, at political, economic, legal and social level.

According to these participants, much is due to the unequal distribution of housework and family responsibilities based on gender social roles (including

*"If we want to increase women's access to power and decision-making, it is necessary to focus on the conditions that facilitate or prevent it."
Sebastián (EEUU)*

maternity). Also, to various aspects of the organizational culture, both public and private, that refuses to move towards changing values and perpetuates exclusionary and discriminatory systems for women because they are gender-blind and hence cause discriminatory biases.

Participants stressed the need to promote policies and

*"It is central to review and rethink labor practices hand in hand with new policies of care that promote co-responsibility of companies, the State and men. They should go together with social protection policies that ensure social security systems, access to services and retirement."
Guillermina (Panamá)*

and programs aimed at increasing the

participation of women in all spheres. And they also suggested certain actions and initiatives to change many aspects of political culture, generating new leadership models and promoting various mechanisms such as electoral quota and alternation the lists of candidates. It is also important to

empower women and promote their leadership changing existing prejudices.

These initiatives should ensure that women's participation will contribute to real progress in the representation and defense of women's interests and rights and achieve real impact.

Sexual and reproductive rights

Various participants agreed that when the right of women to make autonomous decisions is constrained and compromised due to punitive and restricted laws, it threatens a wide range of rights attached to their wellbeing.

"The rise of femicide, sexual violence against women, the criminalization of abortion, workplace and street harassment suggests that we have made little progress in the control of our bodies and that decisions about it are resting in powers or are trafficked in partisan political negotiations of those in power."
Maruja (Perú)

According to them it is necessary to ensure that women can exercise, on an equal footing to men and from their freedom and autonomy, any decisions about their life plan without discrimination, coercion or violence. It is also essential to ensure that all women and girls have access to appropriate, affordable and quality healthcare services.

4. Priorities and strategies

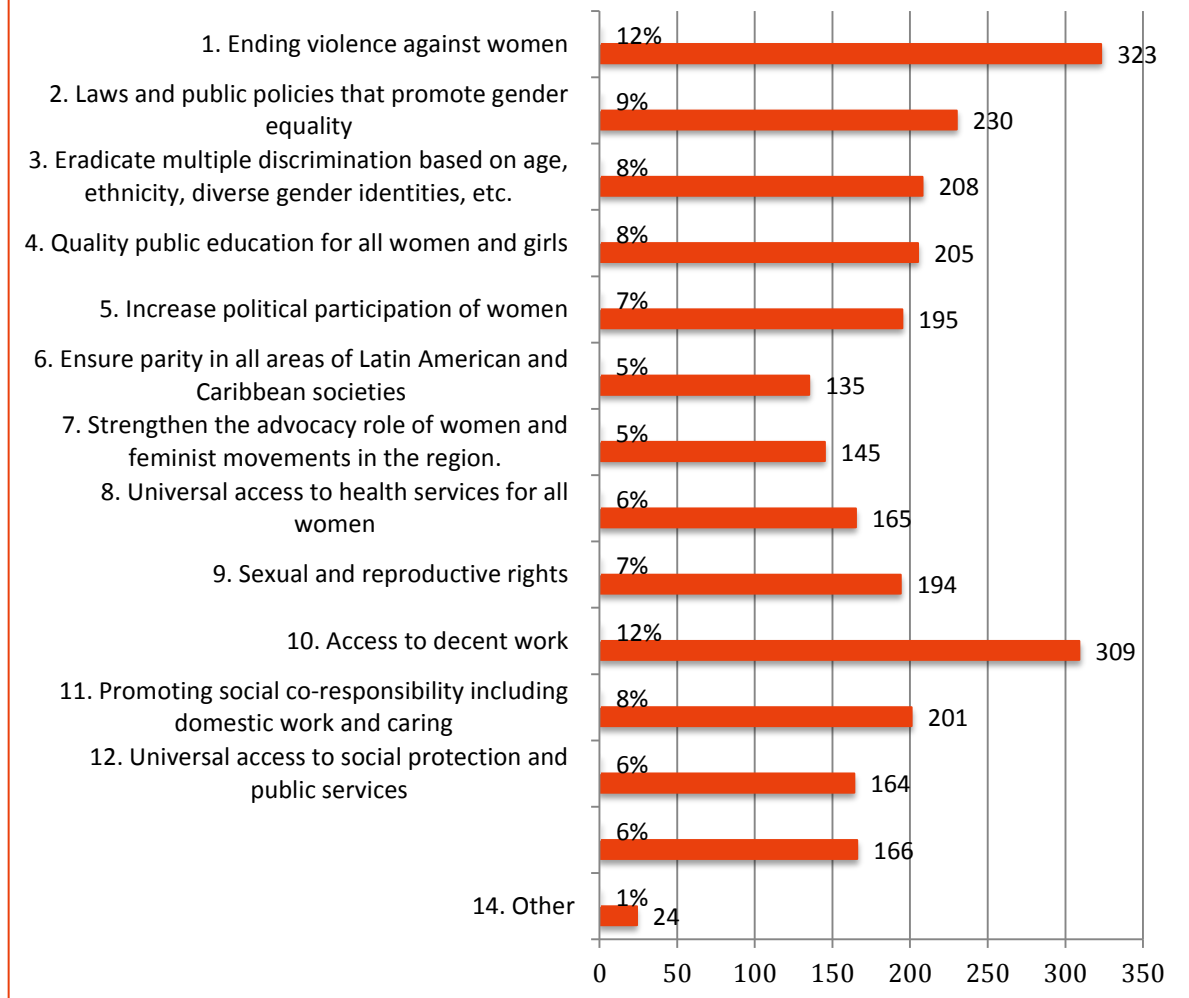
In addition to the debates raised, the consultation contained a survey where participants were asked to choose the five top priorities to transform the region. Among thirteen possible options, 445 voters choose:

1. Ending violence against women
2. Access to decent work
3. Laws and public policies that promote gender equality
4. Eradicate multiple discrimination based on age, ethnicity, diverse gender identities, etc.
5. Quality public education for all women and girls

In the end result, the first seven options came out very tight and that they are consistent with the identified challenges to be addressed for a real social transformation for gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

What's more, these priorities are largely consistent with those expressed in the "Global Online Consultation on Gender Equality" carried out in the same website and those outlined in the [Declaration of women and young women participating in the Regional Consultation of Guadalajara \(México\)](#) convened in the framework of the agenda post-2015. They are also in agreement with the [statements and position papers](#) recently issued by feminist organizations and similar organizations that can be found on the [Coalition of Women post2015 website](#).

Priority / Percentage and number of votes



Participants highlighted these priorities as relevant issues for the post-2015 agenda and proposed some strategies to address them and to position them on the development agenda in the countries of the region.

Among the strategies or combination of strategies to be implemented to overcome the limitations of the previous global frameworks, some are described below. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive or complete, but a snapshot of the proposals expressed in the debate and are those that have received greater approval by participants:

At a time in which inequalities are rising worldwide consultation participants argued that it is necessary to build a new agenda with a strong commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women's and girls, within a **human rights framework** to enable State's compliance with international and regional obligations.

Many interventions highlighted the need to understand and respond to the ways that gender inequality intersects with other forms of exclusion and

discrimination and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression.

Several proposals called for the integration of the diverse gender agendas, responding to classical demands while also accommodating the new ones, given **intersectionalities** of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, race, class, age, urban/rural space, etc. They also call to mainstream these issues in all areas.

In the fight against social norms that cause and perpetuate gender inequalities various ways of moving forward are presented suggesting strategies to address the discrimination or exclusion of women. Most of these proposals agree on the need to change gender relations and social representations through gender equality based education understood in a holistic way - integrating family, school, religious institutions, media, etc.

For that, it is important to review the education curricula, in all formal education to incorporate a gender perspective and promote teachers training in this regard. Also conduct awareness raising and capacity building activities for the general population and younger generations to create critical awareness

and mobilization towards changing power relations between individual and social groups.

Throughout the process it is important to recognize the role of media and new communication

“...A profound change in society is needed to contribute to the construction of a new freedom paradigm that recognizes that all people have the same rights not for being identical but for being unique.”
Sara (Uruguay)

technologies to achieve a favorable public opinion, involved and engaged in the necessary changes for gender equality. It is also recommended to position the women’s agenda in the media and work towards a digital inclusion of women.

Gender equality is not just for women. Work on a cultural change needs the **commitment and involvement of men and boys.**

Participants believed that future progress in gender equality has to promote the involvement of men in family life and care work, their commitment to a responsible parenthood, and access and respect for sexual and reproductive health. These strategies must include the promotion of new masculinities based on nonviolence and care.

Participants stressed the need to **generate real political commitment by States and citizens towards gender equality and women’s rights** to give continuity to the legislation already in place and propose its development as to comply with international and regional agreements to which they are subscribers.

They also acknowledged an apparent lack of the State’s capacity to implement laws and regulations in favor of gender equality with an emphasis on gender sensitive indicators for monitoring plans already approved and adequate design and distribution of resources through gender sensitive budgets.

For that, the promotion of monitoring and evaluation from a gender perspective is needed, along with an improvement of survey systems, data collection, statistics, censuses, etc.

Participants agreed that the initiatives of civil society organizations working on women’s rights, and women’s and feminist organizations must be reinforced for an effective accountability of public policies. They must be promoters and watchdogs of these policies. A strengthening of networks regionally and internationally is also necessary.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The new agenda post-2015, must learn from the lessons drawn from the MDGs, adapt to new contexts and address the persistent and growing inequalities of the region. It should enclose a new way of understanding and measuring development that takes into account the care economy, the full participation of women in all spheres, the exercise of rights of women and girls and the fulfillment of a live free of violence, among other things.

In the post-2015 development framework, gender equality and respect for women’s human rights must be central, recognizing that gender equality is an essential foundation for development, peace, security and human rights.

To be effective, leadership and political will to focus on transforming social relations, while facing the root causes of gender equalities. The overall message expressed by participants is that there is still much to be done to boost the necessary political and social commitment in region towards gender equality, but we are advancing in the right direction.

Even though the consultation addressed many issues, those that prevail in the discourse match in some way with the most voted priority topics from the survey. They also tally with the areas identified and demands made from various women’s organizations during forums and consultations.

In general, participants highlighted a number of recommendations to be considered for the post-2015 process. Here is a summary of the most relevant:

- The new post-2015 framework must be centered on people’s needs and based on human’s rights in compliance with international and regional obligations signed by State and non-state actors.
- The structural causes of inequality and gender discrimination must be addressed.
- Attention must be given to the inequalities and the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographical location, disability, etc.

- Different dimensions of women’s autonomy: economic, political, sexual and reproductive, and a life free of violence must be considered.
- A specific result on gender equality and women’s empowerment must be considered, at the same time gender must be mainstreamed in all targets and indicators of other future goals. This will allow addressing the structural inequalities that persist for women and girls and promote the necessary political will and the provision of resources to create effective attention on gender equality.
- Clear mechanisms for accountability must be included.
- Women's organizations and social movements must be supported in the definition of priorities and monitoring the progress.

6. Participation statistics

At the end, more than 7,600 people from 17 countries visited the consultation site, 445 people casted their votes in the parallel survey. Below is a summary of the main topics and key messages that emerged from this exchange.

CONSULTATION STATISTICS

Main page	7645 visits
Total comments	90 comments (15% men, 85% women)
Survey participants	445
Nº of countries	17 countries

BLOCK 1

Progress and challenges for achieving gender equality 1577 visits /15 comments

BLOCK 2

The structural roots of inequality, discrimination and violence:
social norms and attitudes 885 visits / 20 comments
Ability to choose 428 visits / 17 comments
Participation, impact and power 220 visits / 10 comments

BLOCK 3

Priorities and strategies to influence the post-2015 agenda: The key messages 482 visits / 28 comments

* NOTE: Word cloud on cover page built with words that have been most frequently mentioned in the consultation.

**All information about the consultation can be found at:
www.worldwewant2015.org/genero**