

Gender Mainstreaming in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas

Inter-American Network for Labor
Administration (RIAL)

Buenos Aires, July 21, 2009





Purpose of the Study

Offer the IACML an hemispheric overview of progress made towards institutionalizing the gender perspective in Labor Ministries in the Americas, in order to define strategic areas of intervention, particularly through the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).



Description of the Study

- Documentation and systematization of the current state of incorporation of a gender perspective into the institutional framework of Labor Ministries in the region.
- Identification of the main weaknesses and strengths of gender perspective institutionalization processes.
- Generation of recommendations for strengthening the incorporation of the gender perspective into Labor Ministries' internal and cross-cutting practices by means of actions designed as institution building efforts.



Methodology

- Design a data sheet/questionnaire for collecting the required information, sent to all Labor Ministries in the region.
- Design the data sheet/questionnaire sent to national mechanisms for the advancement of women.
- Map the information in order to use it for axis and cross-axis analysis
- Personally interview key informers in a number of countries to round out the information received through the fact sheets/questionnaires.
- Analyze contents from secondary sources (institutional documents and publications, internal and external evaluations, Web pages, etc.)
- Perform a more in-depth analysis of cases likely to be of interest as real life examples of good gender institutionalization practices (desk study analysis and interviews).



Main issues addressed

- Characteristic Features of institutional insertion
- Mission
- Functions
- Economic empowerment
- Available resources
- Strengths and weaknesses detected
- Programs and projects
- Training (received and needed)



Main study findings

Main findings

Most ministries in the region have a specialized gender unit in place

- 16 countries have a gender affairs bureau or specialized unit (Canada, United States, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and Dominican Republic).
- Two (Peru and Suriname) have a focal point
- In Uruguay, the function is provided in the form of an advisory service
- Chile has a ministry gender affairs officer
- In Honduras, the unit is in process of creation
- In Bolivia, it is defined as the Ministry of Labor's Fundamental Rights Unit.



Main findings

Principal factors that facilitate the creation of these units:

- The political will of governments—in many cases, the highest institutional authority (Minister of Labor
- The need to comply with international commitments assumed by the region's national governments regarding the institutionalization of the gender perspective

Main findings

Specialized gender units engage in a broad spectrum of activities.

- Internal activities:
 - Gender education and training for ministry personnel as an initial phase of the gender perspective institutionalization process (awareness raising, training, workshops and events).
- External activities chiefly center on dissemination and training as well as interinstitutional coordination.

Main findings

No proportion between the tasks assigned to specialized gender units and the human and financial resources made available to them.

- Scarcity of resources is a cross-cutting feature in the vast majority of specialized gender units
- In general, their human resources endowments are restricted—in many cases consisting of one professional plus administrative support—and assigned on a part time basis, since these resources share other functions in other Ministry units
- This state of affairs is all the more alarming when such meager resources are compared with the huge number of functions these units are called upon to perform

Main findings

Gender units have developed a wide network with other agencies

- There is a significant amount of interinstitutional coordination on labor issues
- In particular, the connection with national mechanisms on gender issues
- With other offices in the government apparatus (15 countries)
- With international agencies (17 countries)
- Civil society organizations (15 countries)
- Workers' organizations (14 countries) and employers' organizations (12 countries).

Main findings

Training needs are highly heterogeneous

- Most people working in specialized gender units have received training in general, and gender training in particular
- Lack of training has been reported by countries in strategic planning with a gender perspective, gender indicator construction or budgeting with a gender perspective
- Disparity was noted in the training received by different specialized gender units



The Mission

The Mission

Defines:

- The why or reason for being of the organization
- The values, rules, principles that guide the activities of the members of the organization or group
- The cohesion of the organization or group around common objectives
- The interconnection between the organization and its relevant stakeholders: users, officials, other public- or private-sector institutions, a range of organizations, the general public.
- The commitment shared by all



The Mission

The mission of specialized gender units does not expressly identify their role as bodies responsible for the institutionalization of a gender approach in Ministries of Labor

- Only some specialized gender units clearly define their role as agencies in charge of mainstreaming the gender issue in Labor Ministries
- Approximations to coordination and support for the development of gender issues
- Overly broad statements about improving conditions for working women.
- In most countries the reason for their existence is not expressly stated



The Mission

How should specialized gender units be conceived?

Mechanisms specializing in gender issues, in charge of facilitating and promoting the institution-wide creation of gender equity conditions in the workplace.



The Mission

What is the gender unit's scope of action?

- It carries out its work both inside and outside the institution.



The Mission

What is its relationship with the institution?

- It seeks the commitment of all the departments and units that comprise the institution.
- Integrating gender equity criteria in the institution's activities.

The Mission

What issues should be addressed with gender equity criteria?

- Gender equity criteria should be integrated in the substantive aspects of every unit in the institution (including Administration and Finance)
- It should be an integral part of institutional processes and procedures



The Mission

What is the aim of gender mainstreaming?

- Evaluate the implications, for men and women alike, of any planned measure, including laws, policies or programs, in any area and at every level.
- Eliminate gender gaps at work
- Encourage a new gender-equity-based culture
- Promote new institutional values



The Mission

Therefore, the Mission must be consistent with

- The objectives of the specialized gender unit
- The activities of the unit
- The work of the institution as a whole