



Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor

Towards a Manual or “ABC” for Gender Units

November 30, 2021 – Virtual

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOMES

Full event information is available at http://rialnet.org/?q=en/third_gender_dialogue

1. Introduction and background

The Hemispheric Dialogue “Towards a Manual or ABC for Gender Units,” held on November 30, 2021, brought together representatives from 24 Ministries of Labor of the Americas and was jointly organized by the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), with funding from the Government of Canada for the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).

The Ministers of Labor of the Americas, in the framework of the OAS Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML), have over the years made a growing commitment to gender mainstreaming and institutionalization within their operations, policies, and programs, recognizing them as a means to achieve gender equality in the labor market. The RIAL/OAS and the CIM have undertaken various efforts to support the ministries in this regard, including technical studies, participatory gender assessments, regional and subregional workshops, and bilateral cooperation activities.

As part of their efforts to strengthen the institutionalization of gender within Ministries of Labor against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RIAL/OAS and the CIM organized two earlier Hemispheric Dialogues (November 2020 and May 2021). The objective of those events was to promote reflection and exchanges on the current situation, emerging issues, and challenges and opportunities for gender units or areas in light of the pandemic. In the first dialogue, the emphasis was on the operation of gender units during the pandemic, while the second focused on teleworking and joint responsibility for care in order to achieve a gender-responsive recovery.

During the discussions, the idea emerged of developing a tool to support the creation and consolidation of gender units in the Ministries. In response to that demand, the RIAL/OAS Technical Secretariat prepared a preliminary version of a Manual or “ABC” to support the institutionalization and mainstreaming of the gender perspective, which was made available to the member states for their comments. At the Third Hemispheric Dialogue, the main results and conclusions of which are contained in this document, the Manual was reviewed and finalized. It provided also the opportunity

to have an open conversation about the current status of gender units and options for expanding gender cooperation and collaboration in our region.

2. Main conclusions

The dialogue was conducted in two parts. The first involved a dialogue on the operation of gender units almost two years after the start of the pandemic: whether they have been strengthened or weakened, what are the main challenges they face today, and what initiatives they are currently pursuing. The second part focused on revising and offering comments on the Manual or ABC for Gender Units.

1) The situation of gender units today, almost two years after the start of the pandemic

During this first part of the dialogue, it became clear that in most cases, the gender units, areas, focal points, or mechanisms within ministries of labor have been able to strengthen themselves in spite of the pressures imposed by the pandemic. In a survey conducted through the platform, 62.5% of respondents said their unit or area had strengthened during this period, 20.8% said it had remained the same, and 16.7% said it had weakened.

Much of that strengthening was due to the implementation of new programs and projects by the units, intended mainly to address the difficult situation faced by the region's women as a result of the pandemic.

The following are some of the areas in which gender units are working two years into the pandemic, together with the main challenges they foresee:

- One of the main lines of action that the gender units said they were working on is to **continue gender mainstreaming in their ministries** so that all programs and projects are gender-responsive and thus contribute to the recovery of women's employment:
 - o The delegation of Brazil spoke of the creation of a working group, within the framework of the National Labor Council, to deal specifically with the issue of women and employment. This tripartite mechanism's actions will include updating statistics on women's participation in the labor market, compiling good national and international practices, and updating legislation.
 - o The delegation of Chile highlighted the growing importance of the Gender Unit in its Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, especially the incorporation of a mainstreamed gender perspective in its actions and programs over recent months. As an example, it referred to the *IFE Laboral* subsidy, as an incentive for workers to be formally employed, directly granting them a monthly benefit for the employment relationship they begin (new employment contract), for three months.

Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor

- The Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare of Mexico is currently making efforts to contribute to gender equity through its different programs. As an example, it referred to the “Youth Building the Future” (its youth employment program), in which 57% of the beneficiaries are women.
- As one of their strategies to promote the recovery of female employment, some delegations reported that they were making efforts to promote **the inclusion of women in sectors primarily dominated by men**. Some specific strategies are:
 - In Argentina, the *Choferas* program to promote the hiring of women in the transport sector. The delegate of the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security noted that similar efforts were being made in other industries, such as the maritime sector.
 - Canada reported that one of its strategies is the “Women in Construction Fund” to promote the entry of women into that sector. The delegate stressed that one of the main challenges identified is that female-dominated sectors are often perceived as less valuable, so they are working with leaders of male-led sectors to create friendlier environments for women’s inclusion.
 - The Government of Chile, through the Gender Area of the MTPS, maintains dialogues with industry leaders to expand women’s participation, including in largely male-dominated sectors.
- The participants agreed that one of the **great challenges continues to be the care crisis** and its incompatibility with work. They identified the actions they are taking to address this problem, which in many cases goes hand in hand with a teleworking policy.
 - In Brazil, the main responsibilities of the Working Group for Women and Employment within the National Labor Council include using tripartite mechanisms to identify ways to address the care crisis and the challenges of motherhood.
 - Chile’s Ministry of Labor has determined that the pandemic, during its highest peak between May and July 2020, led to an increase of more than 500% in the number of women leaving the labor market because they needed to devote themselves to household work. To address this, efforts are underway with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of the Economy to develop a national employment equity plan, which will include a care component.
 - In Guatemala, the implementation of the breastfeeding-friendly places program remains ongoing.
 - In Paraguay, the Equal Employment strategy, which aims to reduce gender gaps in the labor market, includes a care component. Mention was also made of the drafting of the Care Bill that will soon be submitted to Congress.

Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor

- The delegate from Peru said that one of her country's pending tasks was to update the guide to good practices for reconciling family and personal life, in order to take the new circumstances into consideration. In connection with the same topic, she spoke of the remote work regulations, which provide for the right to disconnect.
- Another prominent trend reported was the **promotion of training and capacity-building for women**, to reduce both skills gaps and gender gaps in the labor market:
 - Colombia shared it is developing a strategy to strengthen women's occupational profiles and improve their skills in order to enhance their employability.
 - The Government of Canada launched the Women Employment Readiness Program, which includes both training for women facing multiple intersectionalities to obtain the skills needed for work and an outreach component targeting employers to make workplaces more inclusive.
 - The Chilean delegation highlighted the creation of a National Labor Improvement System, intended to anticipate future trends in the world of work and prevent any further widening of the skills gap. As part of those efforts, an advisory commission on labor improvement was created, in which the Ministry of Women's Affairs also participates.
 - The delegate of Ecuador spoke of the STEM skills training for women implemented by the Ministry of Labor.
 - In Uruguay, through INEFOP, special attention has been paid to training women to improve their employability.
- Efforts are continuing to address the issue of **paid domestic work**, a sector that is largely dominated by women and toward which there is a historical debt:
 - The Government of Argentina created the "Registered Women" program to promote the formalization of domestic workers. As part of this effort, the State subsidizes a portion of their earnings for a period of six months.
 - The Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Paraguay reported that a working group on domestic work had been established to promote formalization and the enforcement of rights.
 - The Ministry of Labor and Social Security of Uruguay expanded its unemployment benefits, with a particular focus on sectors such as domestic work, which is among the hardest hit.

Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor

- Efforts to **eradicate gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace**, as well as the **care and labor inclusion of victims of gender-based violence** to support them in achieving economic independence is another major focus of gender units' work. It is important to note that, in response to this priority identified since the First Hemispheric Gender Dialogue in 2020, during 2021 the RIAL/OAS and the CIM developed the Virtual Course on Gender-Based Violence at Work, which is available on the Educational Portal of the Americas.¹ The following were among the specific efforts identified by the delegations regarding this topic:
 - The delegation of Argentina reported that it had developed the first protocol against gender-based violence arising from collective bargaining as one of the concrete outcomes following the ratification of ILO Convention 190. This protocol provides fundamental tools to raise awareness among negotiators for the inclusion of a gender approach in collective bargaining agreements.
 - In Colombia, one of the strategies for reducing gender gaps is the placement of women who have experienced harassment and violence, or who have sought assistance through state services.
 - The Ministry of Labor of Guatemala reported that a collaboration agreement had been signed with the Public Prosecution Service to connect women victims of violence with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in order to support them in finding jobs, assisting them in achieving economic independence, and enabling them to leave environments where they are at risk.
 - In Ecuador, one of the main focuses of attention of the Directorate of Attention to Priority Groups is the eradication of violence. The creation of channels for reporting abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace, the launching of a comprehensive system for dealing with violence, and a series of gender-sensitive training courses for all areas that provide initial care to victims of gender-based violence, including the police and the fire service, were all highlighted.
 - In Mexico, a protocol that seeks to prevent and eradicate violence against women in all workplaces was recently adopted.
 - The delegation of Paraguay reported on the good results of the digitization of its centers for the attention and prevention of workplace violence, which has provided care for 63,000 victims, compared to a range of between 10,000 and 15,000 through the face-to-face version.

¹ The Spanish version of the Course was launched in October 2021 and the first cohort was made up of 50 officials from 16 Spanish-speaking Ministries of Labor. This is a tutored course that consists of 50 hours of training. The Course in English will be launched between March and April 2022 only for Ministries of Labor.

Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor

- Peru is developing the Work Without Harassment program, which monitors workplace victims of harassment, including sexual harassment.
- The Uruguayan delegation reported that following the femicide of a female worker at the ministry, acts of activism began that led to the approval of 10 days' leave for women victims of violence, a situation that will be replicated in other ministries.
- The meeting also explored actions to **support women entrepreneurs**, and to contribute to gender equity within micro, small and medium-sized enterprises:
 - In Canada, programs that provide financing to women entrepreneurs have been strengthened.
 - Colombia is developing a free mechanism for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to measure their wage gaps.
 - Ecuador has implemented a program that provides productive credit to women entrepreneurs.
- Some delegations also spoke of the implementation of **Good Practice Seals** that contribute to gender equity in the labor market:
 - The delegation of Colombia reported the expansion of the EQUIPARES seal to organizations based in rural areas to reduce the effects of intersectionality on rural women.
 - The delegation of Mexico spoke of its good labor practices stamp, which includes a gender component
 - Paraguay continues to implement the Gender Equity Seal in the public sector.
- Practically all the delegations said they were **working hand-in-hand either with their mechanisms for the advancement of women or with the gender units of other ministries**. The need to address all the issues described above in an intersectoral manner was underscored.
- The delegations agreed that one of the main challenges for their operation and functioning is the lack of budgetary allocations and the lack of specialized human resources.

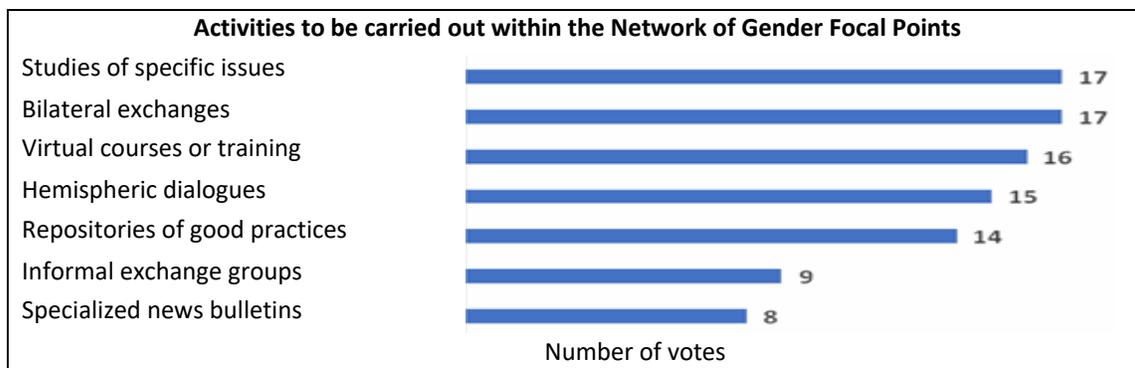
2) Review of and comments on the Manual or ABC for Gender Units, creation of the Network of Gender Focal Points in the framework of RIAL

The second part of the Dialogue involved reviewing and providing feedback on the Manual or ABC for Gender Units. During this second half of the event, the idea of establishing a Network of Gender Focal Points within the framework of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) re-emerged and received support.

The main outcomes and recommendations from this part of the Dialogue are outlined below:

- **Strong support and contributions to the Manual for Gender Units:** The delegations noted their thanks and congratulations for the Manual, which they recognized as an important tool for creating and strengthening gender units.
- **Some concrete recommendations:**
 - Include an intersectionality component, acknowledging that many women are more vulnerable because of their race, sexual orientation, geographic location, among other.
 - Mention the articulation of gender units' efforts with national gender equity policies, as well as mainstreaming policies with subnational governments and in the territories.
 - Include information and indicators on legal frameworks and international instruments, to include information on existing structures in the gender units, and to strengthen social dialogue.
- **Develop a glossary of terms:** To complement the Manual, delegations recommended developing a glossary of terms.
- **Establishment of the Gender Network within RIAL:** With strong support from the delegations present, the event endorsed the creation of a network of gender focal points as a specialized network of RIAL. In a zoom survey, the participants were asked about the activities they believe should be carried out within the framework of the Network. The results of this exercise are shown below.

Third Hemispheric Gender Dialogue among Ministries of Labor



3. Next Steps

- The Technical Secretariat will disseminate this document of conclusions and results, and reiterates its commitment to serve as a link between Gender Units that require more information on any practice or policy advanced by another country.
- With the contributions received in writing prior to the Dialogue and the recommendations expressed during it, the OAS Secretariat will produce the final version of the Manual for Gender Units, which will be available in English and Spanish.
- In March or April 2022, the English version of the Virtual Course on Gender-Based Violence at Work will be launched, which in its first cohort in Spanish had the participation of officials from 16 countries. In addition, obtaining resources to launch more cohorts will be explored, given the great interest it generated in the Ministries of Labor of the region.
- The CIM and the OAS Secretariat will prepare a Glossary of terms to complement the Manual, based on an exercise already carried out by the CIM.
- The Secretariat will be working on a proposal to create the specialized network of focal points and will submit this recommendation to the authorities of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML).