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**CONSULTANCY STUDY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGY
FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE
SUBSTANTIVE WORK OF ECLAC**

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ABSTRACT

Although the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established as far back as 1977, it was not until 1986 that it received a mandate from the member States (res. 483(XXI)) to consider sectoral and intersectoral problems in all the programmes of the ECLAC system, with a view to ensuring the participation of women in development on an equal basis with men.

In 1997, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) called on the regional commissions to institutionalize the gender perspective into their work as an initial step towards gender mainstreaming. In that same year, the Council defined "mainstreaming a gender perspective" as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It pointed out that mainstreaming was a tool for making the concerns and needs of women as well as men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres. The ultimate goal was to achieve gender equality (A/52/3, chapter IV, section A, para. 4).

In this framework, a six-month pilot project, entitled "Institutionalization of gender policies within ECLAC", was conducted in 1997 with the cooperation of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). The objective was to work out a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective into the substantive work of ECLAC, using a participatory and consensual approach. The consultancy study reported on in this document was carried out as part of the project. It was prompted by the conviction that an undertaking of this scope calls for collective action and a transparent and participatory process and, moreover, that the will of decision-makers is a prerequisite for change.

Senior officials of the substantive divisions and units of ECLAC expressed opinions and made inputs which contributed to a diagnostic analysis of the situation. In particular, they drew attention to: (1) the efforts currently being made by divisions to incorporate the gender perspective in different subject areas; (2) existing constraints; (3) the need for divisions to become involved in the process of institutionalizing the gender perspective; (4) possible approaches to strategy design.

Accordingly, this preliminary version of the strategy for institutionalizing the gender approach in ECLAC reflects the suggestions and concerns canvassed during the dialogue with senior officials and staff of ECLAC and comprises the specific activities that form part of this process, which will be supported by the second phase of the cooperation project with GTZ, scheduled to begin in mid-1998 and to run for 24 months.

The study demonstrates that the issue has gained legitimacy and that interest and consensus exist for carrying through a process for mainstreaming the gender perspective within ECLAC.

INTRODUCTION

Institutionalization of a theoretical-methodological approach, such as the gender perspective, is the process whereby the relevant social and work practices become sufficiently well-established and consistent, are confirmed and maintained by rules and procedures and play a significant role in the organizational structure and in the definition of the objectives and methodologies adopted. Moreover, any process of institutionalization is dependent on the scope that individuals and organizations possess for generating lasting change.

For the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, mainstreaming the gender dimension is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned public action, including legislation, policies or programmes in any area. It is a tool for making the concerns and needs of men and women an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.¹ The Council also called on the regional commissions, including ECLAC, to take concrete steps to institutionalize mainstreaming of the gender perspective into their work.²

The existence of a policy mandate on gender is fundamental to the design and implementation of a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective, and this perspective must be associated with the overall policy mandate and mission of the institution.

In this connection, ECLAC has received a mandate from its member States (res. 483(XXI) to examine sectoral and intersectoral issues in all programmes of the ECLAC system with a view to ensuring women's participation on an equal basis with men in the development process. In the proposals adopted by ECLAC member States for the 1990s, reference was made to the need to adopt an integrated approach to development, which would resolve the discrepancies between economic and social policies

¹ The most recent mandates for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations are set forth in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, General Assembly resolution 51/69 and the report of the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March, 1997). In resolution 50/104 of December 1997, the General Assembly urged Governments to develop and promote methodologies for incorporating a gender perspective into all aspects of policy-making, including economic policy-making. In October 1997, the Secretary-General sent a letter to all heads of the United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies indicating the importance and urgency of incorporating the gender perspective in medium-term plans, diagnostic analyses and recommendations, whether of a general or sectoral nature, provided to Governments, and stating that this perspective should be reflected in the budgetary allocations for those programmes.

² See, "Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997" (A/52/3), New York, 18 September 1997, chapter IV, section A, para. 4; and "Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following themes. Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. Draft agreed conclusions" (E/1997/L.30), Geneva, 14 July 1997, p. 5.

and address the various aspects of social equity, including the problem of gender equity, so as to foster social integration in democratic and productive societies.

But the commitment of ECLAC in this regard is more than just a token gesture. Although progress in implementing this mandate —and others— relating to mainstreaming the gender perspective in its work has been slow and often laborious, appreciable headway has been made both quantitatively and qualitatively since the beginning of the 1990s.

Moreover, success in a process of this kind is heavily influenced by the position within the hierarchy of the entity with primary responsibility for gender issues. In this respect, the situation at ECLAC could hardly be better, since the Women and Development Unit has been part of the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Commission since 1993. However, notwithstanding the progress referred to, there is still an absence of systematic gender analysis cutting across the work of all the divisions and units of the organization and viewed as a “sound practice” which would not only improve the quality of analyses of the socio-economic reality of Latin America and the Caribbean but also contribute to the formulation of public policy proposals more consistent with the needs of the different sectors of the population, in the long run enhancing the quality of development cooperation provided by the Commission.

In response to this need, ECLAC conducted in 1997, in conjunction with GTZ, a six-month pilot project entitled “Institutionalization of gender policies within ECLAC” and commissioned the consultancy study which is the subject of the present report.³

I. BACKGROUND

The main purpose of the ECLAC/GTZ project was to design a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective in the substantive work of ECLAC using a participatory and consensual approach.

A diagnostic analysis of the existing situation was considered necessary as a first step in order to assess the opportunities and stumbling blocks existing within the institution and to determine the scope for change and action.

Institutionalization of the gender perspective calls for collective action and a transparent and participatory process, entailing cooperation, consultation and negotiation, and conflict resolution between the actors concerned in the different processes involved in “mainstreaming”. To this end, various briefing sessions and consultations were held within the framework of the project with professionals in ECLAC, such as the focal points for women’s issues in the divisions, project coordinators and experts on gender.⁴

³ Other activities under the project were the compilation and analysis of substantive material on: (i) the main theoretical and methodological advances in the area of gender and development; (ii) steps for implementing gender planning in policies for poverty eradication in various Latin American countries; (iii) experiments in training in the gender perspective and its mainstreaming in the regular work of different international organizations.

⁴ The main suggestions put forward at these meetings for designing a strategy are set out as section IV of this document.

Institutionalization of the gender perspective is, by definition, a complex undertaking and calls for policy actions and positions. Moreover, decision-makers and bureaucrats are often reluctant to initiate a process they perceive as imposed from outside and whose benefits are expected to be paltry in comparison with the efforts required. Furthermore, there is often ideological resistance to change, especially change that is pervasive and structural.

The above reasons and the conviction that the commitment and will of decision-makers are a key factor for change prompted a number of activities, among which the most significant in its policy implications was the consultancy study carried out with the heads of the various substantive divisions and units of ECLAC.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study comprised three consecutive phases:

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the study consisted in the collection and analysis of all available information on the internal functioning of the institution in order to assess the status of gender mainstreaming within ECLAC.

Firstly, the activities relating to women's issues and the gender perspective carried out by the various divisions and units of ECLAC from 1994 to mid-1997 were reviewed. These activities were the subject of a report to the Women and Development Unit by the designated focal points in each of these divisions and units in preparation for the seventh Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean or were compiled as a follow-up to the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001.⁵

Secondly, ongoing ECLAC projects and others shortly to be started were reviewed jointly with the Project Management Unit of the Programme Planning and Operations Division. The purpose of this review was to identify those projects that already incorporated some activity or theoretical or methodological assumption relating to mainstreaming of the gender perspective and, in the case of projects not satisfying this requirement, to identify priority areas and activities where it would be feasible and appropriate to do so in the short term.

Lastly, consideration was given to the regular programme of work of ECLAC for the 1998-1999 biennium with a view to identifying subject areas and activities in the area of research, training and

⁵ See ECLAC, "Activities of the ECLAC secretariat relating to the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean from 1 June 1994 to 30 August 1997" (LC/L.1062(CRM.7/3)), Santiago, Chile, 23 September 1997; and ECLAC, "Questionnaire for the mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan (SWMTP) for the advancement of women", Women and Development Unit, Office of the Executive Secretary, Santiago, Chile, September 1997 (unpublished).

cooperation for development where it would be feasible, given the current resources available to the institution, to incorporate the gender perspective in such a way as to cut across the different sectors.

Phase 2

In view of the foregoing and to complete the institutional diagnosis, a loosely structured format for an in-depth interview to be conducted with the heads of substantive divisions and units and the Office of the Executive Secretary of ECLAC were worked out in Phase 2.

The interview objectives were defined as follows:

- (i) To determine the present situation in the division or unit;
- (ii) To identify opportunities or stumbling blocks to institutionalization of the gender perspective;
- (iii) To solicit suggestions from managerial staff of ECLAC for the design of a strategy for institutionalization of the gender perspective.

The units of content and meaning used in the interviews were as follows:

- Main topics, procedures and postulates of the work of the division;
- Current situation in the division or unit with respect to gender mainstreaming and concern for integration of women in the socioeconomic development of Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Current experiences in the countries of the region and requests for cooperation in gender-sensitive development;
- Available resources and basic prerequisites for mainstreaming a gender perspective;
- Methodological suggestions for institutionalizing the gender perspective in ECLAC, at both the technical and policy levels;
- Perception of the role of the Women and Development Unit in mainstreaming;
- Suggestions for devising a strategy.

To facilitate the conduct of the interviews, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC sent a communication to the heads of the substantive divisions and units of the Commission recalling the mandate received by ECLAC for mainstreaming the gender perspective in its work, underscoring the importance of institutionalizing this perspective and requesting their cooperation. The date and time of the interviews were later agreed by telephone with each of the persons concerned.

These approaches were well received by directors of divisions and chiefs of units, who were willing to be interviewed and to cooperate in this exercise. On average, the interviews lasted 45 minutes. Notes were taken on the views expressed in the course of these interviews.

Phase 3

Following interviews with 17 persons (see list in annex), the information obtained was processed and analysed for subsequent compilation.

The results were presented to the participants at a half-day workshop held during the ECLAC/GTZ coordination and work session. On that occasion, the discussion was opened up to elicit the reaction of participants together with new contributions and suggestions for the design of the strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective at ECLAC.

III. MAIN RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

1. Status of gender mainstreaming within ECLAC

On the basis of the response of interviewees regarding their current activities or those they had carried out in recent years, which included an express concern for the situation of women or the incorporation of a gender perspective in analyses and proposals relating to public policies, the gender perspective may be said to have penetrated most of the substantive divisions and units of ECLAC (see table 1).

The situation varies, however, in terms of scope, degree and consistency. Clearly, there are wide differences between divisions or units whose regular programme consists of gender-related activities or which traditionally address issues directly linked to women's problems and gender inequality and those which have only recently started to include gender-sensitive activities under specific projects or in response to recent demands.

In the case of divisions and units where no gender activities had been incorporated, a distinction should be made between those that envisaged such activities in the near future and those where the respondents considered such an approach impracticable, either because the subject matter bore little relationship to gender, or because of ideological opposition or doubts concerning the relevance of the gender perspective in their sphere of activity.

In this respect, it is also interesting to note that the priority subjects identified by respondents as requiring a crosscutting gender analysis were predominantly subjects, at different levels of aggregation, traditionally associated with women such as population trends, and issues with a direct bearing on social equity and the poverty of households (see table 2). On the other hand, among the topics identified as potential areas for incorporation of a gender perspective in the future, respondents included a number of subject areas not traditionally addressed but crucial both for economic growth in Latin America and the Caribbean and for the definition of a development model for the region.

There was a perception among the respondents, however, that most of the topics covered in their work, especially at higher levels of aggregation, were "gender-neutral", that is to say, without differences or inequalities between men and women. These responses suggest that a homogenizing view of the population of the countries in the region still prevails and that the diverse needs of the different segments of society and the differential impacts of public policies on men and women go unrecognized.

Table 1⁶

Are conducting activities	Expect to conduct activities	Consider it difficult
Office of the Executive Secretary	International Trade, Finance and Transport Division	Economic Development Division
CELADE	Programme Planning and Operations Division	Environment and Development Division
ILPES		Transport Unit
Social Development Division		Personnel Section
Division of Production, Productivity and Management		
Statistics and Economic Projections Division		
Women and Development Unit		
Development Finance Unit		

⁶ All the expressions that appear in the tables are derived from the views expressed during interviews.

Table 2

Priority topics for gender mainstreaming	Potential topics for gender mainstreaming
Population Population dynamics Migration Indigenous people Poverty Social policies Microeconomics Labour market Employment Production projects Professional training Small and medium-sized enterprises Land markets Agricultural development Local development Services sector Health Education Statistics	Evaluation of social projects Socio-economic indicators Globalization International trade Macroeconomics Environment Governability

2. Institutionalizing the gender perspective in the work of ECLAC

Once the respondents had been advised of the project objectives, in the course of the interview, they were asked to make a simulated projection of the process of institutionalizing the gender perspective within ECLAC, indicating how they would approach it and what advantages they expected to arise from a collective effort in that regard.

The responses received included direct references to the gender perspective and its potential or limitations (see table 3) and references relating to the process of mainstreaming the gender perspective within ECLAC (see table 4).

In this context, it is important to note that, for the respondents, the role of the Women and Development Unit would depend on its capacity to provide the other divisions with information on theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the gender issue from a perspective cutting across the various aspects of development addressed by ECLAC, together with methodological tools for applying them and data from research carried out in different subject areas. In addition, the Unit should fulfil the role of promoter, facilitator and coordinator of a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective.

In terms of the views expressed on gender analysis, it was observed that not all respondents showed the same sensitivity in that regard or were as familiar with its principles and contributions. Nevertheless, there was some degree of concurrence in their expectations regarding the application of the gender perspective to the work of ECLAC.

Table 3

VIEWS ON THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

- Gender should be a cross-cutting issue;
- It is a highly relevant issue, but one should not try to make it apply to everything;
- Theoretical, methodological and ideological obstacles exist which tend to relegate gender issues to the realm of a mere marginal exercise applicable only to micro-level projects;
- The approach can provide new and different responses to the major issues and fundamental processes relevant to the present and future development of Latin America;
- It is not clear how the principles of the gender approach and resulting recommendations should be translated into appropriate actions;
- The approach must go beyond the descriptive level and assume the form of an analytical perspective which opens up new interpretations that can no longer be ignored;
- Gender analysis makes it possible to strengthen the link between economic and social policies, issues relating to production and reproduction and the micro and macro levels of development;
- The gender approach must win acceptance by making a substantive contribution;
- It should be integrated into major issues, failing which it may become a minority issue, an approach which has already been exhausted;
- The gender perspective should not be trivialized; it can enhance the quality of work and staff.

With regard to a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective within ECLAC, what form it should take and how it should be integrated, it is interesting to note that the views expressed by respondents concur, to a large extent, with the conclusions arrived at following a review, under the project, of the different results of gender mainstreaming exercises conducted by other international organizations and the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council.⁷

⁷ The summary of this review and its analysis and the main lessons to be drawn from it with regard to gender mainstreaming within ECLAC will be published shortly.

Table 4

**VIEWS ON INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE
WITHIN ECLAC**

- It is a process with both technical and policy dimensions;
- It is based on a substantive-operational link;
- It benefits ECLAC;
- It benefits Governments of the region;
- It improves the quality of cooperation for development;
- It must respond to the needs of Governments;
- It comes at a time when the climate in the institution is one of change;
- It is associated with concrete activities and procedures;
- It involves both ECLAC headquarters and the subregional offices;
- It concerns not only the regular work programme but also projects;
- Additional, long-term funding is required in order to fulfil the mandates and achieve substantive strengthening of the gender perspective;
- The Women and Development Unit must play the role of coordinator and catalyst for the process.

A number of respondents agreed with the view that ECLAC is a think tank whose ideas influence the countries of the region and have a major impact on government policies. All agreed that, except for the Caribbean area, there were no requests for mainstreaming the gender perspective in the development cooperation the countries received from ECLAC, and that the subject was not usually raised in the ongoing dialogue maintained with the countries on technical and policy issues. That was cited as the main reason why the gender perspective was not adopted or was difficult to incorporate, since a great void existed at the country level in that regard.

A sizeable number of respondents did, nevertheless, acknowledge the existence of external pressure from the cooperation agencies financing the projects carried out by the divisions. That pressure was prompting them to try to incorporate the gender dimension, even when they were not firmly convinced of the need to do so or that the outcome would be a positive one. That being the case, they saw

a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective in ECLAC as something that could provide them with tools for fulfilling that request satisfactorily.

3. Existing constraints and requirements

During the interviews, consideration was also given to constraints within ECLAC on institutionalizing the gender perspective and to the requirements of the substantive divisions and units.

In general, the responses on both issues may be grouped by subject. The issues rallying the greatest degree of consensus concerned the need for a clear definition of institutional policy with respect to mainstreaming the gender perspective and a greater conceptual and methodological development of the approach in relation to the different sectoral issues addressed by ECLAC and the resulting substantive and operational linkage that should be created, based on rigorous empirical and analytical working methodologies.

Furthermore, there was agreement on the importance of access to statistics disaggregated by sex, which could later be analysed from a gender perspective, and on strengthening professional and technical development of staff through flexible and smooth mechanisms which would serve mainly to provide information, since the more traditional forms of training (e.g., workshops) were not considered the most appropriate mechanism for ECLAC. The topic of resources in all their varied forms (human resources, funding, time, information, training, and so forth) was also regularly mentioned in all the interviews.

Among the issues raised by some management staff, but either rejected or ignored by others, the most important concerned procedures, that is, activities and practices relating to different aspects of the work of the institution, such as recruitment, drafting of terms of reference for consultants, experts and staff and guidelines for the follow-up and evaluation (accountability) of projects and of the work of the divisions in general. Reference was also made to mechanisms for achieving equality of opportunity for men and women employed at ECLAC or for establishing incentives with a view to mainstreaming the gender dimension in the work of the institution.

The main responses obtained are set forth in the two tables below:

Table 5

EXISTING CONSTRAINTS

- Gender analysis is just being developed and is not strong enough to become established;
- “Ideas” do not easily translate into action due to lack of channels for institutionalization;
- It is not clear what benefits may be derived from the gender approach;
- It is difficult to visualize any links between gender analysis and sectoral issues and topics involving high levels of aggregation;
- There are uneven levels of awareness and interest in gender analysis at ECLAC;
- The subject is not explicitly treated as a cross-cutting issue in the 1998-1999 work programme;
- The divisions are overworked and subject to excessive demands;
- There is a shortage of human and financial resources;
- It is not one of the priority issues for ECLAC or any of the divisions;
- There is some resistance to the issue and to change in general;
- It is not considered to be a responsibility to be shared by all the staff of the Commission.

Table 6

REQUIREMENTS

- A clear institutional policy on gender analysis;
- Knowledge of the demands and priorities of Governments of the region in terms of gender issues;
- Knowledge of the priorities of donors;
- A sound conceptual framework on gender and development;
- A debate on the interrelationship between gender analysis, on the one hand, and sectoral issues, such as changing production patterns with social equity, on the other, and on the cross-cutting nature of the gender dimension;
- Regular interdivisional work with strong support from the Office of the Executive Secretary;
- Information on gender analysis research into ECLAC subjects;
- Statistics disaggregated by sex; variables, indicators and indices incorporating the gender dimension;
- Internal and external consultancy services on gender issues;
- Operationalization of the gender perspective and methodologies;
- Substantial new resources;
- Management, impact and efficiency indicators relating to substantive and methodological mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

4. Suggestions for the design of a strategy

The respondents were asked to suggest activities that might form part of the strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective and also to make an attempt to identify areas and levels of action that should be given priority in the short term.

The responses obtained mentioned activities that were complementary and others that were mutually exclusive, in that they corresponded to different visions of how the process should take place. The main responses are set forth in the following tables:

Table 7

SUGGESTIONS FOR GENERAL ACTIVITIES

- Work out a conceptual and methodological framework for gender analysis and planning in development;
- Hold a conceptual debate among the different divisions;
- Draft a text on the principal guidelines for gender analysis to standardize the ECLAC approach;
- Identify and prioritize regular activities and projects in two or three divisions;
- Identify activities that can be applied in various divisions simultaneously to ensure the sustainability of the institutionalization process;
- Form a joint advisory group on gender to support the divisions;
- Provide divisions with an appropriate person and necessary funding for dealing with gender issues;
- Define the roles of professionals and divisions involved in mainstreaming the gender perspective;
- Organize seminars and meetings of experts on the issue;
- Develop technical and methodological support instruments for incorporating the gender dimension across disciplines;
- Include sex-disaggregated data on a regular basis and incorporate the gender perspective in the Social Panorama and the Economic Survey;
- Produce sex-disaggregated information and use or devise indicators to incorporate the gender dimension;
- Make greater use of data from national household surveys, censuses and administrative records and from studies conducted within ECLAC.

Table 8

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES RELATING TO STAFF

- Include gender analysis activities in the terms of reference for consultants and in job descriptions for staff posts;
- Ensure that staff entering the system have experience or receive training in gender analysis;
- Strengthen internal capacity for gender analysis and gender planning in development.

With respect to the two main lines of ECLAC work, the regular work programme, approved by the Governments at the ECLAC biennial sessions, and the extrabudgetary projects, most respondents made suggestions related to projects, deeming it easier and more appropriate to incorporate gender analysis at the project level. This attitude is significant, because for gender mainstreaming to be effective, it must take place in both lines of work, and the regular work programme is the area that most clearly reflects the institutional approaches adopted by the organization.

The activities suggested are set out in tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

ACTIVITIES SUGGESTED FOR THE REGULAR WORK PROGRAMME

- Identify subprogrammes and subject areas in which the gender perspective can be incorporated;
- Prioritize topics, sectors and levels;
- Work with the corresponding division on defining and initiating concrete activities;
- Discuss with the Programme Planning and Operations Division and with each of the other divisions activities that can be integrated into their work programmes for 1998-1999 and 2000-2001.

Table 10

ACTIVITIES SUGGESTED AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

- Envisage gender analysis throughout the project cycle but especially in the initial stages;
- Include in the project document a sheet explaining the expected beneficial effects for men and women and considerations on the inclusion of the gender perspective, which will allow for follow-up and evaluation;
- Include a consultant on gender issues in the bimonthly follow-up meetings between the Project Management Unit and the executing teams;
- Analyse the new internal project evaluation system in order to incorporate mechanisms for assessing progress in gender mainstreaming;
- Design a major interdivisional project on gender with support from the Office of the Executive Secretary.

IV. NEW STRATEGY IDEAS EMERGING FROM THE DISCUSSIONS

At the various meetings and dialogues held with ECLAC professionals during the six months of the project's duration, further suggestions were made for a strategy for mainstreaming a gender perspective and completing the institutional analysis.

Three very important information and consultation meetings were organized jointly by the ECLAC project team and GTZ experts in the course of their coordination session.⁸ Generally speaking, these meetings were highly satisfactory, since most of the persons invited and whose attendance was considered indispensable on account of their role and activity in gender mainstreaming in ECLAC were present. Given their participation and collaboration, optimum results were achieved in terms of fulfilling objectives.

The meeting held with ECLAC senior officials and attended by most of the respondents or persons designated by them⁹ offered an opportunity to give them feedback on the results of the interviews and to elicit further suggestions and commitments thus initiating the institutional dialogue necessary for the implementation of a mainstreaming strategy.

The discussions centred on the following points:

⁸ Martina Kampman, chief GTZ consultant on gender policies and poverty reduction, and Barbara Hess, project officer for the ProEquidad project in Colombia.

⁹ See ECLAC, Informe de la reunión sobre estrategia de institucionalización del enfoque de género en el trabajo sustantivo de la CEPAL (LC/L.1088), Santiago, Chile, 16 December 1997.

- The commitment and political will of the Office of the Executive Secretary to push for a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective at ECLAC;
- The need to develop a systematic theoretical framework for the gender perspective in development, based mainly on the advances made in recent years, and to merge it conceptually with the ECLAC proposal for changing production patterns with social equity, for which it is proposed that specific studies should be carried out and published;
- The importance of having a recognizable ECLAC position and line of thought on the issue of gender;
- The urgency of moving from constitutional legitimacy, determined by mandates relating to the gender perspective, to substantive legitimacy;
- The feasibility of creating a task force or a standing high-level advisory group to support institutionalization of the gender perspective;
- The advisability of having the subject area addressed by the Women and Development Unit and its respective activities constitute a subprogramme in the programme of work for 2000-2001 up for approval at the next ECLAC biennial session, to ensure that it can pursue its role in mainstreaming more efficiently;
- The definition of a series of key ideas concerning the gender dimension to be reflected in the public policy proposals put forward by ECLAC to Latin American Governments;
- The need to devise instruments and methodologies for a proper and efficient application of the gender approach;
- The importance of furthering the idea that gender is a cross-cutting issue;
- The difficulties that would arise if it were left to individuals to bring the gender perspective into the mainstream of activities, as they saw fit, without defining mechanisms, procedures, responsibilities and incentives;
- The need to heighten awareness among staff so as to involve them not only in the concept but also in the outcome of mainstreaming;
- The certainty that although new resources may be needed, "we can always use what we have to better advantage";
- The advisability of combining institutionalization of the gender perspective with other processes of institutional change.

The following points, which emerged from the dialogue conducted at the other two meetings,¹⁰ are of particular relevance for the design of a strategy:

- The importance of ensuring that the gender perspective helps to reinforce interdivisional collaboration within ECLAC;
- The confusion that prevails as to whether promoting gender equality by eliminating obstacles to women's access to resources, decision-making and power and to opportunities for improving the quality of life and attaining independence is desirable not only for reasons of social justice or social equity but also because it would make for more efficient economies and sustainable development;
- The need for new and greater resources, since gender mainstreaming implies not only a fresh analysis but also additional work;
- The tendency to assume that including the gender perspective is an additional task and not a basic strategy for programming and policy design;
- The cognitive difficulty in associating the gender approach with macrosocial and macroeconomic problems;
- The lack of conceptual clarity and the limited diffusion of the gender perspective among the different agents and actors of development;
- The recognition of the limitations of current analyses which are not gender-sensitive in explaining certain changes in the situation of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

V. MAIN ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGY FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE, PRELIMINARY VERSION

The work of preparing a preliminary version of a strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective in the substantive work of ECLAC was initiated on the basis of the above-mentioned inputs, considered in the light of the institutional mission, the mandates for mainstreaming, the organizational structure, the functional description of the component parts of the institution, and the fundamental and regular procedures that form part of the work of ECLAC. This task was undertaken jointly by the ECLAC Women and Development Unit and the GTZ experts at the work and coordination meetings held between 20 and 30 October 1997. At the same time, preparations were made for the second phase of the project, which is expected to strengthen the process.

The next steps to be taken in the design and implementation of the strategy for the period 1998-2000, which is presented in the next section, are as follows:

¹⁰ One of these meetings was held with the focal points for women's issues in the divisions, project coordinators and experts on gender (22 October 1997) and the other was one of the series of "reuniones de los jueves", a regular open-discussion forum at ECLAC (30 October 1997).

- Circulate the preliminary version of the strategy among the management staff and other staff members of ECLAC for comment and commitments and in order to identify possible areas of collaboration;
- Identify the components of the definitive strategy (objectives, activities, actors, resources) in conjunction with the persons involved and reach formal agreements;
- Make the strategy known to the divisions, the agencies with which ECLAC works and other organizations;
- Carry out the activities outlined in the strategy;
- Monitor implementation of the strategy to assess progress and identify new support requirements;
- Evaluate the implementation of the strategy.

VI. STRATEGIES

1. History of the process of institutionalizing the gender perspective in ECLAC

- In compliance with the provisions of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, the Commission decided, at the eleventh special session of the Committee of the Whole held in Havana in 1977, to establish a special unit for the integration of women in development. Since then, ECLAC has acted as technical secretariat for its member countries on women's issues. To date, the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean has held seven sessions and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference have held 25 meetings.
- In accordance with mandates handed down by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the regional commissions act as United Nations focal points for women's issues, ECLAC serves as the focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- By resolution 483 of the twenty-first session of ECLAC held in 1986, member States mandated the Commission to bring the gender perspective into the mainstream of all its activities and, in particular, to examine sectoral and intersectoral problems in all the programmes of the ECLAC system with a view to ensuring that women participate on an equal footing with men in development.
- In 1993, the Office of the Executive Secretary made an important step in this direction. In December, the Women and Development Unit was made a part of that office, thereby acquiring the authority to require the cooperation of the other substantive divisions and units of ECLAC in institutionalizing the gender perspective into their projects and programmes.

- In 1994, when the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 was adopted, the member States meeting for the sixth Regional Conference for the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean requested the ECLAC secretariat to carry out the relevant follow-up activities.
- In 1996, the Women and Development Unit started to collaborate on a regular basis with the Programme Planning and Operations Division with a view to the systematic inclusion of the gender perspective in ECLAC projects.

2. Institutional framework

The ECLAC mission

“... the secretariat has directed its activities on the understanding that ECLAC, as a regional organ of the United Nations, has as its current mission to contribute to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean, collaborating interactively with member governments in the comprehensive analysis of development processes and in the resulting provision of operational services. ECLAC focuses its analytical work on the design of public policies and facilitates the implementation of such policies, concentrating operational services in the areas of specialized information, advisory assistance, training and support for regional and international cooperation” (LC/G.1899(SES.26/4)).

Insofar as the ECLAC proposal for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for changing production patterns with social equity considers development to be a process of change that should be instrumented in reducing existing inequalities among the population, gender relationships become an important focus of reflection and analysis.

Experience has shown that economic growth does not necessarily or automatically lead to social equity. The ECLAC proposal for changing production patterns with social equity maintains that growth that is consistent with equity, environmental sustainability and democracy is not only desirable but also feasible. To this end, it is necessary to improve analyses of socio-economic conditions in the region and to make them more specific, taking into account the wide range of existing situations, including inequalities between women and men, the ultimate purpose being to combat poverty.

The three central elements of the integrated approach to changing production patterns with social equity require a gender perspective in order to be more effective. The underlying rationale in changing production patterns is to deliberately and systematically incorporate **technical progress** in order to generate increasing levels of sustainable productivity, **productive employment** and **investment in human resources**, which will contribute both to efficiency and social equity.

According to ECLAC, social equity can be improved by progress towards the three following objectives, for which the incorporation of the gender dimension in policies is a prerequisite:

- (a) Minimizing the proportion of persons and households living in conditions deemed socially, economically and politically unacceptable; to fulfil this objective, any poverty reduction policy or programme must improve the status of women, and specific factors must be taken into consideration in order to ensure the success of such policies or programmes;
- (b) Promoting the development of the potential capacity of all groups in society, gradually eliminating legally established privileges and discrimination and inequality of any kind, including those based on social, ethnic or geographic background or on gender; promoting equality of opportunity implies paying express attention to the needs, interests and views of underprivileged groups, which include women, and, where appropriate, taking affirmative action, on a temporary basis, to redress the situation;
- (c) Ensuring that power, wealth and the fruits of progress are not concentrated in such a way as to restrict the freedom of present and future generations; to this end, it is necessary to recognize and enhance the power of women to make individual and group decisions on forms of organization, political participation, their reproductive role and economic participation, so as to ensure their independence on an equal basis with men in different sectors of the population.

3. Overall objective of the strategy

To mainstream the gender perspective into cooperation for development provided by ECLAC to countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to ensure equal benefits for both men and women.

4. Specific objectives

Objective 1: To integrate the gender perspective into the activities of the regular programme and into ECLAC development cooperation projects

Activities:

- 1. Identify, on a joint basis, subject areas and activities of the regular programme in which the gender approach could appropriately be integrated in selected ECLAC divisions;
- 2. Draw up and implement a work plan incorporating gender analysis in selected divisions;
- 3. Strengthen the internal capacity of selected divisions in order to incorporate gender analysis into their work;
- 4. Facilitate technical and policy dialogue between the divisions and counterpart agencies in selected countries on gender and sectoral issues;

5. Integrate the gender perspective into selected development cooperation projects;
6. Socialize successful practices in the remaining ECLAC divisions and units.

Objective 2: To incorporate the gender perspective into the substantive debates and biennial sessions of ECLAC

Activities:

1. Propose a conceptual framework on gender analysis and planning in development for use within ECLAC;
2. Draft a policy paper reflecting a gender-based analysis of the proposal, "Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns: An Integrated Approach" (LC/G.1701/Rev.1-P);
3. Identify, within selected divisions, sectoral priorities which match and reinforce national priorities relating to gender and which could subsequently be the basis for conceptual debates together with topics central to the work of ECLAC;
4. Organize discussion forums with the Executive Secretary and divisions on priority issues in ECLAC and their links with the gender perspective.

Objective 3: To develop technical and methodological support instruments to facilitate mainstreaming of the gender perspective

Activities:

1. Promote the compilation and use of data disaggregated by sex; gather and evaluate existing gender-specific indicators and indices and develop new indicators in accordance with the requirements of the regular ECLAC work programme;
2. Integrate gender analysis into all phases of the project cycle and develop the requisite support instruments;
3. Prepare a guide explaining the main principles of gender analysis and gender-related planning in development;
4. Disseminate the information generated and the methodological procedures used to countries of the region and donors.

Objective 4: To generate mechanisms of interdivisional cooperation in the implementation of the strategy

Activities:

1. Identify and establish a gender consultancy group to support the divisions and units in mainstreaming gender analysis into their activities and into their dialogue with Governments of the region;
2. Set up an interdivisional group to monitor, follow up and report on institutionalization of the gender perspective in ECLAC activities;
3. Link the strategy for institutionalizing the gender perspective with other institutional changes in ECLAC.

Objective 5: To compile, systematize and distribute information on gender and the various sectoral issues addressed by ECLAC

Activities:

1. Identify the informational, statistical and bibliographical requirements of the divisions and units with a view to integrating the gender perspective into their subject areas;
2. Collect and distribute information to the divisions and units and to the press;
3. Set up a data base through the Internet and Intranet;
4. Make periodic evaluations of use and preferences.

Annex

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Mr. Héctor Assael
Director
International Trade, Finance and Transport
Division

Mr. Raúl Atria
Senior Regional Adviser
Extra-budgetary Resource Mobilization Unit

Mr. Reynaldo Bajraj
Deputy Executive Secretary

Mr. Daniel Blanchard
Director
CELADE

Mr. Axel Dourojeanni
Deputy Director
Environment and Development Division

Mr. Rolando Franco
Director
Social Development Division

Mr. Raúl García Buchaca
Evaluation Officer
Programme Planning and Operations Division

Ms. Helga Hoffmann
Director
Environment and Development Division

Ms. Miriam Krawczyk
Chief
Women and Development Unit
Assistant Secretary of the Commission

Ms. Laura López
Chief
Information Services Unit

Mr. Arturo Nuñez del Prado
Director
ILPES

Mr. Ernesto Ottone
Secretary of the Commission

Mr. Joseph Ramos
Director
Division of Production, Productivity and
Management

Mr. Pedro Sáinz
Director
Statistics and Economic Projections Division

Ms. Barbara Stallings
Director
Economic Development Division

Ms. Adriana Valdés
Director
Documents and Publications Division

Mr. Dietrich Von Graevenitz
Chief
Project Management Unit