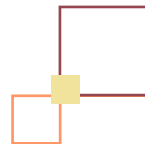




Gender Mainstreaming in Latin American Parliaments

A Work in Progress



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Foreword

The figures for women parliamentarians in Latin America are slowly increasing, with women currently holding 23% of the seats in lower houses or unicameral legislatures. Less encouraging is the fact that a greater number of women in parliament does not automatically mean better representation of women's interests. This begs the deeper question of how the machine of parliament can be made to function in ways that are geared to the needs and interests of both men and women.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has sought to cast light on these questions in its global study of "Gender Sensitive Parliaments." The present volume looks at Latin America, and in preparing this assessment of the gender sensitivity of the region's parliaments, the IPU partnered with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

The study draws on questionnaires and interviews with parliamentarians, and five national case studies which aim to pinpoint good practice. It describes some good developments in the region in terms of improved quota legislation and the establishment of gender committees and caucuses. On the other hand, it finds that women are under-represented in senior positions; there are few if any formal rules designed to promote gender equality; parliamentarians continue to grapple with difficulties in balancing work and family life; and a host of unwritten rules tend to make life harder for the women legislators.

This study shows that even though a good number of laws and regulations have been put into place, laws are not enough. More work needs to be done on education and changing traditional mindsets, through which men come to see gender equality not as a strictly female objective but as an achievement of deep and lasting value to society as a whole. The challenges set out in the report suggest a need for wider debate on these issues.

International IDEA and IPU thank the project collaborators and the many participants in the study who gave generously of their time and without whom this study could not have been produced.



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This study is the result of a joint initiative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) to create a document that evaluates the situation of parliaments in the region on gender mainstreaming, in addition to revealing good practices as well as the significant work still required for Latin American parliaments.

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Executive summary

The past decade has seen a significant rise in the number of women participating in national parliaments in the region, although results vary by country. The enactment of women's or gender quota laws in 12 Latin American countries has played a key role in this increase. Given the positive results of these laws, efforts to establish gender quotas should be promoted in countries that have not adopted gender legislation. In addition, the results achieved to date underscore the need for the establishment of parity-based quotas. The laws enacted recently in Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador are particularly interesting in this regard.

The increased participation of women in some of the national parliaments in the region has enabled them to gain access to parliamentary leadership and decision-making positions. Nonetheless, the glass ceiling suggests a need to modify the procedures and standing orders of parliaments in the countries of the region in an effort to guarantee more equitable participation by men and women parliamentarians in all legislative bodies. Encouraging signs were identified in some countries.

The formal rules regulating the working conditions of parliamentarians in the region have not generally been adapted to the growing presence of women in national parliaments. These rules do not promote systematic, concrete measures to foster gender equality among parliamentarians, thus calling for further reform.

Unwritten rules may also generate situations that are discriminatory towards women parliamentarians. Given that parliamentarians of both sexes contribute to forming public opinion, parliaments should strive to become exemplary institutions in order to reverse this trend.

Some countries have launched initiatives to introduce gender mainstreaming into their national parliaments. The implementation and strengthening of these measures in all parliaments of the region would greatly contribute to strengthening democracy.

The growing presence of women in the majority of parliaments in Latin America has expanded and enriched parliamentary agendas. Moreover, some important laws on gender issues and women's rights have been enacted in recent years. In this sense, cross-party caucuses of women parliamentarians are the best means to this end. Generally, men parliamentarians provide only passive support for legislative initiatives on gender equality

or women's needs and interests—not realizing that they form part of gender relations. Training to facilitate this understanding would be beneficial.

The findings of this report indicate that members of national parliaments in the region continue to face situations of inequality due to their sex. The practices of political parties or caucuses operating in national parliaments play a fundamental role in promoting or discouraging change in this area.

Introduction¹

Currently, gender equality in political participation is an indicator that is often taken into account when evaluating the level of development in democracies. Yet before reaching this point, women were systematically excluded from exercising political rights for decades. In Latin America, as in many regions of the world, women obtained the right to vote much later than men. For a long time after achieving the right to vote, women only occasionally participated in politics as representatives, or in decision-making and leadership positions. The arguments made to justify this situation referred to women's supposed lack of interest in politics, their limited capacity to work on political affairs and their lack of adequate experience of conducting themselves with ease in political institutions.

The delayed inclusion of women in national parliaments placed them in the difficult position of being 'newcomers.' They also faced challenges linked to adapting to codes and rules of the game in parliamentary life which were established long before their arrival. While the significant increase in women's participation in positions of political power constitutes first and foremost an act of justice, it also creates expectations regarding their role in promoting gender issues and women's interests or needs.

In the light of this complex scenario, this report describes and analyses the advances made in the region in terms of women's access to national parliaments, as well as the number of women decision-makers and the level of gender mainstreaming in such parliaments.

The report draws mainly on qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the *Gender-sensitive Parliaments* research project, carried out jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). Three separate questionnaires designed specifically for the purposes of this research were sent to the region's parliaments: questionnaire A for parliamentary authorities, questionnaire B for party caucuses, and questionnaire C for individual parliamentarians of both sexes. In addition, case studies were conducted in Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru and individual interviews were carried out with parliamentarians from different countries.² Although these sources provided valuable information, not all the parliaments in the countries of the region completed the questionnaires, which limited research efforts.

This report begins by presenting the gender composition of parliaments in the region and some of their decision-making bodies, taking into account the existence of affirmative action mechanisms designed to promote the presence of women in these entities.

Following is an analysis of the formal and informal rules guiding parliamentary working conditions. Next, issues related to gender integration in standing parliamentary committees are examined, as well as cross-party women's caucuses and parliamentarians' positions on gender-focused parliamentary initiatives. The report closes by drawing conclusions with respect to the main trends identified in the region, with an emphasis on pending challenges and identifying good practices.

1. Women's participation in national parliaments in Latin America

1.1 The importance of affirmative action mechanisms in facilitating more systematic access for women to national parliaments

It was not until the early 1990s that opportunities began to open up for the increased inclusion of women in positions of political power. In this context, the adoption of women's or gender quotas in over a dozen Latin American countries played a vital role. Unlike the experience in Europe,³ affirmative action mechanisms were implemented through reforms of the electoral systems. As a result, the political parties in the countries of the region that have implemented these measures are required to include minimum percentages, which vary by country, of women on their lists of candidates for national parliamentary elections.

Currently, 12 of the 18 countries of the region have a women's or gender quota law,⁴ but their contents vary widely. These laws differ in the minimum percentages for women's inclusion on candidate lists, which range from 20 per cent to 50 per cent. There are also differences with regard to the characteristics of the electoral systems, the specificity of the wording of the quota laws, the existence or lack of sanctions in cases of non-compliance by the political parties, and monitoring to ensure the full application of any provisions.⁵

The importance of these factors becomes evident when evaluating the effectiveness of women's or gender quotas in the region (see Table 1). In every country where women represent over 20 per cent of the seats in parliament, there is a national quota law requiring this minimum. Nonetheless, some of these laws have been more effective than others. Brazil implemented a gender quota system to ensure a minimum participation rate of 30 per cent by women candidates on parliamentary election lists, but women's participation in the lower house remains at just 8.8 per cent. Similarly, Mexico has a law stipulating a minimum of 40 per cent female candidates on electoral lists, but women parliamentarians in the upper house represent just 19.5 per cent of the upper house⁶. In addition, in Panama, women parliamentarians account for just 8.5 per cent of the lower house, despite the fact that a quota law stipulates a minimum of 30 per cent participation by women on electoral lists.

Table 1: Percentage of women in national parliaments and gender quotas in effect at the time of the most recent election

Country	Gender composition ⁽¹⁾				Upper house or senate				Quotas for electoral lists ⁽²⁾			Year law was passed
	Lower or single house		% women		Elections	Total seats	% women	% of female candidates	Provision of placement	Sanctions for non-compliance	Year law was passed	
	Elections	Total seats	Elections	Total seats								
Argentina ⁽³⁾	2009	257	38.5	2009	72	36.1	30%	x	x	1991		
Bolivia	2009	130	25.4	2009	36	47.2	50% ⁽⁴⁾	x	n/d	2010		
Brazil ⁽⁵⁾	2006	513	8.8	2006	81	12.3	30%			1997		
Chile	2009	120	14.2	2009	38	13.2	NO					
Colombia ⁽⁶⁾	2010	166	10.8	2010	102	n/d	NO					
Costa Rica ⁽⁷⁾	2010	57	38.6	---	---	---	40%	x	x	1997		
Dominican Republic	2010	183	20.8	2010	32	9.4%	33% ⁽⁸⁾		x	2000		
Ecuador	2009	124	32.3	---	---	---	30%		x	2000		
El Salvador	2009	84	19.0	---	---	---	NO					
Guatemala	2007	158	12.0	---	---	---	NO					
Honduras	2009	128	18.0	---	---	---	30%	n/d	n/d	2004		
Mexico	2009	500	26.2	2006	128	19.5	40%	x	x	2009		
Nicaragua	2006	92	20.7	---	---	---	NO					
Panama	2009	71	8.5	---	---	---	30%	n/d	n/d	1997		
Paraguay	2008	80	12.5	2008	45	15.6	20%	x	x	1996		
Peru	2006	120	27.5	---	---	---	30%		x	1997		
Uruguay ⁽⁹⁾	2009	99	15.2	2009	31	12.9	NO					
Venezuela	2005	166	17.5	---	---	---	NO					

(1) Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wrm-e/classif.htm>, except in the cases indicated.

(2) Source: Quota project, case studies.

(3) Source for percentage of women parliamentarians: www.diputados.gob.ar and www.senado.gov.ar

(4) For multi-member districts.

(5) For proportionally elected positions (lower house).

(6) Source: Questionnaire A.

(7) The 2009 reform of the electoral code introduced gender parity in candidate lists, but it was not applied in the 2010 elections.

(8) Only the lower house.

(9) For the 2014 elections the women's quota will be 30%.

Beyond the importance of the multiple factors that determine the efficiency of women's or gender quotas, study results point to the need to promote the implementation of gender parity. Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador, where legal parity quotas were recently established, can serve as models in this regard.

In addition, voluntary quotas exist in some countries. These measures are implemented by political parties in countries without quota laws. In countries with quota laws, voluntary quotas have been established to increase the percentage of women on electoral lists to more than the minimum percentages stipulated by law.

Table 2: Voluntary quotas of political parties for parliamentary candidate lists in Latin America

Country	Party	Quota
Bolivia ⁽¹⁾	Unidad Nacional (UN)	50% of each sex
Chile ⁽²⁾	Partido por la Democracia (PPD)	No more than 60% of either sex
	Partido Socialista de Chile (PS)	No more than 60% of either sex
	Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC)	20% women
Colombia	Movimiento Mira	50% of each sex
Dominican Republic ⁽³⁾	Partido Revolucionario Dominicano	33% women
	Partido Reformista Social Cristiano	33% women
El Salvador	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional FMLN	35% women
Guatemala	Unidad Nacional de Esperanza (UNE)	40% women
	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca	A minimum of 30% of each sex
Mexico	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	50% of each sex
Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN)	30% women
	Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC)	40% of women and young people (combined)
	Alianza del Movimiento Renovador Sandinista (MRS)	A minimum of 40% of each sex
Paraguay	Asociación Nacional Republicana/Partido Colorado (ANR)	30% women
	Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA)	33% women
	Partido Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos	30% women
Uruguay	Partido Socialista	In accordance with the number of women party members in each district
	Vertiente Artiguista	33% women ⁽⁴⁾

(1) Beginning in the 2010 elections, legal parity quotas are applied for multi-member districts.

(2) According to the source, the measures are not applied at all or at least not systematically.

(3) The legal quota applies only for the lower house whereas the party quotas apply to both houses.

(4) Since the 2014 elections, a legal quota of 30% women will apply for electoral lists.

Sources: <http://www.quotaproject.org> (November 2010).

Authors: Vivian Roza, Beatriz Llanos, Gisela Garzón de la Roza

1.2 Gender composition of parliamentary chambers

In 2010, 21.4 per cent of the parliamentarians in Latin America were women. This regional average surpasses the global average (19.2%) and is slightly below the average for European parliaments (22%).⁷ The average hides significant gaps among the countries of the region. In Argentina, Costa Rica and Ecuador, women parliamentarians represent over 30 per cent of the members of lower or single houses. In Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru, women's participation ranges from 20 per cent to 30 per cent, whereas women account for 10 to 20 per cent of parliamentarians in Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. In Brazil and Panama, women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians. In terms of gender composition, the upper houses of Bolivia and Argentina are noteworthy, with women accounting for 47.2 per cent and 36.1 per cent of their members, respectively. In all other countries with bicameral systems,⁸ women's participation in the upper houses ranges from 10 per cent to 20 per cent (Table 1).

1.3 Gender composition of parliamentary leadership and decision-making positions

The increase in the average number of women serving in parliaments in the region in recent years raises the question of whether this translates into greater access for women to positions of parliamentary leadership. These bodies have considerable influence over the decision-making processes of the parliaments. Moreover, the composition of these bodies is often determined based on the number of seats held by the different political forces in the respective houses. In other words, appointments to leadership positions imply negotiations among parties to determine which political party will fill each position. Thus, it is important to analyse the extent to which political parties consider gender mainstreaming when determining the membership of these bodies.

In the countries in the region, no formal provisions were identified for ensuring the equitable appointment of men and women parliamentarians to key positions in parliamentary houses. The inclusion of women in leadership positions depends largely on the will of the political parties, although the quantitative presence of women parliamentarians often also plays a role.

If you have a large share of women [...] this will necessarily change who fills positions of power. It also affects possibilities for negotiation [...]. This does not mean that there is internalized change [...] and an assimilated change. I think it has more to do with strength (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).⁹

Costa Rica: Legal measures to promote affirmative action in parliamentary leadership positions

Costa Rica provides a good example of affirmative action measures to guarantee equal access to leadership positions for men and women parliamentarians. As a result of numerous petitions filed by men and women representatives, a legal ruling was passed ordering compliance with measures on the proportional composition of committees and the governing bodies of parliament. Although this has not led to the inclusion of a specific provision in the regulations of the Legislative Assembly, the ruling must be applied to the board of the house and its standing committees.¹⁰

1.3.1 Leadership positions in national parliaments¹¹

In October 2010, of the 18 countries studied, only Chile and Uruguay had a woman speaker in its lower house. All the upper houses of the region were led by men parliamentarians. A woman parliamentarian presided over the upper house in Bolivia between January and October 2010,¹² and in Colombia, one of the countries of the region with the lowest participation of women in the national parliament, women parliamentarians presided over the lower house in 1999–2000 and 2004–2005, and over the upper house in 2005–2008. A woman served as speaker of the national parliament of Peru in 2006–2007.

Women serve as one or more of the several deputy speakers in the lower houses of 10 countries, while men occupy all these positions in the other eight countries. In the case of the nine upper houses, only three have women deputy speakers. In sum, women serve in leadership positions in 12 of the 18 lower houses and hold some of these positions in three of the nine upper houses of national parliaments. In four countries in the region, no woman holds a parliamentary leadership position (Table 3).

Table 3. Gender composition of decision-making bodies of Latin American parliaments, 2010

Country	% of women		Lower or single house				% of women		Upper house			
	Total N°	Chaired by a woman	Chairperson	Deputy chairpersons	Total N°	Chaired by a woman	Total N°	Chaired by a woman	Chairperson	Deputy chairpersons	Total N°	Chaired by a woman
Argentina	1	0	0	1	3	1	36.1	1	0	3	0	
Bolivia	1	0	0	1	2	1	47.2	1	0	1	1	
Brazil	1	0	0	0	2	0	12.3	1	0	2	1	
Chile	1	1	1	0	2	0	13.2	1	0	1	0	
Colombia	1	0	0	0	2	0	No data	1	0	2	1	
Costa Rica	1	0	0	2	2	2	**	**	**	**	**	
Dominican Republic	1	0	0	1	1	1	9.4	**	**	**	**	
Ecuador	1	0	0	1	2	1	**	**	**	**	**	
El Salvador	1	0	0	0	5	0	**	**	**	**	**	
Guatemala	1	0	0	0	3	0	**	**	**	**	**	
Honduras	1	0	0	3	6	3	**	**	**	**	**	
Mexico	1	0	0	0	3	0	19.5	**	0	3	0	
Nicaragua	1	0	0	0	3	0	**	1	**	**	**	
Panama	1	0	0	1	2	1	**	**	**	**	**	
Paraguay	1	0	0	1	2	1	15.6	**	0	2	0	
Peru	1	0	0	1	2	1	**	1	**	**	**	
Uruguay	1	1	1	0	4	0	12.9	1	0	3	0	
Venezuela	1	0	0	1	2	1	**	1	**	**	**	
% of positions held by women			11.8	25.5		0.0	22.4*				23.5	

* Regional average of women parliamentarians in parliamentary houses.

Sources: National parliamentary websites, accessed October 2010; case studies; and questionnaire A.

1.3.2 Standing committees

Despite the structural differences that exist among the standing parliamentary committees of the countries in the region, as well as the limited availability of data on the composition of their authorities, it is possible to identify certain trends (Table 4). In most of the cases analysed, a significant number of women parliamentarians served as chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of standing committees. While there is a continuing trend—to varying degrees—in the region of male over-representation compared with their level of participation in the respective houses, the proportion of women chairpersons of these committees in Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru and Uruguay is, on average, proportional to or higher than their level of participation in parliament.

Table 4. Gender composition of authorities or standing committees, 2009–2010

Country	% of women in house	Total chairpersons	Chair				Vice-chair				
			Women		Men		Total vice-chairpersons		Women		Men
			N°	%	N°	%		N°	%	N°	%
Argentina ³											
Lower house	42.0	45	18	40.0	27	60.0	84	36	42.9	48	57.1
Upper house	37.5	25	10	40.0	15	60.0	22	3	13.6	19	86.4
Bolivia											
Lower house	25.4	12	2	16.7	10	83.3	12	1	8.3	11	91.7
Chile											
Lower house	14.2	24	3	12.5	21	87.5	s/d	s/d		s/d	
Upper house	13.2	18	2	11.1	16	88.9	s/d	s/d		s/d	
Colombia											
Lower house	10.8	11	0	0.0	11	100.0	11	0	0.0	11	100.0
Costa Rica											
Single house	38.6	28	10	35.7	18	64.3	Does not exist				
Mexico											
Lower house	26.2	44	8	18.2	36	81.8	Does not exist				
Upper house	19.5	57	9	15.8	48	84.2	Does not exist				
Peru											
Single house	27.5	22	7	31.8	15	68.2	22	10	45.5	12	54.5
Uruguay											
Upper house	12.9	16	2	12.5	14	87.5	16	2	12.5	14	87.5
Total	24.3	302	71	23.4	231	76.5	167	52	31.1	115	68.9

Source: Questionnaire A and case studies.

Given the lack of formal regulations on equal access for women parliamentarians to leadership positions, this trend is encouraging, notwithstanding the cases of under-representation of women parliamentarians in some countries.

Mexico: Legal initiative for the proportional participation of men and women as committee chairs in the lower house

A bill calling for the lower house to establish quotas to promote a proportional distribution of committee chairs among men and women was introduced in Mexico but the initiative was not approved.¹⁴

Given the large structural differences that exist between the committees in each country, only preliminary trends could be identified with respect to the types of committee presided over by women. According to the available information, committees devoted to what are traditionally considered 'women's issues', such as those connected to the family, health, disabilities, education, and women's interests and needs, are more likely to be chaired by women parliamentarians, whereas committees that address topics considered 'high profile', and which are frequently given more weight and prestige, such as finance and budgetary concerns, domestic policy and foreign affairs, tend to be chaired by men.

However, in some cases women parliamentarians chair committees on the other side of this stereotypical divide. These include the committees on constitutional affairs, national defence and general legislation in Argentina, on domestic policy in Chile and on foreign affairs in Mexico and Peru. By contrast, according to available data, no committee on finance or budget issues is currently chaired by a woman. Table 5 lists the committees chaired by women in four national parliaments in the region.

Table 5: Committees chaired by women parliamentarians in Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Peru

Country	Lower/single house	Upper house
Argentina (2009)	18 of 45 committees <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constitutional affairs 2. Trade 3. Culture 4. Economics and Regional Development; 5. Education 6. Energy and Fuels 7. Family, Women, Children and Adolescents 8. Impeachment 9. General Legislation 10. Criminal Legislation 11. Freedom of Expression 12. Mining 13. Population and Human Development 14. Prevention of Addictions and Control of Drug Trafficking 15. Monitoring of Tax Laws 16. The Elderly 17. Transportation 18. Housing and Urban Planning 	10 of 25 committees <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agriculture, Livestock and Fishing 2. Administrative and Municipal Affairs 3. Federal Taxes 4. National Defence 5. Regional Economies, Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 6. Education and Culture 7. Population and Human Development 8. Health and Sports 9. Public Safety and Drug Trafficking 10. Tourism
Bolivia (2009/2010)	2 of 12 committees <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Rights 2. Sustainable Development 	No committee of the upper house is chaired by a woman parliamentarian
Costa Rica (2009/2010)	10 of 28 committees <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government and Administration 2. Social Affairs 3. Agricultural Affairs 4. Special Appointments 5. Publications 6. Women 7. Tourism 8. Education, dossier No. 16.918 9. Electoral Reforms and Political Parties, dossier No. 16.212 10. Special Regulations, dossier No. 16.217 	Single chamber
Peru (2009/2010)	7 of 22 committees <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreign Trade and Tourism 2. Constitution and Regulations 3. Consumer Defence and Public Service Regulatory Agencies 4. Women and Social Development 5. Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian Peoples, Environment and Ecology 6. Foreign Relations 7. Health, Population, Family and Disabled Persons 	Single chamber

Sources: Argentina: Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, op.cit; Bolivia: Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, op.cit; Costa Rica: García Q., Anabel Isabel, op.cit; Peru: Llanos, Beatriz, op. cit.

2. Parliamentary procedures: formal and informal rules

Members of national parliaments perform their duties within the framework of formal and informal rules. The former are defined by the standing orders and procedures of the parliament, as well as codes of conduct, national laws, and so on. The latter are built largely on daily interactions between men and women parliamentarians.

2.1 Formal parliamentary rules

The results of the analysis of formal parliamentary regulations suggest that parliaments in the region have yet to adapt their procedures and standing orders to ensure that men and women parliamentarians can carry out their work under conditions of equality. Examples are given below that illustrate the impact of this omission on the opportunities for men and women parliamentarians to achieve their professional legislative goals.

2.1.1 Maternity and paternity leave

Analysis of the results from questionnaire A and of the case studies demonstrates that the systems for maternity and paternity leave currently in effect in national parliaments in the region are usually regulated by national employment laws. These generally stipulate pre- and post-natal maternity leave of several weeks and paternity leave of a few days. No cases were identified where parliaments implemented their own policies in this respect, which could have served, among other things, as a good example for national legislation and to promote more equitable participation in childcare by men and women.

According to the information available, national parliaments in the region do not have any procedures for filling vacancies when parliamentarians take leave. This situation frequently poses difficulties, particularly for women parliamentarians, when, for example, they must attend for important votes in the plenary or participate in key debates in committees and are therefore unable to take their full maternity leave. The testimony of a Colombian parliamentarian illustrates how such omissions in the provisions with respect to women's participation in parliaments can lead to extreme situations.

Last year we faced a real drama. Female members of the parliament who were pregnant were at risk of losing their seats when they took maternity leave because an amendment was introduced which stated that a parliamentarian would lose his or her seat if he or she did not attend a certain number of sessions. Since women are largely invisible in these positions, the issue of pregnant

women was not addressed. Obviously, we raised a fuss. As we won a majority of votes, we can at least be mothers and continue to hold a seat. It was a tough battle (woman parliamentarian, Colombia).¹⁵

Costa Rica: Petition to the Supreme Court of Elections to appoint a substitute during maternity leave

A Costa Rican parliamentarian, Leda Zamora Ch., asked the Supreme Court of Elections to authorise the temporary appointment of a substitute parliamentarian to replace her during her upcoming four-month maternity leave (Report No. LZCH-42-08). The Tribunal declared that it was not qualified to address the matter, but at least the problem was brought to light.¹⁶

2.1.2 Parliamentary infrastructure

With respect to the infrastructure of national parliaments in the region, there is no evidence that the growing presence of women in parliaments has led to modifications to parliamentary buildings and services. For example, only two of the 10 countries in this study (Argentina and Bolivia) provided childcare services and only four (Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Peru) had made provisions for breastfeeding mothers. Thus, it is not surprising that a majority of parliamentarians interviewed reported that childcare services were either limited or non-existent,¹⁷ and that, consequently, improvements in this area had been requested.¹⁸

"to allocate a budget to cover women's needs as a mother, childcare, recreation for children and school and university subsidies" (male parliamentarian, Colombia).

2.1.3 Parliamentary working hours

A key issue for facilitating conditions for the equal participation of men and women in politics is the adaptation of parliamentary working hours to the needs of family life. Table 6 demonstrates, however, that most of the parliaments studied continue to hold late night plenary sessions and do not adapt parliamentary sessions to the school calendar.

Table 6: Parliamentary working hours and sessions

Measure	Responses		Countries that apply the measure
	Yes	No	
Night sittings discontinued	2	9	Peru, Mexico
Sessions aligned with school calendar	1	9	Argentina

Sources: Questionnaire A; interview with Mexican woman parliamentarian

In addition to plenary sessions, parliamentarians work in committee and in party caucuses or other bodies, and hold informal meetings that are often vital for political negotiations. Parliamentary working hours may be inconvenient for some male political representatives, as the testimony of the Bolivian parliamentarian below illustrates, but the sexual division of labour that persists in the region poses particular difficulties for women parliamentarians. This is echoed in the testimony of a former woman parliamentarian from Argentina.

[...] you have to understand that the parliament is a place of political pressure and at times of social and political tension where there are no schedules, no dates and no days. To attempt to be guided by criteria on labour welfare in a centre as political as parliament is simply out of place. It is not the place to discuss these issues (male parliamentarian, Bolivia).¹⁹

The biggest difference between men and women in the parliament can be observed when the session ends. The women rush home while the men decide where they're going to eat. And that makes a big difference in the dedication of men—full time without any other concerns. We women accommodate everything, our agenda in the parliament, our dedication, our time, to the other responsibilities we have at home, which continue to be a priority and largely the responsibility of women. This is where the main difference lies (woman ex-parliamentarian, Argentina).²⁰

Faced with this double responsibility, one Colombian woman parliamentarian interviewed described how women parliamentarians regard the disadvantages they suffer as a result of social factors and the insensitivity of some of their male colleagues as a personal challenge to demonstrate their capacity to deal with their multiple obligations:

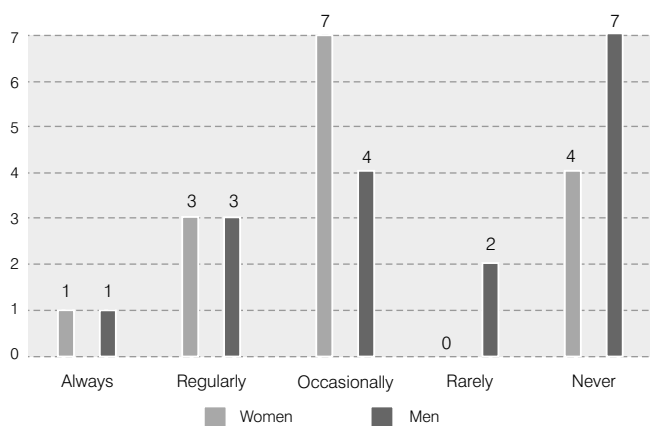
We wanted to change the culture of working hours but could not. We had to show that we could do everything the same. To work such an exhausting schedule and continue in the same roles, for which reason we had to make adjustments within families and to take better advantage of time spent with children so that we could fulfil our duties and change the idea that 'or if they can't they have to resign' (woman parliamentarian, Colombia).

The testimony of a Bolivian representative illustrates the toll this takes on many women parliamentarians.

So, it's kind of difficult, but we manage [...]: we get up at four in the morning and by eight everything is ready and we can then go to work (woman parliamentarian, Bolivia).²¹

This is evident in the fact that two-thirds of the parliamentarians surveyed have faced—at least occasionally—problems in reconciling their family life with their political commitments. Breaking down the results by sex shows that women parliamentarians are more affected by this problem than are their male colleagues.

Figure 1: Problems reconciling family life with political commitments



Source: Questionnaire A.

2.1.4 The use of language in parliaments

One aspect that may shed light on the current situation of participation by women and men in public life is the use of gender-sensitive language. Parliaments should serve as a model in the use of forms of expression that avoid subsuming women to generic masculine terms, but the results of the questionnaires and case studies indicate that this issue is not generally addressed in the procedures of the parliaments of the region.

Costa Rica and Peru: Formal initiatives to introduce gender-sensitive language

The parliaments of Costa Rica and Peru are the only ones in the region that have made a formal effort to introduce gender-sensitive language. Costa Rica has agreed to use gender-sensitive language in developing its new parliamentary website,²² and Peru has passed Law 28983 on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, which stipulates in article 4, paragraph 3, that the government should incorporate and promote gender-sensitive language in all written communications and documents prepared by government bodies at all levels.²³

Although Mexico does not have formal provisions on the topic, some good practices do exist.

Mexico: Good practices in the use of language

In Mexico, sexist language is not used in parliamentary plenary sessions. If someone makes the mistake of using it, he must face the consequences of the reaction en masse of women parliamentarians as well as the criticism of men parliamentarians and the press attending the sessions.²⁴

Bolivia and Ecuador: Gender-sensitive language in official documents

Bolivia and Ecuador also exhibit good practices, although these are not mentioned in the regulations or internal procedures of parliament. The 2008 Bolivian Constitution and the 2009 Electoral Law and Democracy Code of Ecuador were written using gender-sensitive language, avoiding the use of generic masculine terms.

2.1.5 Parliamentary rules for addressing sexual harassment

An analysis of the information provided in the responses to the questionnaires and by the case studies indicates that parliaments in the region have not included specific clauses in their standing orders and procedures to protect members from sexual harassment.

Responses to inquiries regarding the incidence of the sexual harassment of parliamentarians suggest that it is not a common problem. Of the 33 parliamentarians surveyed, three women reported that they had *occasionally* been the victim of inappropriate comments or harassment due to their sex, and three women parliamentarians and one man parliamentarian said they had experienced these situations rarely. There are laws to prevent and punish sexual harassment in the different areas of society in various countries. Table 7 provides some examples of such laws in the region.

Table 7: Examples of national laws against sexual harassment

Argentina ¹	Law for integral protection to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women in environments where they develop their interpersonal relations (2009)
Costa Rica ²	Law against sexual harassment at work and school (1995)
Mexico ³	General law of women's access to a life free from violence (2009)
Peru ⁴	Law for the prevention and punishment of sexual harassment (2004), modified by Law No. 29430 (2009)
Uruguay ⁵	Sexual harassment: Provisions for its prevention and punishment in work environments and teacher-student relations (2009)

Sources: 1. www.infoleg.gov.ar;
 2. questionnaire A; García Q., Anabel Isabel, op.cit.;
 3. questionnaire A; Cuevas, Daptne, op. cit.;
 4. Llanos, Beatriz, op. cit.;
 5. questionnaire A

2.2 Some unwritten rules operating in parliaments

Analysis of the formal rules of national parliaments in the region found that parliamentary procedures do not usually contain provisions designed to promote the equal participation of men and women in parliamentary life. It is also essential to examine informal or unwritten rules when evaluating working conditions for parliamentarians.

The available information indicates that women parliamentarians face discriminatory situations in their daily interactions, which reproduce the prejudices that continue to exist in societies. These are expressed in a variety of ways, some of which are described below. First, the findings showed that there is still a **predominance of the male voice** in parliamentary affairs.

I do not know if we all have the same benefits or the same authority within the party caucus. When a specific issue is addressed in the house, regardless of how much both women and men know about the issue, men generally speak first. If the time can be shared, it is; if not, the man speaks instead of the woman. Men define the issue. It is simply natural for them: they are not being malicious. It is just logical for them to speak first and for you to speak afterwards—they have internalized this (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).²⁵

Moreover, the sources consulted indicated that several women parliamentarians in the region perceived that **different values are placed on the work of men and women parliamentarians**, which forces women to work more and better than their male colleagues in order to be acknowledged as equals.

There are many women belonging to the left and we are used to being in male-dominated environments and, therefore, to gradually earning respect with our work, which is always four times more than that of men (woman parliamentarian, Uruguay).

We are tested every day; we have to demonstrate that we are capable. Even though most of the women in the House of Representatives, at least in my caucus, have experience in other executive or legislative positions, we have to continually demonstrate our ability in these posts (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).²⁶

A related phenomenon is the limited access of women parliamentarians to political negotiation mechanisms. According to the testimonies collected, this is a clear example of the persistence of masculine codes established in their absence due to women's later incursion into politics.

Masculine codes are used in conversation and women must pretend to understand them. This is a man's world. Uruguayan politics is poorly constructed (woman parliamentarian, Uruguay).

We do not get involved in anything associated with politics, the arrangements, the political negotiations. This is because they do not discuss those issues with us. They talk about other issues with women, but not about political issues (woman parliamentarian, Chile).

Finally, several women parliamentarians complained that their initiatives to incorporate certain gender issues or topics on women's interests/rights into the parliamentary agenda were ridiculed by their male colleagues and/or defined as issues of less importance.

Gender issues are often subject to ridicule, but the men do not dare to openly ridicule them—instead they do it on the sidelines (woman parliamentarian, Peru).

There are several parliamentarians who believe that they are dealing with important issues and that women should only concern themselves with gender-related issues, which they do not value as much as they do economic, security and other issues (woman parliamentarian, Mexico).

3. Mainstreaming gender issues and women's interests into the the work of parliament

A great deal of parliamentary work takes place in committees, where draft legislation is discussed and bills are prepared for voting on in plenary sessions. Thus, these committees are vital for legislating on gender mainstreaming and/or women's needs and interests.

An analysis of the gender composition of some standing committees—selected by the research study based on topics traditionally associated with women or men—helps to identify whether, or the degree to which, parliamentary work produces and reproduces the sexual division of labour prevalent in other areas of Latin American society.

3.1 Standing committees

The results of questionnaire A and the case studies show that, in 2009–2010, women's participation in committees addressing issues related to the family, youth, the elderly, the disabled, health, gender equality and women's interests and/or needs far outweighed their proportional representation in their respective parliaments. One exception was the Costa Rican Committee on Youth, Children and Adolescents, the membership of which is predominantly male.

By contrast, on average, men are over-represented in the region on committees that address financial and economic issues such as trade and industry, public works and territorial planning, and finance and the budget. Nonetheless, in a few cases, the proportion of women parliamentarians that serves on these committees surpasses women's participation in the respective parliament: trade and industry, and public works and territorial planning in Peru, and finance and the budget in Mexico.

Table 8. Gender composition of selected standing committees

Country / chamber	% of total parliamentarians who are women	Issues addressed by the committees									
		Family / Youth / Elderly / Disabled	Women's interests and/or needs/ Gender Equality	Education	Trade / Industry	Foreign Affairs	Health	Public Works / Territorial Planning	Agriculture / Food / Forestry / Fishing	Immigration	Finance / Budget
% of women parliamentarians on committees											
Argentina											
Upper house	37.5	80.0	80.0	60.0	20.0	26.7	80.0	0.0	33.3	60.0	26.7
Lower house	42.0	73.7	80.6	60.0	24.1	33.3	46.9	38.9	37.1	49.0	33.3
Bolivia											
Lower house	25.4	85.7	85.7	20.0	13.3	33.3	20.0	22.2	13.3	33.3	25.0
Chile											
Upper house	13.2			0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0		20.0
Lower house	14.2	53.8		15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	23.1		0.0
Colombia											
Lower house	10.8	21.1	11.4	5.6	5.6	10.5	21.1	5.6	15.8	11.1	3.4
Costa Rica											
Single house	38.6	28.6	80.0	33.3		55.6	33.3	55.0	11.1		18.2
Mexico											
Upper house	19.5	25.0	83.3	26.7	7.7	42.9	45.5	25.0	21.4	4.3	33.3
Lower house	26.2	82.1	92.6	30.0		37.9	48.3		10.0	40.0	23.5
Peru											
Single house	27.5	83.3	100.0	31.3	46.2	26.7	30.8	36.4	46.2	31.3	20.0
Uruguay											
Upper house	12.9	33.3	33.3	28.6	14.3	0.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	22.2	11.8
Total Average	24.3	56.7	71.9	28.3	16.3	25.7	35.4	19.9	21.0	31.4	19.6

Note: In cases where there are several committees that address each topic, an average was used. Percentages are not given where there is no corresponding committee or where data were not available. Sources: Questionnaire A and case studies.

It was apparent from the analysis of men and women committee chairs that there is a sexual division of labour in parliaments in the region. This phenomenon is probably linked to a series of factors, including gender stereotypes, asymmetrical power relations and, possibly, self-imposed limitations.

Several factors affect any analysis of the gender composition of the different committees associated with parliamentarians' interests. Despite the specifics of the formal appointment of parliamentarians to the different committees, such as a vote in the plenary or by a decision of the speaker of each house, political party representation on each committee tends to be defined in terms of the numerical force of the corresponding political party in the chamber.

It is also common for committee composition to be the result of prior negotiations, the results of which are frequently approved in formal bodies with authority in this area, as is illustrated in the testimonies below.

In plenary sessions, the respective parties propose the distribution of their members in different committees (male parliamentarian, Colombia in questionnaire A).

The leader of the party discusses and negotiates with each parliamentarian the interest he or she has in each committee. He or she also negotiates with other parliamentary groups to ensure that the number of party members is equitable. Finally, after the parliamentarian agrees to accept the post, his or her name is given to the legislative decision-making body and the speaker makes the appointments and forms the committees (woman parliamentarian, Costa Rica²⁷ in questionnaire A).

The interests of parliamentarians are considered in the decision-making processes within political parties regarding the composition of committees, although restrictions on the number of members may limit the opportunities on certain committees, especially in the case of minority political parties. Another factor that could influence the opportunities of interested parliamentarians is their political weight or seniority in the parliament. The responses below illustrate these factors.²⁸

[These decisions are made based on] political quotas, depending on the parliamentary seats the parties have, and considering individual preferences and professional capabilities (woman parliamentarian, Chile).

In my case, the committee was assigned because of [my] knowledge and experience in education (male parliamentarian, Colombia).

They are assigned in accordance with the parliamentarian's profile (woman parliamentarian, Mexico).

According to their specializations or interests (woman parliamentarian, Uruguay).

The responses obtained from questionnaire C indicate that more than 80 per cent of parliamentarians of both sexes were in agreement with their committee assignments. Nonetheless, there were testimonies from women parliamentarians who felt they were pigeonholed into certain issues that did not necessarily correspond with their political priorities.

They have pigeonholed women into social and family issues; they cannot imagine that women could be involved in economic, budget and transportation issues. This seems illogical to them because they want to pigeonhole women in domestic affairs. You will not find more than one woman in a group of 17 parliamentarians on the budget or the economic committees, but if

you go to a committee that addresses social issues, such as health or childhood, you will find more women than men. This is because party decisions put people where the machista system leads them, not to where they would like or want to be (woman parliamentarian, Colombia).

3.2 Committees that address gender equality and women's interests and needs

The handling by parliaments of issues associated with gender equality and women's needs or interests depends on the specific structures of the committees in each national parliament.

Table 9: Committees dedicated to women's interests and needs or gender equality

Country	Lower/single house	Upper house
Argentina	Family, Women, Children and Adolescents	Population and Human Development
Bolivia ²⁹	Sub-committee on Gender and Generational Affairs of the Social Policy Committee	Sub-committee on Gender and Generational Affairs of the Committee for Work, Gender and Generational Affairs
Brazil	Social and Family Welfare	Subcommittee on the Protection of Women of the Human Rights and Participatory Legislation Committee
Chile	The Family	By law, any committee may address these issues
Colombia	On Public Servants' Statute; Public Servants' Salaries and Benefits; Unions; Social Security; Sports; Health; Housing; Affairs of Women and the Family	On Statutes of the Public Servant and Employee; Public Servants' Salaries and Benefits; Unions; Mutual Aid Societies; Social security; Social Protection Associations; Benefit Funds; Administrative Career; Civil Service; Recreation; Sports; Health; Community Organizations; Housing; Solidarity Funds; Affairs of Women and the Family
Costa Rica	On Women	
Dominican Republic	On Gender Equality	On the Family and Gender Equality
Ecuador	No specific committee	
El Salvador	The Family, Women and Children	
Guatemala	On Women	
Honduras	On Women	
Mexico	On Gender Equality	On Gender Equality
Nicaragua	Women, Children, Youth and the Family	
Panama	Women, Rights of the Child, Youth and the Family	
Paraguay	Social and Gender Equality	Gender Equality and Social Development
Peru	Women and Social Development	
Uruguay	On Gender Equality	Population, Development and Inclusion

Source: Questionnaire A, websites of the upper house of the Brazilian parliament, and the Colombian parliament's upper and lower houses. National Democratic Institute and International IDEA, 2010.

From a conceptual standpoint, these issues should be viewed as a unit. In most of the countries in the region, however, there is a trend towards treating these topics in committees that work on a variety of issues, generally associated with vulnerable social groups or other issues that are traditionally viewed as women's responsibility, such as family, youth, social development, and so on (see Table 9).

Nevertheless, there are some encouraging exceptions. For example, both houses of parliament in Mexico have gender equality committees, and Paraguay has a social and gender equality committee in its lower house and a gender equality and social development committee in its upper house. Moreover, the lower houses of parliament in the Dominican Republic and Uruguay have special gender and equality committees. For its part, Bolivia, which before its constitutional reform had a gender and generational affairs committee in both houses of its parliament, created—in the framework of the new organizational scheme of the lower house of the Multinational Legislative Assembly—a gender rights sub-committee of the committee on human rights and equal opportunities, which replaces the previous committee. The experiences of Mexico and Bolivia provide insights into the functioning of such committees.

The gender equality committees of the Mexican Parliament,³⁰ which were established in 2000, have the same powers as all the other Mexican parliamentary committees. In the lower house, 25 of the 26 gender equality committee members are women, as are seven of the eight members of the equivalent committee in the upper house.³¹ Although the function of these committees is to promote gender mainstreaming in all legislative areas, the parliamentary authorities assigned them only a small proportion of all the legislative initiatives. During the LX Parliament (2006–2009), the lower house committee received just 36 (1.16 per cent) of the more than 3000 legislative bills. In 20 cases it was able to make a ruling and in the others it issued an opinion. With regard to the issues addressed by the committee, almost two-thirds of the initiatives proposed a modification to the General Law of Women's Access to A Life Free from Violence and the General Law on Equality of Women and Men. Of the four legislative bills proposing new laws, two were on unmarried mothers. Only two bills were passed in the plenary of the two houses: a modification to the General Law of Women's Access to A Life Free from Violence concerning the elimination of the concept of 'estrangement' and the inclusion of a mention of Mexico City in the body of the text, and a general education law to 'harmonize legislation with a gender perspective to prevent and eradicate discrimination against women and raise awareness that teachers should impart to students throughout their education respect for the human rights of women and their guaranteed access to and right to an education.'

On the other hand, one of the important tasks this committee assumes merits greater attention:

Mexico: Evaluation of the impact of the budget on gender

An important task of the gender equality committees in Mexico is to promote the inclusion of information on federal public spending disaggregated by sex. The goal is to create conditions for the evaluation of the differential impact of public resources on women and men. To this end, beginning in the LVIII Parliament, an annex to each federal budget was included which disaggregated by sex the amounts allocated.

Unlike Mexico, the bodies assigned to oversee gender mainstreaming in the Bolivian parliament are sub-committees (Mokrani Chávez and Chávez León) that report to committees. The sub-committees provide inputs into research and support the coordination of operations. In the upper house, the Sub-Committee on Gender and Generational Affairs reports to the Committee on Work, Gender and Generational Affairs. In the lower house, a sub-committee with the same name reports to the Social Policy Committee. In both cases, they act as advisory bodies on the draft legislation presented. According to Mokrani Chávez and Chávez León, this situation 'has not permitted the complex structures of inequality to be comprehensively addressed, which are the foundations of social relations in the country, and for this reason they have been strongly questioned'. Nonetheless, a member of the sub-committee in the lower house emphasized the importance of the sub-committee's work:

I have promoted major modifications to laws for women and have presented a positive report on laws such as the elimination of gender violence and political harassment. All the draft bills to benefit women have received positive reports here. I have disseminated them and I have sent reminders to the executive to encourage their advancement (woman parliamentarian, Bolivia).³²

Specific committees on women's issues, as distinct from *gender equality*, exist in Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Uruguay these issues are addressed by committees with decision-making powers on a variety of issues. In practice, women's committees also deal with issues related to gender equality and committees on gender equality address women's interests and needs. In other words, the focus of these committees depends mainly on the understanding and vision of their members regarding such issues. Thus, in both cases members determine the direction of their work from a perspective that either favours gender equality or, on the contrary, centres attention on women's issues, which runs the risk of not promoting an explicit, conclusive shift in current gender relations.

I have been a member of this committee [on Family, Women, Children and Adolescents] since I joined the House of Representatives in December 2001. At that time, the chairperson of the committee did not even want to include the word 'gender' in draft legislation because she claimed that it implied abortion. Obviously, advances have been made since in terms of the

perspective of some committee members and that of subsequent chairpersons. Unfortunately, this has not led the committee to become more active. One difficulty it faces is that it is not a lead committee for most legislation. This means that the draft legislation is first assigned to another committee and that [this committee] cannot advance the bill until that committee does so (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).³³

In recent years, the emphasis of the Committee on Women and Social Development of the Peruvian parliament on the issues of family, children and adolescents has represented 'a setback, not because we do not value the family, but because we are again ignoring the discrimination that women face as social beings' (woman parliamentarian, Peru).³⁴

In addition, in many cases, committees with responsibilities on these issues are not lead committees, which means that bills on gender or those favouring women's interests and needs may be assigned to other committees, the members of which may be less willing to address them. This can result in delays or adverse decisions on them, or they may not even be discussed. The testimonies of a woman former Argentinean parliamentarian, as well as a Bolivian and Mexican parliamentarian, are illustrative.

[The lack of a gender committee means] that draft legislation on women's rights is generally first sent to a committee that is not that of the Family [Women, Children and Adolescents]. The Family [committee] plays a secondary role rather than taking the lead. Perhaps if a specific committee on women's rights existed, that committee would play a much more important role. Non-punishable abortion comes under Health; a bill on legalizing abortion comes under the Criminal Legislation (woman former parliamentarian, Argentina).³⁵

Some issues that we promote are taken very seriously, such as the Law Against Human Trafficking, because these issues look good. But in others there seems to be resistance. All the laws we promote are sent to more than two committees, which does not occur with other laws—they just go to one. So you have to fight in several committees and that is exhausting. They use a series of manoeuvres (woman parliamentarian, Bolivia).³⁶

Despite the efforts of the committee and its participation in the passage of important laws [...], it does not participate in the discussion of all reforms associated with gender, in part because the executive board assigns them to another committee that deals with legal code reform and on occasion does not request the opinion of the committee, or the committee does not request the extension of assignments (woman parliamentarian, Mexico).³⁷

In sum, the lack of specific committees to address the issues mentioned above, combined with the overlapping responsibilities of several committees that usually exist when dealing with such topics, pose difficulties for the work of parliamentarians who want to advance legislation on gender issues.

In the light of the difficulties of gender mainstreaming in the work of parliaments, and given the frequent lack of technical information available to this end, the creation of the Technical Unit for Gender Equality in Costa Rica and the Study Centre for Women's Advancement in Mexico are particularly noteworthy.

Mexico: The Study Centre for Women's Advancement ³⁸

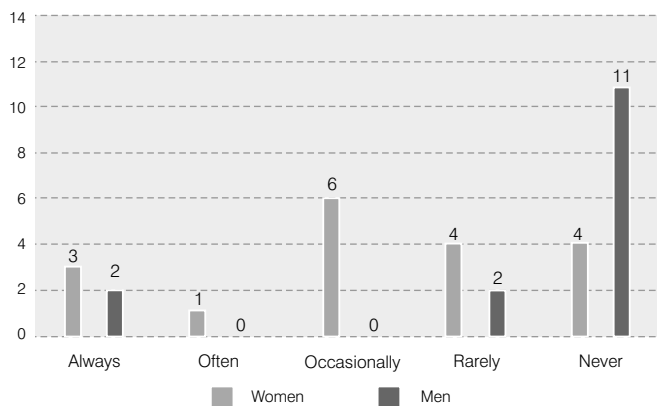
Since its founding in August 2005, the Study Centre for Women's Advancement (CEAMEG) has focused on three research areas: public budgets with a gender focus; women's political participation; and advances in the harmonization of legislation. A quantitative report on the activities of CEAMEG at the end of the LX Parliament demonstrated that it responded to 428 requests for information from parliamentarians, which included 65 opinions, 35 investigations, 49 analytical studies and 18 interrogations integrations of information systems, as well as being involved in the establishment of three indicators, nine training and advisory sessions and the development of 98 materials and reports.

Costa Rica: Technical Unit for Gender Equality ³⁹

In 2009, the Legislative Assembly created the Technical Unit for Gender Equality, which reports to the Executive Board of the Assembly. The mission of this Unit is to: 'Promote, plan, propose, coordinate, guide, strengthen and monitor gender mainstreaming in parliamentary processes, promoting equal opportunity and equal rights for men and women'. Its vision is to 'be a model technical unit that promotes public policies in favour of equality and equal rights, benefits and opportunities for men and women, promoting gender mainstreaming in all processes of the Legislative Assembly'. The objectives of the unit include: 'providing specialized advisory services on gender to all technical-administrative and legislative bodies for the gender mainstreaming of their legislative processes' and 'creating strategies of communication and coordination with civil society and institutions that facilitate social participation in the gender mainstreaming of the different processes of the Legislative Assembly'.

The importance of these bodies is also apparent in the responses to the question in questionnaire C on the perceptions of parliamentarians with respect to the availability of data disaggregated by sex, which is especially important for gender mainstreaming in parliament. Ten of the 18 women parliamentarians who responded to this question reported that there was either always, often or occasionally a lack of information. By contrast, only one of the 14 men parliamentarians surveyed believed that this information was lacking.

Figure 2: Lack of data disaggregated by sex



Source: Questionnaire C.

Given the above, national parliaments in the region should examine the possibility of implementing standing gender equality committees with broad powers to rule on all issues related to gender. They should also consider establishing technical units that can provide the specific information needed to advance gender mainstreaming in all areas of parliament. In the meantime, they should at least make some efforts to provide information disaggregated by sex.

3.3 Caucuses of women parliamentarians

Women parliamentarians are still in the minority in national parliaments in the region. This, coupled with the discriminatory situations women face in parliamentary work and the limited interest of most of their male colleagues in debating and approving draft legislation on gender issues, has led women parliamentarians to form alliances of different types in most Latin American countries. Some of these are temporary, ad hoc alliances in as much as they are limited to specific issues and last for a specific period of time. Others are more permanent.

Beyond the success of these different groups in each specific case, the joint work of women parliamentarians frequently crosses party lines. In some countries, this has even led to the creation of cross-party caucuses, as shown in Table 10. These are listed in Table 10. The women's caucuses have a variety of institutional forms and powers. Some examples are described below.

Table 10: Women's caucuses in the parliaments of Latin America

Country	Lower/single house	Upper house
Argentina	No	Women's caucus
Bolivia	Union of Women Parliamentarians of Bolivia (UMPABOL)	UMPABOL
Brazil	Women's caucus	Women's caucus
Chile	No	No
Colombia	No	Temporary Working Committee on Gender Equality for Social, Political, Labour, Mental Health, Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women
Costa Rica	No	
Dominican Republic	No	No
Ecuador	Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights (men and women)	
El Salvador	No	
Guatemala	Women's caucus	
Honduras	No	
Mexico	No	
Nicaragua	No	
Panama	No	
Paraguay	No	No
Peru	Roundtable on Peruvian Women Parliamentarians (MMPP)	
Uruguay	Bicameral Women's Caucus (BBF)	
Venezuela	No	No

Source: Questionnaire A; Cuevas, Dapthne, op. cit; Llanos, Beatriz, op. cit; Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, op. cit.; Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, op. cit.: National Democratic Institute and International IDEA: Muchos modelos, un objetivo: experiencias de comisiones and bancadas de género en los congresos, 2010

The women's caucus of the upper house in Argentina⁴⁰ has the status of a special committee. Its objectives are to 'provide advice, answer consultations, and oversee and monitor laws and government policies and acts associated with equal rights, equal opportunities and the equal treatment of men and women'. As a special committee, it has a duration of one year, which may be extended. It does not have its own budget or the right to make rulings on legislation—powers that other committees do have.

The Union of Women Parliamentarians of Bolivia (UMPABOL), created in 1997 by resolutions in both houses, does not have a budget or personnel. Nor does it have the power to issue recommendations on legislation. Despite these limitations, Mokrani Chávez and Chávez León believe that 'UMPABOL has become an interesting space for linking demands and joint action to promote gender equality in parliamentary work'.⁴¹

In Mexico,⁴² where an attempt to establish a women's caucus failed, an informal feminist caucus was formed during the LX Parliament, which enabled women parliamentarians from seven political parties to work together to promote laws and discussion in parliament. As a woman former parliamentarian observed about the experience:

[...] we parliamentarians who clearly identified with a feminist identity, and with shared causes to that end, created a type of women's caucus, which had representation in the Policy Coordination Board which directly negotiated our issues. Although it was not a formal caucus, it did perform coordinated cross-party work. There were issues which we managed to advance, even more than the Gender Equality Committee could. This caucus served to stem attempts to create obstacles in the parliament, particularly those associated with sexual and reproductive rights (woman former parliamentarian, Mexico).

In Peru,⁴³ the Roundtable of Women Parliamentarians (MMPP) was created in 2006. It serves as a cross-party channel for dialogue and consensus-building for all women parliamentarians. The MMPP has a Coordination Committee comprised of a chairperson and a delegate from each political party represented in parliament. This roundtable is not a formal part of the parliamentary structure, and it is not included in the parliamentary budget. A key feature of the MMPP is its work to promote dialogue with civil society and women's organizations.

Despite the differences in the organizational forms and attributes of *women's caucuses*, they share some common characteristics in terms of strengths and weaknesses. With respect to the difficulties these caucuses face, the lack of an adequate budget to fulfil their functions arises in every case. Another critical issue is their cross-party composition. Although this characteristic represents a particular strength, it has also led to situations in which party political differences have hindered consensus-building efforts.

The fact that women must answer to their political party lines, which in some cases do not have clear, real policies or guidelines for applying gender equality criteria [is a problem] (woman parliamentarian, Colombia).⁴⁴

Another factor impeding the efforts of these caucuses is the work overload of women parliamentarians, which is reflected in a 'lack of time to institutionalize debates, meetings or work days' (woman parliamentarian, Colombia) and in the 'numerous work fronts that women parliamentarians must deal with, as well as the difficulty in coordinating agendas between the two houses' (woman parliamentarian, Uruguay).⁴⁵

Despite the limitations mentioned above, most of the women parliamentarians interviewed or surveyed believe that their caucuses have contributed significantly to the promotion of

gender issues and have expanded the political agenda in that area through the promotion of emblematic draft legislation, such as laws on quotas and gender violence.

Another related area for discussion is the relationship between women's or gender committees and women's caucuses. While there is great potential for these bodies to work in a complementary manner, tensions can also arise. Peru is a case in point. According to the chairwoman of the Women's Committee, it would be desirable to link the work of the MMPP with that of the Women's Committee. She believes that the current operation of both bodies gives the impression of having 'split the Women's Committee':

I believe that both groups should come together and go hand-in-hand. [...] Perhaps it would be better for the Committee to be able to involve all women parliamentarians (woman parliamentarian, Peru).⁴⁶

In the case of Bolivia, attempts are being made to integrate UMPABOL into the organic structure of the Multinational Legislative Assembly with a view to:⁴⁷

making the Union of Women Parliamentarians of Bolivia a gender mainstreaming committee within the structure of the lower house, and for it to form part of the Multinational Legislative Assembly, in order to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all parliamentarians (article 1 of the proposal for the UMPABOL statutes).

Finally, in Argentina, where the parliament is discussing the creation of a women's caucus in the lower house with attributes similar to those of the caucus in the upper house, the testimony of a woman parliamentarian questions the efficiency of this initiative:

And I especially have my doubts in terms of institutionally establishing a [women's caucus]. If it were a permanent gender committee, yes. [...] And the permanent gender committee would be interesting, I think; it would be quite interesting, but I don't think it will materialize. I doubt that the parties in general, or the movements, will support this modification. They're going to institutionalize the women's caucus... (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).

In sum, women's committees and caucuses currently have different functions. Whereas the former have formal powers established in parliamentary procedures and standing orders, the latter are cross-party coordination groups in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. While tensions may arise between the committees and the women's caucuses, the existence of these bodies also has potential for complementary action to achieve gender mainstreaming in parliament.

3.4 Expansion of the parliamentary agenda in terms of gender

The growing participation of women in the majority of the parliaments in the region has enabled the expansion and enrichment of parliamentary agendas. Women parliamentarians legislate on a number of issues, but their work also greatly contributes to the debate and the promotion of draft legislation with a gender or women's rights content. Despite the difficulties women parliamentarians have frequently faced when promoting such initiatives, important laws related to gender have been enacted in recent years. Table 11 lists some of the laws that were passed during the study period.

Table 11: Examples of laws with a gender or women's rights content enacted between 2007 and 2009

Country	Laws enacted
Argentina ¹	<p>Law for the prevention and punishment of human trafficking and assistance to its victims (Law 26364), passed in April 2008.</p> <p>Law for integral protection to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women in the environments where they develop their interpersonal relationships (Law 26.485), passed in March 2009.</p>
Bolivia ²	<p>Law convening the Constituent Assembly (March 2006). Article 15 (Gender Equality) stipulates that 'in the candidacies of constituents, quotas should exist, both in the list of territorial districts as well as the multiparty districts', which resulted in women accounting for 34.51% of the Constituent Assembly.</p> <p>The new national constitution of 2008 stipulates in article 26 that: 'all citizens have the right to freely participate in the training for, exercise and control of political power, directly or through their representatives, and in an individual or collective manner. Participation shall be equitable and under equal conditions for men and women'.</p> <p>Law on the Transitory Electoral System (2009), which introduces a quota of 50% for each sex on the electoral lists of multiparty districts.</p>
Colombia ³	<p>Law 1257 of 2008 'For which provisions are established to raise awareness of, prevent and punish forms of violence and discrimination against women, reforming the Penal Code of Criminal Procedure, Law 294 of 1996 and other provisions are issued'.</p>
Costa Rica ⁴	<p>Law of the criminalization of violence against women (No. 8589), passed in 2007.</p> <p>Reform of the Electoral Code (No. 8765), passed in 2009: Introduction to the principles of participation by sex and parity.</p>
Mexico ⁵	<p>Modification of the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence (elimination of the concept of 'estrangement' and inclusion of the mention of Mexico City in the body of the text), passed in 2009.</p> <p>Modification of the General Education Law (passed in 2009) in an effort to 'harmonize legislation with a gender perspective to prevent and eradicate discrimination against women and raise awareness that teachers should impart to students throughout their education to respect the human rights of women and guarantee access to the right to an education'.</p>
Peru ⁶	<p>Law on equal opportunities for men and women (Law 28893), passed in 2007.</p> <p>Law 29083 (2007), which modifies the General Law of the National Budgetary System, establishes that in the evaluation of public budget spending each entity should incorporate in its analysis the impact on gender equality policies.</p>

Table 11: Examples of laws with a gender or women's rights content enacted between 2007 and 2009

Country	Laws enacted
Perú ⁶	<p>Law 29409 (2009) grants four consecutive days of paid and mandatory leave to public and private sector workers when their wives or partners give birth.</p> <p>Law 29282 (2008) modifies the Law on Domestic Violence and prohibits conciliation in police offices, sanctions immediate protection measures, creates a registry of victims and aggressors and defines the actions of this nature as crimes in the Penal Code, increasing sentences.</p> <p>Law 29360 (2007): Creation of the national prosecutors' office in the Ministry of Justice for victims of domestic or sexual violence.</p> <p>Law 28970 (2007): Creation of a registry of individuals owing child support.</p>
Uruguay ⁷	<p>Law N° 18104 of 15/03/2007. Equal rights and opportunities for men and women.</p> <p>Law N° 18246 of 21/12/2007. Common law partners' rights and obligations.</p> <p>Law N° 18436 of 12/12/2008. Reduction in working hours for adoptive mothers.</p> <p>Laws 18476 of 03/04/2009 and 18487 of 15/05/2009, on the inclusion of both sexes on electoral lists.</p> <p>Law N° 18561 of 11/09/2009 on sexual harassment.</p>

Sources: 1) Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, op. cit., questionnaire A;
 2) Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, op. cit.;
 3) questionnaire A;
 4) García Q., Anabel Isabel, op. cit., questionnaire A;
 5) Cuevas, Daptnhe, op. cit.; questionnaire A;
 6) Llanos, Beatriz, op. cit.; questionnaire A.;
 7) questionnaire A.

3.5 The position of male parliamentarians with respect to draft legislation on gender issues

This report alludes above to the existence of a sexual division of labour in the national parliaments of the region. In this context, it is interesting to examine the level of interest of men and women in draft legislation on gender issues.

The information available indicates that gender issues and the existence on the legislative agenda in all the countries of the region of issues related to women's interests and needs mainly result from draft legislation promoted by women parliamentarians. The role of their male colleagues is frequently limited to supporting these initiatives, although some exceptions no doubt exist. In some cases, men parliamentarians' interventions are influenced by the fact that currently 'it is politically correct not to oppose gender initiatives' (woman parliamentarian, Chile). In other words, women parliamentarians perceive that a gender focus has not yet penetrated the political views of their male colleagues:

Most male parliamentarians lack knowledge and awareness of these issues (woman parliamentarian, Colombia).⁴⁸

They have not been sensitized and I think they often lack information. They do not give it the [necessary] time (woman parliamentarian, Bolivia).⁴⁹

The lack of knowledge, awareness or interest that many men parliamentarians exhibit forces women parliamentarians to make an extra effort to explain and negotiate their bills and, in some cases, to develop strategies to advance them. They are sometimes critical of their own strategies.

Our strategy [...] to advance the gender agenda was [...] well, we have done so by renouncing [our turn] to speak, renouncing our political debate in the plenary and also by giving up our time and making it the last issue, when everyone is tired and exhausted and they cannot argue anymore and want to go home. [...] I make agreements with all the groups to ensure no one speaks. I do not speak as the sponsor of the bill, no one presents political positions on the bill to be voted on. [...] The draft legislation is introduced in the plenary, there are no speeches [...]. Of course the house speaker is informed: listen, I arranged that no one will speak; you just have to present it for consideration at the plenary session. They present it at the plenary session. Overall, we haven't been rejected, we have made progress in this area (woman parliamentarian, Argentina).⁵⁰

In this context, many of the women interviewed agreed that there was a need to 'educate men in order to achieve equality' (woman parliamentarian, Mexico), an opinion shared by a man Colombian parliamentarian:

In many cases, the main obstacle to advancing gender equality is the little importance this issue generates compared with issues that have a social, economic and ethical impact on society [...]. For this reason, it is important to raise the awareness not only of society but also of parliamentary bodies to promote gender equality (male parliamentarian, Colombia).⁵¹

The testimony below clearly illustrates the importance of the increased involvement of men parliamentarians in the issues mentioned above for the development of democracy:

We have to think about how to win them over because there are some issues that they pay attention to, like the Law against Trafficking of Persons. They supported the initiative and realized that it was really in everyone's best interests. I think they should be included; our issues should become their issues, just like the issues of democracy, inclusion and development are for the whole country rather than just for women (woman parliamentarian, Bolivia).⁵²

4. Some considerations on the predominant role of political parties in ensuring the equal participation of men and women in institutional politics

Political parties recruit candidates for elected positions and prepare electoral lists. In addition, they develop electoral platforms and government programmes or programme principles, in which they express their political views, objectives and priorities. Moreover, their ethical and operational principles are set out in their procedures and rules.

In the framework of parliamentary work, political parties or caucuses have a duty, among other things, to negotiate and come to agreement on the composition of leadership bodies and on the order of political priorities to be included on the parliamentary agenda.

This report focuses on the aspects for which information was available. First, six of the eight political caucuses that responded to questionnaire B reported that they had adopted affirmative action measures to promote women's access to national parliaments. In countries with legislated women's or gender quotas, these measures do not depend on the good will of political parties to promote women's participation as it is mandated by law. However, there have been cases of non-compliance with the legal provisions on the inclusion of a minimum percentage of women on electoral lists in several countries. In others, this minimum has become a ceiling—as electoral results suggest. Moreover, there is evidence that certain political parties require their elected women parliamentarians to give up their seats for male substitutes.⁵³

Voluntary quotas based on modifications of party rules

Some political parties have established voluntary quotas that promote the inclusion of a certain percentage of women on their electoral lists in countries that do not have legislated quotas. Others, in countries that have legislated quotas, have increased the minimum percentage stipulated in electoral law.⁵⁴

On another level, the gender composition of the leadership and decision-making bodies of the parliament still reflects the limited willingness of party caucuses to ignore the sex of an individual when deciding who is best qualified to take leadership positions within them. Thus, political parties and their caucuses are faced with the challenge of making their principles of gender equality a reality when making appointments.⁵⁵

With respect to the powers that political parties or caucuses have in national parliaments in the region to promote, impede or reject draft legislation to promote gender equality or to address women's interests and needs, initiatives are generally developed by women parliamentarians through cross-party caucuses.⁵⁶

Finally, the rules or procedures of each parliamentary chamber in the region also reflect the willingness of the caucuses to change the rules of the parliament in an effort to promote increased gender equality in parliamentary work. The procedures and standing orders of the different parliaments in the region do not normally include clauses to this effect.⁵⁷

In sum, political parties or caucuses play a pivotal role in ensuring gender equality in political institutions. The considerable deficiencies they exhibit in the fulfilment of this responsibility are one of the key challenges to be addressed in the region.

5. Conclusions

The significant increase in the average number of women participating in national parliaments in Latin America is largely the result of the enactment of gender quota laws in 12 Latin American countries. Such laws exist in all the Latin American countries where more than 20 per cent of the parliamentarians are women. The implementation of these measures can therefore be considered a good practice for institutionalizing the participation of women in parliaments. Nonetheless, much remains to be done, and not only in countries with no gender quotas for parliamentary candidates. In the light of the ineffectiveness of gender quota laws in some Latin America countries, there is a need to for improvements and adaptation to each electoral system, as well as for monitoring their full enforcement and reviewing party practices in this area. In addition, while quotas define minimum percentages of women to be included on party lists, in practice, they often become ceilings for women's participation in national parliaments. This underscores the need to evaluate the introduction of parity quotas. Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador serve as positive examples in this regard.

Increased levels of the inclusion of women in the national parliaments of the region have allowed women to begin to assume parliamentary leadership and decision-making positions. Specifically, in several countries, the percentage of women parliamentarians who serve as chairpersons or vice chairpersons on parliamentary committees matches their levels of participation in the respective parliamentary houses. However, in others, men parliamentarians remain over-represented in such positions. Only Chile and Uruguay currently have female speakers in their lower houses. No country has a female speaker in its upper house. The rules of procedure and standing orders of parliamentary chambers in Latin American countries do not contain any provisions to ensure women's access to leadership and decision-making positions in parliament. It would therefore be timely to introduce affirmative action measures to this end.

Analysis of the formal rules regulating the working conditions of parliamentarians in the region indicates that they do not take account of the growing presence of women and do not promote gender equality among members. For example, maternity and paternity leave, which are normally regulated exclusively by the provisions of general employment laws, mandate pre- and post-natal leave of several weeks for mothers and just a few days for fathers. National parliaments in the region do not have their own exemplary policies, which could serve to promote shared parental leave. In addition, none of the countries in this study stipulates the provision of substitutes when parliamentarians are on leave. This causes difficulties for women parliamentarians in particular, who, on some occasions, are

forced to interrupt their leave. A good practice in this area is the initiative of a Costa Rican representative who requested that the Supreme Court of Elections appoint a substitute to fill in for her during maternity leave. Unfortunately, the Court responded that it was not qualified to act in this matter.

The lack of childcare facilities and of provisions for breastfeeding mothers in most of the houses of parliament studied, combined with the long working hours, make it difficult for parliamentarians to balance their work and family lives. These circumstances particularly affect women, given the persistence of the sexual division of labour in Latin American societies (and not only in this region). Measures should be discussed to adapt specific working conditions in parliaments to the obligations of representatives who are responsible for the care of other persons. The examples of Mexico and Peru may be useful in this regard.

Finally, national parliament's procedures and standing orders in only a very few cases include provisions to ensure the use of gender-sensitive language. In practice, this omission often leads to dominant, masculine forms of communication that create an artificial environment where the public sphere is viewed as the domain of men alone. This is offensive to women parliamentarians and to all women, as they form the majority of the population in all the countries of the region. The initiatives underway in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru could serve as models in this regard.

The lack of formal provisions to regulate working conditions and ensure gender equality in national parliaments is especially problematic given the influence of unwritten rules in this area. These include many which tend to discriminate against women parliamentarians, such as the predominance of male authority in parliament and of persistent prejudice regarding the alleged lesser abilities of women in the parliamentary arena, which, among other things, forces women representatives to work harder and better than their male colleagues in order to advance their legislative proposals.

This context, which coincides with the wider socio-cultural context in the countries analysed, clearly illustrates that social changes tend to be slow and therefore to require norms to guide them. Parliaments have a special responsibility in this area. As such, it is highly recommended that national parliaments modify their rules of procedure in an effort to demonstrate their support for further promoting democracy and draft legislation on gender issues.

In addition to the above-mentioned areas, this study, conducted jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and International IDEA also examined the degree to which national parliaments in the region produce and reproduce the sexual division of labour. The analysis of the gender composition of the committees selected for study indicates that men

and women carry out different functions in most of the parliaments, and that these functions are in some way linked to traditional notions of the responsibilities of men and women.

Some national parliaments have begun to establish standing committees to promote gender equality in the framework of the legislative initiatives they develop. In others, the findings indicate a trend for including gender issues in committees that address a variety of issues traditionally associated with women's responsibilities, which in many cases are not lead committees. The implementation of gender committees in all the parliaments of the region would considerably strengthen democracy.

Cross-party alliances among women parliamentarians are one of the best practices for promoting draft legislation on gender issues or on women's interests and needs. In some cases, these alliances are formalized as women's caucuses. The regulations and responsibilities of these groups tend to vary in the different national parliaments. However, they share some characteristics. They are important channels for promoting draft legislation on gender issues and certain social policies. Unfortunately, they all lack dedicated funding to help them fulfil their responsibilities.

The growing presence of women in most of the parliaments in Latin America has expanded and enriched legislative agendas. Moreover, some important laws associated with gender and women's rights have been passed in recent years.

The position of men parliamentarians with regard to legislate initiatives on gender was also examined in this study. The findings indicate that these initiatives are generally promoted by women parliamentarians, who are frequently faced with the indifference of their male colleagues. In this context, it is recommended that actions be developed to raise awareness and provide training for men and women parliamentarians regarding the significance of a gender-based approach and the importance of gender mainstreaming in parliament.

This report could not end without reference to the responsibilities of political parties in the areas discussed. Such parties play a pivotal role. Whereas most claimed to have established measures in their rules to contribute to gender equality in the exercise of political power, the results of this study indicate the need to transform intentions into more concrete results. Some political parties have implemented voluntary gender quotas. These measures are especially important in countries that do not have legal quotas. In some cases, these initiatives also permitted an increase in the percentage of women included in electoral lists above the percentage stipulated by law.

In sum, significant advances have been made in recent years towards achieving equal access by men and women to parliaments in the region and, to some extent, to leadership positions in their bodies. However, women parliamentarians continue to be at a disadvantage, and this hinders the development of their work. This fact, together with the limited establishment of measures for gender mainstreaming in national parliaments, presents challenges for the achievement of gender-sensitive parliaments.

Annex: Materials used to prepare the report

The report's findings are based mainly on responses to questionnaires A, B and C and on information from case studies and personal interviews. Some Internet sources were also consulted, and these are listed below.

1. Responses to questionnaires

Information from this report was obtained from the responses to questionnaires for national parliaments, party groups and parliamentarians (see www.gender-parliaments.org)

Questionnaire A. Parliamentary authorities

Argentina	Lower house
Bolivia	Lower house
Chile (2)	Upper and lower houses
Colombia	Lower house
Costa Rica	Single house
Mexico	Upper house
Peru	Single house
Uruguay	Upper house

Questionnaire B. Political party groups in parliament

Chile	Democracia Cristiana
Colombia	Movimiento de Integración Regional 'IR'
Colombia	Movimiento Político Mira
Colombia	Partido Conservador Colombiano
Colombia	Partido Opción Centro Circunscripción Especial Minorías
Colombia	Partido Político Apertura liberal
Costa Rica	Fracción Unidad Socialcristiana
Mexico	Grupo Parlamentario del Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)
Mexico	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)
Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista para la Liberación
Uruguay	Bancada Bicameral Femenina

Questionnaire C. Individual parliamentarians

Brasil (1)	Upper house	1 woman
Chile (2)	Lower house	2 women
Colombia (19)	Upper house and Lower house	6 women, 13 men
Costa Rica (6)	Single house	3 women, 3 men
Mexico (2)	Upper house	2 women
Nicaragua (1)	Single house	1 man
Peru (1)	Single house	1 man
Uruguay (2)	Upper house	2 women

2. Personal interviews conducted by Beatriz Llanos

Argentina	Woman Representative (October 2008)
Bolivia	Male Senator (September 2009)
Chile	Woman Representative (September 2009)
	Male Representative (October 2009)
Costa Rica	Woman Representative (October 2009)
	Woman Representative (September 2009)
Colombia	Male Representative (September 2009)
	Woman Representative (October 2009)
Mexico	Woman Senator (October 2009)
Peru	Male Representative (October 2009)
	Woman Representative (June 2009)
Uruguay	Male Representative (October 2009)
	Woman Senator (July 2009)

3. Case studies

Cuevas, Daptnhe, *Parlamentos sensibles al Género: Estudio de caso en Mexico* [Gender-sensitive parliaments: Mexico case study]

García Q. and Anabel Isabel, *Estudio de caso: Incorporación de la dimensión de género en la Asamblea Legislativa de Costa Rica* [Case study: Mainstreaming gender in the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica]

Llanos, Beatriz, *Más mujeres, ¿más igualdad?: Estudio de caso sobre la sensibilidad al género del Parlamento Peruano* [More women, more equality? Case study on the gender sensitivity in the Peruvian parliament]

Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *El Congreso nacional de la Argentina y sus niveles de inclusión en términos de género. Un estudio de caso* [The parliament of Argentina and its gender inclusion levels: A case study]

Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *Investigación sobre mecanismos y medidas para Parlamentos sensibles al género* [Study on mechanisms and measures for gender-sensitive parliaments]

4. Other sources consulted

Gonzalez, Keila and Sample, Kristen (eds): *Muchos modelos, un objetivo: Experiencias de comisiones y bancadas de género en los congresos* (Lima: National Democratic Institute and International IDEA, 2010)

Roza, Vivian; Beatriz Llanos, Beatriz; Gisela Garzón de la Roza, Gisela: *Partidos políticos y paridad: la ecuación pendiente* (Lima: IDB and International IDEA, 2010)

Quota project: <http://www.quotaproject.org> (last access: 3.11.2010)

Inter-Parliamentary Union website: <http://www.ipu.org> (last access: 5.11.2010)

The websites of national parliaments (access: 8./9. 11.2010)

Argentina: www.diputados.gov.ar and www.senado.gov.ar

Bolivia: www.congreso.gov.bo/3senadores/index.html and www.diputados.bo

Brazil: www.senado.gov.br and www.camara.gov.br

Chile: www.senado.cl and www.camara.cl

Colombia: www.senado.gov.co and www.camara.gov.co

Costa Rica: www.asamblea.go.cr

Dominican Republic: www.senado.gov.do and www.camaradediputados.gov.do

Ecuador: www.asambleanacional.gov.ec

El Salvador: www.asamblea.gob.sv

Guatemala: www.congreso.gob.gt

Honduras: www.congreso.gob.hn

Mexico: www.senado.gob.mx and www.diputados.gob.mx

Nicaragua: www.asamblea.gob.ni

Panama: www.asamblea.gob.pa

Paraguay: www.senado.gov.py and www.diputados.gov.py

Peru: www.congreso.gob.pe

Uruguay: www.parlamento.gub.uy

Venezuela: www.asambleanacional.gov.ve

Notes

- ¹ This report does not address the situation in Caribbean countries, except for the Dominican Republic. The data presented refer mostly to the period 2009–2010.
- ² The annex to this report provides details of the sources used.
- ³ Progress in European countries is based on voluntary quotas established through the charters of political parties.
- ⁴ The quota system will be applied in Uruguay for the first time in 2014.
- ⁵ A brief description of the quota system worldwide and for each country can be found on the website www.quotaproject.org.
- ⁶ For an analysis of this case see Cuevas, Daptnhe, *Parlamentos sensibles al Género: Estudio de caso en Mexico* [Gender-sensitive parliaments: Mexico case study].
- ⁷ IPU data (<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>). The information on Latin America was developed by the authors based on IPU data accessed in October 2010.
- ⁸ Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Paraguay and Uruguay. There are no data for the upper house in Colombia.
- ⁹ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *El Congreso nacional de la Argentina y sus niveles de inclusión en términos de género. Un estudio de caso* [The parliament of Argentina and its gender inclusion levels: A case study].
- ¹⁰ García Q. and Anabel Isabel, *Estudio de caso: Incorporación de la dimensión de género en la Asamblea Legislativa de Costa Rica* [Case study: Mainstreaming gender in the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica].
- ¹¹ A more in-depth study would require to examine developments over several legislative periods, which is beyond the scope of this study.
- ¹² Upper house speaker Ana María Romero de Campero passed away on 25 October 2010. A man currently presides over the upper house.
- ¹³ The percentage of women parliamentarians in each house differs from that in Table 1 because this table reflects the situation at the time of the surveys and case studies.
- ¹⁴ See Cuevas, Daptnhe, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, the quotes are from interviews conducted by Beatriz Llanos, which are detailed in the annex.
- ¹⁶ See details in García Q. and Anabel Isabel, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁷ Limited: 6 women parliamentarians and 1 parliamentarian; non-existent: 7 women parliamentarians and 10 men parliamentarians, out of a total of 30 responses.
- ¹⁸ Questionnaire C.
- ¹⁹ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *Investigación sobre mecanismos y medidas para Parlamentos sensibles al género* [Study on mechanisms and measures for gender-sensitive parliaments].
- ²⁰ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *op.cit.*
- ²¹ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ²² Questionnaire A.
- ²³ Llanos, Beatriz, *Más mujeres, ¿más igualdad?: Estudio de caso sobre la sensibilidad al género del Parlamento Peruano* [More women, more equality? Case study on the gender sensitivity in the Peruvian parliament].
- ²⁴ Cuevas, Daptnhe, *op. cit.*
- ²⁵ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*

- ²⁶ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*
- ²⁷ Source of both quotes: Questionnaire A.
- ²⁸ Questionnaire C.
- ²⁹ A Gender Rights Commission was created, which reports to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Committee, in the new organizational scheme of the lower house of the Multinational Legislative Assembly (Procedures of the Lower House, January 2010, article 45).
- ³⁰ Cuevas, Dapthne, *op. cit.*
- ³¹ Source: Websites of both houses, November 2010.
- ³² Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op.cit.*
- ³³ Marx, Jutta; Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*
- ³⁴ Llanos, Beatriz, *op. cit.*
- ³⁵ Marx, Jutta; Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*
- ³⁶ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ³⁷ Cuevas, Dapthne, *op. cit.*
- ³⁸ Cuevas, Dapthne, *op. cit.*
- ³⁹ García Q. and Anabel Isabel, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁰ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*
- ⁴¹ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ⁴² Cuevas, Dapthne, *op. cit.*
- ⁴³ Llanos, Beatriz, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁴ Questionnaire C.
- ⁴⁵ Source of both quotes: Questionnaire C.
- ⁴⁶ Llanos, Beatriz, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁷ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁸ Questionnaire C.
- ⁴⁹ Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁰ Marx, Jutta and Borner, Jutta, *op. cit.*
- ⁵¹ Cuevas, Dapthne, *op. cit.*
- ⁵² Mokrani Chávez, Dunia and Chávez León, Patricia, *op. cit.*
- ⁵³ For more details, see table 2.
- ⁵⁴ See Section 2 of this report.
- ⁵⁵ The available data are insufficient for analysing leaders of party caucuses, but evidence suggests that the example of Argentina—where leaders tend to be men despite the large proportion of women in the parliament—is typical.
- ⁵⁶ See Section 4 of this report.
- ⁵⁷ See Section 3 of this report.

Gender equality in political participation is an indicator that is often considered when evaluating the level of democratic development. For decades, however, women were systematically sidelined from the exercising of political rights.

Because of the delay in gaining access to seats in national legislatures, women not only found themselves in a difficult position as latecomers, but also faced the challenge of adapting to codes and rules of parliamentary life that were drawn up in their absence. Meanwhile, although greater participation by women in positions of political representation is, first and foremost, a matter of justice, it also raises expectations about the role that female legislators should play in representing gender issues and women's needs and interests.

This report describes and analyzes progress in the region, in both women's access to national congressional seats and the degree of gender mainstreaming in their parliaments. The report is mainly based on qualitative and quantitative data from the study of gender-sensitive parliaments carried out jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

International IDEA

International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization with 27 member countries. The Institute supports democratic institutions and processes worldwide by providing resources to strengthen capacities, developing policy proposals and supporting democratic reforms. International IDEA's main areas of expertise are electoral processes, political party systems, constitutional processes, gender and democracy. www.idea.int

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The IPU is the international organization of parliaments. It was established in 1889. The Union is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To that end, it:

- Fosters contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;
- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights – an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development.

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