

Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality

of the Central American
Integration System (SICA)

**PRIEG/SICA
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**Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of the Central American Integration System
PRIEG/SICA**

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Table of Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	6
Presentation by the General Secretariat of SICA	9
Presentation of the Pro Tempore of Presidency COMMCA	10
Recognition and acknowledgments	11
Executive summary	13
CHAPTER 1 Reference framework	17
1.1. International agreements on equality: consensus agendas and pending agendas	17
1.2. Context of equality in the SICA Region	20
1.3. The path taken by SICA in terms of gender equality	37
1.4. Equality policies in the countries of the SICA Region	39
CHAPTER 2 Scope and characteristics	49
2.1. Characteristics	49
2.2. The process of formulating PRIEG/SICA	50
CHAPTER 3 Principles, approaches and strategies	53
3.1. Guiding principles	53
3.2. Approaches	55
3.3. Strategies	57
CHAPTER 4 Strategic thrusts and measures	59
4.1. Objective of PRIEG/SICA	59
4.2. Strategic thrusts	59
CHAPTER 5 Regional architecture for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of PRIEG/SICA	87
5.1. Mechanisms of the architecture of PRIEG/SICA	87
5.2. Monitoring and evaluation	89
Bibliography	91
Appendixes	97

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
AES	Strategic Social Agenda of SICA
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CAC	Central American Agricultural Council
CCAD	Central American Commission for Environment and Development
CCIE	Advisory Committee on Economic Integration
CCJ	Central American Court of Justice
CCSICA	SICA Advisory Committee
CCVAH	Central American Council for Housing and Human Settlements
CCTC	Commission of Science and Technology of Central America
CD-PRIEG/SICA	Regional Executive Committee –PRIEG/SICA-
CECC	Central American Educational Cultural Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEDDET	Foundation Center for Distance Education for Economic and Technological Development
CENPROMYPE	Center for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in Central America
CENTROESTAD	Central American Statistical Commission
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
CEPREDENAC	Coordination Center for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America
CIPD	International Conference on Population and Development
CIS	Council of Central American Social Integration
CMCA	Central American Monetary Council
COMIECO	Council of Ministers of Economic Integration
COMISCA	Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic
COMMCA	Council of Ministers of Women of the Central American Integration System and the Dominican Republic
CONADECO	Central American Council for Consumer Protection
CONAMU	National Council for Women
CONAPLUVI	National Commission for Prevention and Fight against Domestic Violence

COSEFIN	Council of Ministers of Finance or Tax Administration of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic
CRICAP	Real Estate Registry Council of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic
CTCAP	Central American Commission of Science and Technology
CTGS	Technical Commission on Gender in Health
CTS-PRIEG/SICA	Sectoral Technical Committees –PRIEG/SICA-
DIAKONIA	World Federation of Diaconal Associations and Communities
DSD/SG-SICA	Democratic Security Directorate SG-SICA
ECADERT	Central American Strategy for Territorial Rural Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDAN	Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis
EHPM	Household Survey of Multiple Purposes
EMPRENDE	Integral Development of Entrepreneurship Program in Central America and the Dominican Republic
ESCA	Central American Security Strategy
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
GEM	Women's Specific Cabinet
GIZ	German International Cooperation Agency
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICAP	Central American Institute of Public Administration
ILO	International Labor Organization
INAM	National Institute of Women of Honduras
INAMU	National Institute of Women of Panama
INAMU	National Institute of Women of Costa Rica
INCAP	Central America and Panama Institute of Nutrition
INIM	Nicaraguan Institute for Women
IPG	Institutionalization of the Gender Perspective
ISDEMU	Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women
MIDES	Ministry of Social Development
MIPYMES	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs in English)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWC	National Women's Commission of Belize
OCASO	Organization of the Central American States
ODETCA	Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development of Central America
OEA	Organization of American States (OAS)
OIM	The International Organization for Migration
OSPESCA	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
PACA	Central American Agricultural Policy
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PARCA	Environmental Plan of the Central American Region
PARLACEN	Central American Parliament

PCGIR	Central American Policy for the Comprehensive Management of Disaster Risk
PEA	Economically Active Population
PEC	Central American Educational Policy
PIEG	National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity
PIEGAL	Legislative Assembly Policy on Gender Equality and Equity
PLANEG	National Plan for Gender Equity
PPIOM	Public Policy on Equal Opportunities for Women
PPT	Pro Tempore Presidency
PRESANCA	Regional Program for Food and Nutrition Security for Central America
PRIEG/SICA	Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality
PROIGUALDAD	Cooperation Project for the Institutionalization of the Gender Equality Program in SICA
PSCA-RD	Central America and the Dominican Republic Health Plan
PSI	Sectorial Inter-Institutional Equality Plans
SE-CAC	Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council
SG-SICA	General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIECA	Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration
SISCA	Secretariat of Central American Social Integration
SITCA	Secretariat of Central American Tourism Integration
STM-COMMCA/SICA	Technical Secretariat of Women of the Council of Ministers of Women of the Central American Integration System
TIC	Information and Communication Technologies
UCE/SG-SICA	SICA Energy Coordination Unit
UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Program for Development
UNFPA/LACRO	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Presentation by the General Secretariat of SICA

From Esquipulas II, three decades ago, the presidents of SICA region have committed to *"promote an authentic pluralistic and participatory democratic process that involves the promotion of social justice and respect for Human Rights."*

These imperative objectives cannot be achieved while more than half of the population continues to face discrimination, inequality, and violence, as it happens with women throughout their life cycle. Without full respect and the guarantee of their human rights, democracy cannot exist.

I have always believed in equity and gender equality to enhance our development. At the time of my Presidency, more than 40 women served in the highest management positions during my administration, in those times, this was a real scandal. Aware of the importance of the participation of women and their leading role in development, I have increased my commitment to gender equality throughout these years, with the certainty that they constitute a cornerstone for the development of their families, communities, and countries.

We understand that a transversal line of work must be human rights and gender equality and equity, as it was included in the Vision and Strategic Plan 2018-2021 of the General Secretariat, in full agreement with the PRIEG/SICA. This line aims: *"To adopt the approach of human rights and gender in the operational practices of SG SICA and in the exercise of its coordinating role of the System and of PRIEG/SICA, as a cornerstone for the achievement of sustainable development, with the objective that regional integration becomes an instrument to contribute to a fair, equitable, and inclusive development for SICA's peoples."*

I have reaffirmed my commitment and that of the General Secretariat of SICA with the implementation of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality (PRIEG/SICA) and human rights of women; since, although we have made progress overcoming gender gaps in the region, it is still essential that it be a priority.

I want to recognize the support and commitment of the international community with the region to promote PRIEG/SICA and strengthen institutional actions so that we achieve an inclusive and fair development.

At the end of my term of office, I will be fully satisfied to have contributed substantively to the path that marks the full compliance of women's human rights, achieving significant contributions in reducing historical gaps in gender inequality and, in this manner, to have advanced in the construction of democratic, representative, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

Vinicio Cerezo
Secretary General of SICA
President of Guatemala 1986-1991

Presentation of the Pro Tempore Presidency of COMMCA

Gender inequalities have generated deep inequality gaps in the full and active exercise of the universal human rights of women in the SICA Region, constituting one of the greatest challenges of the States of the Regional Integration System, in its consolidation process as a region of peace, freedom, democracy, and development.

SICA, with the incorporation of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), with the support of the different bodies and institutions of the System, and in coordination with the General Secretariat (SG-SICA), has adopted the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality (PRIEG/SICA), as the mechanism to overcome inequalities.

The PRIEG/SICA has fostered a broad political and technical process involving the regional institutions and the States that are part of SICA, generating the creation of conditions and mechanisms for the institutionalization of the policy, in order to take the necessary measures to guarantee the full development and advancement of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, in equality and equity conditions, in the: political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional spheres, both at the regional and national scope.

By presenting the update of the PRIEG/SICA, COMMCA ratifies its commitment to the elimination of discrimination based on gender. Likewise, it assumes the unwavering challenge of working so that States and Regional Institutions continue to advance firmly to guarantee the full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women in the Region.

Janet Camilo
Pro Tempore Presidency COMMCA
Dominican Republic

Recognition and acknowledgments

The Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA 2013) and the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA) express our gratitude to the technical teams of the national mechanisms of women that make up COMMCA; the different sectoral ministries and regional institutions that belongs to SICA; as well as, women's organizations and networks, for the support during the drafting process of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of the Central American Integration System (PRIEG/SICA).

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We thank the cooperation partners that accompanied the processes of construction and implementation of the Policy, especially the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), through the project "Support to the Program for Gender Equality Institutionalization in the System of the Central American Integration (PROIGUALDAD) "; the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID), through its financial instrument Fondo España-SICA; The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), through the project "Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development of Central America (ODETCA)", the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA/LACRO), the Regional Center of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

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Executive Summary

The Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of the Central American Integration System (PRIEG/SICA) is a public policy that expresses SICA's position on the principles of gender equality and equity and non-discrimination against women, is cross-disciplinary and long-term and bases its institutional execution on the pillars of regional integration.

As a regional policy, it is a directive and guiding instrument that promises to add value to sectoral and national interventions, incorporating equality and equity as criteria for the strengthening of sectoral policies and the institutions involved in regional issues.

PRIEG/SICA is the result of a technical and political process in which relevant actors of regional life have participated: officials of SICA, representatives of networks of women's organizations linked to regional advocacy processes, national sectoral institutions, experts in equality from academic, governmental, and cooperation sectors.

The starting point for its preparation was the Resolution on the Guidelines of PRIEG, presented at the proposal of COMMCA and received at the XXXVIII Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the SICA countries, in December 2011.

Two years later, on November 7, 2013, PRIEG/SICA is approved by the COMMCA in an Extraordinary Meeting; and, subsequently, by the Chiefs and Heads of State and Government of the SICA countries, at the XLII Regular Meeting, which was held in Buenaventura, Panama, on December 14 of that same year, where it was agreed: "To approve the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality (PRIEG) and instruct the institutions of SICA and the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic, so that, in coordination with the General Secretariat of SICA, they establish the necessary mechanisms for its operation".

General objective

By 2025, the States Parties of SICA have incorporated the necessary measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, in equality and equity conditions, in the political, social, economic, cultural, environmental and institutional spheres, both at the regional and national scope.

Strategic Thrusts

The PRIEG/SICA proposes to develop measures in seven strategic thrusts, responding to its specific objectives:

1. **Financial Autonomy:** to promote the removal of institutional, material, and cultural obstacles that prevent Central American and Dominican women from fully enjoying their economic rights under equality conditions.
2. **Education for equality:** to strengthen public action in critical areas for the development of skills and the social and productive insertion of women in the region.
3. **Management and integral prevention of disaster risks:** to minimize the practices that reproduce inequality in public actions of planning, organization, and implementation of efforts dedicated to risk management and adaptation to climate change.
4. **Health in equality:** to strengthen the capacities of health systems so that they can operationally integrate the human rights perspective of women and the life cycle approach in promotion, prevention, and health care.
5. **Security and violence-free life:** to promote the incorporation of the right to a violence-free life in policies, programs, and public actions aimed towards preventing, detecting, addressing, and eradicating violence in public and private spheres.
6. **Political participation and decision-making:** to establish a regional route for the standardization/homologation of national legislations with the international legal mechanisms adopted by the States in matters of political rights and women's citizenship; and to generate technical capacities within the regional and national institutions for the guarantee and enforceability of women's political and citizen rights.
7. **Conditions for implementation and sustainability:** This thrust concentrates a series of critical factors for the effective operation of PRIEG/SICA, in particular, for the sustainability of the equality agenda in general. These include funding, gender statistics and the promotion of cultures for equality.

The strategic thrusts give way to a body of 62 measures distributed in the following way, according to theme and type (Table 1):

Table 1. Classification of PRIEG/SICA measures by strategic thrust

Measure type	Financial autonomy	Education	Risk Management	Health	Security	Political participation	Implementation conditions	Total
Homologation and harmonization	2	2	2	1	3	2	7	12
Strengthening of sectoral policies	7	4	3	3	3		7	20
Institutional strengthening	3	3	3	5	3	6		30
Total measures	12	9	8	9	9	8		62

Regional architecture

Regarding institutional arrangements, PRIEG/SICA requires a regional architecture for coordination, monitoring, and evaluation, to strengthen the governing mandate of COMMCA and the national mechanisms of women; additionally, allowing a healthy distinction of roles at two levels: between institutions with cross-sectional and sectoral mandates; and between regional and national institutions.

The architecture of PRIEG/SICA will have the following mechanisms¹:

- Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), as the political body and highest authority on the matters of PRIEG/SICA, will issue the recommendations and resolutions it deems appropriate to promote the progress of the measures established.
- Executive Committee (CD-PRIEG, due to its name in Spanish), formed within the framework of the SICA Secretariats Commission, by means of mandating the exercise of the special function of acting as a directive entity of PRIEG/SICA.

1. Appendix 1. National Women's Mechanisms, Executive Committee and Sectoral Technical Committees of PRIEG/SICA.

- Sectoral Technical Committees (CTS-PRIEG, due to its name in Spanish), with the role of supporting the implementation and follow-up, through the promotion of inter-institutional coordination, discussion, and consolidation of action plans and reports, and the preparation of proposals for the progress of measures.

Finally, it is necessary to specify that for the execution of PRIEG/SICA, a call is made to all SICA institutions and their corresponding national mechanisms, whenever their mandates are related to the content of the proposed measures; therefore, it also represents an opportunity for the strengthening of intergovernmental cooperation.

Reference Framework

1.1. International agreements on equality: consensus agendas and pending agendas

The SICA² Region has been placed in favor of gender equality, legally acknowledging existing international regulations, since the Charter of the United Nations to date, has signed and ratified a significant number of international, regional and national agreements, treaties, and conventions related to gender equality and women's human rights.

The international legal and regulatory framework in this area is broad. Among the most important international instruments for the Region, signed and ratified by member countries, are: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (known as CEDAW, approved by the UN, in 1979) – and its Optional Protocol, approved in 1999 –; and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, Belém do Pará, approved in 1994.

The Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, constitutes a historic milestone for equality, and participated the representatives of the eight countries that make up the SICA Region. This instrument includes the recognition of state responsibility, the private sector and civil society in the actions to eliminate all obstacles to equal opportunities. Also, "*mainstreaming*" and "empowerment" surfaced as strategies for the full development of women's human rights, being these orientations still in force.

From this context of guidelines for projecting equality, the panorama of the countries of the Region has changed positively, there are mechanisms for the advancement of women, specific legislations, public policies and various instruments to operationalize the commitments made through the international agreements.

2. The SICA Region is composed of the following countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic.

Table 2. Situation of the SICA Region regarding its membership and ratification to the main international agreements for the promotion of equality and women's rights

	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dominican Republic
Protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish human trafficking, especially women and children's, which complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000)	Allegiance	State party	Allegiance	Allegiance	State party	State party	State party
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW - 1979)	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party
Optional Protocol CEDAW (1999)	State party	-	-	-	-	State party	
Convention on Children Rights, CD (1989)	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party
Convention on the Citizenship of Married Women (1957)	State party	-	-	Allegiance	-	State party	State party
Convention on the political rights of women (1952)	State party	State party	-	Allegiance	State party	State party	State party
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women "Convention of Belém do Pará" (1994)	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party	State party

(-) No State party

Source: Technical Secretariat of Women of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (STM-COMMCA), based on data provided by the national mechanisms of women of the SICA member countries that integrate COMMCA.

Some countries have incorporated positive action measures within their electoral legislation to facilitate and promote the political participation of women, based on equality laws and comprehensive laws for the elimination of violence against women; there has also been harmonization of family legislation and civil and political rights.

Given that some of these legislations belong to the so-called *second generation*, it has been possible to incorporate issues such as femicide, trafficking of women, girls and boys, sexual violence, among others; the adaptation of terminologies and concepts and, in some cases, the extension of the scope of application of the laws of violence, including other types of relationships and/or links in which a person incurs a crime³.

3. Appendix 2. International, regional, and national agreements related to equality and women's rights.

However, despite significant progress, in some countries, the adoption and ratification of certain international instruments such as the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women or the reservations to the recognition of the International Court of Justice is still pending, as the entity in charge of ensuring compliance with said agreements (Table 2).

Another factor that slows down the progress made, is the fact that the national mechanisms for the advancement of women have limited budgets in relation to their mandates, which depend on fiscal soundness and, above all, on the commitment of governments to invest in gender equality; consequently, difficulties are encountered in the implementation of national equality plans, institutional strengthening and in the services of attention and restitution of rights to women victims of violence.

The mechanisms for the advancement of women that, in absolute amounts, have more funds are: Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic; on the other hand, the countries that allocate least budget are: Honduras and Nicaragua (Table 3).

**Table 3. Budget allocation to national mechanisms for the advancement of women
(Million USD\$), year 2017**

Guatemala - Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM)	US\$ 3,300,000.00
El Salvador - Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU)	US\$ 5,143,445.00
Honduras - National Women's Institute (INAM)	US\$ 957,050.26
Nicaragua - Ministry of Women (MINIM)	US\$ 992,486.03
Costa Rica - National Institute of Women (INAMU)	US\$ 35,000,000.00
Panama - National Institute of Women (INAMU)	US\$ 6,144,400.00
Dominican Republic - Ministry of Women (MMUJER)	US\$ 11,602,809.00

Source: Technical Secretariat of Women of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (STM-COMMCA), based on data provided by the national mechanisms of women of the SICA member countries that constitute COMMCA.

The pending agenda of the countries of the Region focuses on areas such as: women's access to justice; labor market and care services; attention and restitution services of rights for women victims of violence; sexual and reproductive rights; women's access to decision-making positions in the public and private spheres; access and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); regulation of social media, both public and private, in regards to equality; education plans that are non-sexist and stereotype-free; budgets with gender perspective; and incorporation of the agendas of rural, indigenous, and afro-descendant women.

Many of the issues on the pending agenda are included in international agreements, such as those contracted at the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Subsidiary Body of ECLAC, within the framework of the Consensus adopted in this space. The most recent Consensuses (Quito, 2007, Brasilia 2010, and Santo Domingo 2013) set the tone in terms of women's financial autonomy and on relevant issues such as: paid domestic work, ICTs, and the empowerment of women, among others.

On the other hand, the Montevideo Consensus, the result of the First Meeting of the Regional Conference on Population and Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in August 2013, reviews the pending issues and the new challenges for the Region, in terms of population and development. Among the priorities included in the current agenda are: the rights, needs and demands of adolescents and young people, the elderly, persons with disabilities, social protection and socio-economic challenges; the gap in universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and gender equity; indigenous and afro-descendant populations. This agenda is included in PRIEG/SICA in the form of strategic approaches to guide its actions.

1.2. Context of equality in the SICA Region

The population of Central America and the Dominican Republic equates to more than 56.2 million inhabitants and women represent half of this population, that is, 50.6% (Table 4).

Table 4. Total population in Central America and the Dominican Republic (percentage of women), year 2015

Country	Population in Millions	% of women
Guatemala	15.9	51.1%
El Salvador	6.3	52.8%
Honduras	8.8	50.01%
Nicaragua	6.0	50.7%
Costa Rica	4.8	49.9%
Panama	3.9	49.8%
Dominican Republic	10.5	50.1%

Source: ECLAC, Observatory on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015.

The SICA Region leads a demographic transition characterized by a slowdown in population growth and a gradual aging of the population. As a whole, nowadays the weight of the population in productive ages has increased considerably, as the younger population began to decrease and has not accumulated a significant older population. This phenomenon has been called "demographic bonus"; a situation that allows to promote growth and development.

Migration is another relevant factor in the Region's panorama. Although some studies affirm that women who migrate, especially those who migrate to the United States, may be improving their financial autonomy, however, it is necessary to study all gender relations that take place in the dynamics of migrant populations in-depth. There is information and preliminary studies that link migration with the high risk of violence against women and with the establishment of the so-called 'global care chains'.

Also, the rural-city migrations have accelerated. In general terms, the Central American isthmus has gone from being mostly rural in 1980, when two thirds of its population lived in the countryside; to be mostly urban, with more than half of the population living in cities (State of the Region, 2011). From 2005 to 2015, the population of urban areas has grown considerably. By 2015, there is a 38% population living in rural areas and 62% of the population in urban areas (Table 5).

Table 5. Population in urban and rural areas (percentage)

Country	Area	2005	2010	2015
Guatemala	Rural	50.0	42.8	36.4
	Urban	50.0	57.2	63.6
El Salvador	Rural	42.2	39.7	37.4
	Urban	57.8	60.3	62.6
Belize	Rural	53.7	55.0	56.0
	Urban	46.3	45.0	44.0
Honduras	Rural	52.2	49.5	46.9
	Urban	47.8	50.5	53.1
Nicaragua	Rural	43.0	41.7	40.4
	Urban	57.0	58.3	59.6
Costa Rica	Rural	37.4	34.0	31.2
	Urban	62.6	66.0	68.8
Panama	Rural	36.3	34.9	29.2
	Urban	63.7	65.1	70.8
Dominican Republic	Rural	34.5	31.4	28.9
	Urban	65.5	68.6	71.1

Source: SICA's Integrated Statistical Information System

In recent decades, the general situation of women has improved substantively in different areas. Indicators show advancement in the educational level of women, increases in their insertion in the labor market and in decision-making positions, but there are still important challenges to face to achieve equality. The following is a brief overview of the situation of women in the Region, with synthetic information that has been grouped into the three cornerstones of women's autonomy⁴.

1.2.1. Economic Autonomy

The economic autonomy of women is related to the sum of their capacities to generate their own income and resources, and access to paid work without discrimination and under equality conditions, which allow them to fully develop and make decisions about their life. In addition, it involves establishing social responsibility for the care and recognition of their contribution to the economy through unpaid work.

In the Region, the participation of women and men in different economic activities is determined by the assignment of roles and differentiated practices through sexual division of labor. In this case, the differences between men and women in terms of labor participation, employment, unemployment, and income are maintained due to structural factors that segregate the participation of women in low productivity sectors, in the informal sector, with limited access to credit and with lower salaries, self-employment, and other unpaid forms of income generation.

Discrimination against women in the economic sphere is expressed in the following aspects: male standardization of criteria and profiles in management positions; the promotion of job opportunities aligned with the continuity of the sexual division of labor that confines large proportions of women to less remunerated productive sectors and, often, without conditions of dignity and job security or isolates them to the scope of domestic work; the limited capacity of access to housing and productive lands; limited access and incorporation to non-traditional technical training and the lack of time for training, work, or employment.

4. The autonomy of women has been conceptualized in three dimensions: financial, physical, and political. This concept is developed for the XI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Brasilia in 2010, in order to show the progress and challenges of countries towards inequality. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Female participation in the Economically Active Population (PEA, for its acronym in Spanish) is low compared to the participation of men; it reaches only 38.5% on average in the Region (Table 6). Furthermore, the average percentage of women in the region without their own income for 2015 is 36.5%, considerably higher than that of men in this situation (Table 7). The situation is even worse for rural women, whose participation barely reach a share around 30%, while the participation of men exceeds 75%.⁵

Table 6. Economically active population (percentage), year 2015

Country	PEA	Female PEA (%)	Male PEA (%)
Guatemala	6,803,259	37.5	62.4
El Salvador	2,815,916	42.9	57.0
Honduras	3,426,807	35.9	64.0
Nicaragua	2,807,904	37.8	62.1
Costa Rica	2,330,897	38.6	61.3
Panama	1,856,418	38.3	61.7
Dominican Republic	4,305,882	38.4	61.5

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

Table 7. Women without own income (Percentage), year 2015⁶

Country	Women (%)	Men (%)
Guatemala	51.0	14.0
El Salvador	35.7	16.0
Honduras	39.7	15.8
Nicaragua	Und.	Und.
Costa Rica	35.0	10.5
Panama	28.1	8.1
Dominican Republic	29.7	12.6

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

5. Based on data from ECLAC, SISCA/SICA calculated the economic participation rate of rural population, by gender, for the years of 2009-2014, for the economically active population aged 15 and over. Figures correspond to the most recent information available in the database consulted: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, and the Dominican Republic information for 2014, for Honduras in 2013 and for Nicaragua in 2009.
6. Ratio of the female (or male) population aged 15 and over who are not a recipient of individual monetary income and who do not study (according to their activity status) in relation to the total female (or male) population of 15 years and over who do not study.

The Gender Equality Observatory of ECLAC states that receiving own income gives decision-making power over the administration of economic rewards to cover the needs of the household and of other household members, so this indicator is key to characterize the lack of economic autonomy of women.

The countries of the Region show significant proportions of female heads of household in poverty conditions, both in urban and rural areas, a situation that is exacerbated in households with a greater presence of children.

The index of femininity in poor households compares the percentage of poor women aged 20 to 59 years in comparison with poor men in that same group. This indicator shows that efforts to reduce poverty have not benefited men and women equally, nor have they had the same rhythm, and that, in the end, poor households concentrate a greater proportion of women in ages of greater productive and reproductive demand (ECLAC, 2015) (Table 8).

Table 8. Index of femininity in poor households, year 2015 ⁷

Country	Contents
Guatemala	101.9
El Salvador	103.8
Honduras	100.7
Nicaragua	104.3
Costa Rica	125.0
Panama	123.2
Dominican Republic	132.3
Latin America	118.2

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

In addition, the wage gap between men and women and the occupational segregation for women persist, which would reveal that employment does not directly lead to equal pay, and that vocational training is not yet sufficiently inclusive to generate access to jobs in an equitable manner.

7. The Index of femininity in poor households shows the disparities in the incidence of poverty (indigence) between women and men. A value above 100 indicates that poverty (indigence) affects women more than men; a value below 100 indicates the opposite.

Housekeeping and caregiving remain a predominantly female responsibility. Women work fewer hours in a paid job to take time to take care of their children and to do domestic chores, on average, they perform these tasks two and a half times more than men. Also, employed women have longer working hours than men, at this point it is estimated that the gender gap is 73 minutes and 33 minutes; even so, they continue to undertake most of the tasks of house care and unpaid domestic tasks.⁸

In all the countries in the region for which data are available, women's unpaid work time is much longer than the time men spend on these same activities. This shows that, despite the increasing participation of women's labor in market-based economy, this has not been matched by a greater participation of men in domestic and unpaid care work within the household. The overload of women's work hours acts as a barrier to participation in the labor market in equal conditions with men and access to economic resources that allow them greater degrees of autonomy (ECLAC, 2015).

In terms of business, the Region is well known by the substantial amount of existing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MIPYMES, for its name in Spanish). In 2011, 64% of the micro and small companies in El Salvador were in the hands of women (National Commission of Micro and Small Enterprises, 2011), in Panama, in 2010, more than 57% of micro-enterprises were led by women (Ministry of Economy and Finance); in the Dominican Republic (data from January 2009) around 45% of micro, small, and medium enterprises were run by women (National Competitiveness Council); and in Nicaragua, 55% of MIPYMES were managed by women (Ministry of Development and Industry and Trade of Nicaragua).

The larger the size of the companies, the lower is the participation of women in their ownership and even lower participation in their general management, a difference that deepens when moving from the medium-sized segment to larger companies.

Regarding land ownership, some available data show that the proportion of women that own land is still low. For example, in El Salvador, women represent only 14% of the people who own land with agricultural orientation (EHPM 2011). And for the past decade, it was estimated that in Honduras, only 12% of the plots of land owned corresponded to women, while in Guatemala, only 9% of the allotments of land given, between 1962 and 1996, corresponded to indigenous women (Calfio Montalva, 2005).

In another area, although significant progress is being made in the SICA Region in terms of access and educational coverage, translated primarily into greater schooling for girls, among the

8. ILO (2016).

main challenges, the need to advance in the quality of education is maintained, expressed in a solid curriculum capable of promoting the principle of equality and non-discrimination in all courses of studies, and in the training and professional practice of staff teacher at all levels and modalities of educational systems.

It is demonstrated that there is a greater multiplier effect in the increase of women's income (44% vs. 36% for men) when they manage to complete four or more years of studies (UN, 2005). In the Region, the latest censuses show that female illiteracy is, in general, slightly lower than that of men, as reflected in the illiteracy rate (Table 9).

Table 9. Literacy rate of people aged 15 and over, by sex (percentage), year 2015

Country	Women	Men	Total
Guatemala (year 2014)	76.4	86.8	81.3
El Salvador	86.2	90.0	88.0
Honduras	87.9	87.9	87.9
Nicaragua	Und	Und	Und
Costa Rica	Und	Und	Und
Panama	Und	Und	Und
Dominican Republic	92.3	91.7	92.0

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

The net enrollment rate by level of pre-primary education expresses higher enrollment for girls (Table 10). However, in general, the coverage gap persists to serve populations from 3 to 5 years old, ages in which the children demand more hours of care, which becomes a determining factor that women become part of the population that declares not to be economically active because of "housework" or "family obligations" (categories commonly used in Household Surveys).

Table 10. Net enrollment rate by level of Pre-primary education (percentage), year 2015

Country	Girls	Children	Total
Guatemala (year 2014)	43.1	42.8	42.9
El Salvador	62.4	60.3	61.3
Honduras	42.9	40.9	41.9
Nicaragua	Und	Und	Und
Costa Rica	50.1	50.6	50.4
Panama	Und	Und	Und
Dominican Republic	44.2	42.1	43.2

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

The percentage of students who begin the first grade and reach the last grade of elementary education shows a lot of parity, as reflected by the figures in 2015 (Table 11).

Table 11. Percentage of students who begin the first grade and reach the last grade of elementary education, year 2015

Country	Girls	Boys	Total
Guatemala (year 2014)	71.5	72.0	71.8
El Salvador	85.2	80.3	82.6
Honduras	76.7	74.3	75.4
Nicaragua	Und	Und	Und
Costa Rica	91.4	89.4	90.4
Panama	Und	Und	Und
Dominican Republic	80.8	76.7	78.6

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

The percentage of people aged 20 to 24 with complete secondary education by sex for 2014, accounts for more young women who have studies compared to young men (Table 12).

Table 12. Percentage of people from 20 to 24 years of age with complete secondary education by sex, year 2014

Country	Women	Men	Total
Guatemala (year 2014)	32.8	33.2	33.0
El Salvador	48.2	43.2	45.9
Honduras	nd	nd	nd
Nicaragua	nd	nd	nd
Costa Rica	62.3	54.4	58.2
Panama	62.5	54.5	58.6
Dominican Republic	70.1	52.3	60.9

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

University education for the 25-59-year-old population, according to years of education, also reflects a higher degree of study for women (except for Guatemala and El Salvador). This indicator includes university education and technical vocational training (Table 13).

Table 13. University education, year 2015

Country	Women	Men	Total
Guatemala (year 2014)	5.8	6.5	6.1
El Salvador	14.2	15.1	14.6
Honduras	Und	Und	Und
Nicaragua	Und	Und	Und
Costa Rica	24.7	23.2	24.0
Panama	33.2	24.6	29.1
Dominican Republic	24.8	17.0	21.0

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

However, the countries have a pending debt to get youngsters into the labor market, who additionally, are not registered for any type of educational training. This sector of the population aged 15-24, not in education or employed, by group of age and geographical area, for the year 2014, exceeds 25%, as expressed in the data (Table 14). In Latin America and the Caribbean, close to 30 million young people do not study nor work, of this total, 70% are women from predominantly urban sectors and 55% are engaged in domestic work and unpaid care.⁹

Table 14. Young people from 15 to 24 years of age who do not study nor work (or do not integrate the PEA), year 2014

Country	Percentage
Guatemala	25.8
El Salvador	24.9
Honduras (year 2013)	25.7
Nicaragua	na
Costa Rica	12.7
Panama	18.4
Dominican Republic	17.5

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

Public spending on education is one of the main reasons for the problems faced by education systems in the Region, as it remains extremely limited in relation to what is set forth in international commitments, hence the difficulties towards improving quality indicators, where the promotion of gender equality represents a cornerstone. (Table 15).

9. Data published by OCADE, based on information from ECLAC to 2012.

Table 15. Public education expenditure (percentage of GDP), year 2015

Country	Percentage
Guatemala	3.0
El Salvador	3.5
Honduras	Und
Nicaragua (year 2010)	4.5
Costa Rica	7.2
Panama (year 2011)	3.2
Dominican Republic	Und

Source: ECLAC, 2015. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

1.2.2. Physical autonomy

The physical autonomy of women refers to two critical areas, gender-based violence and respect for women's reproductive rights. Woman's gender-based violent death is the most serious expression of violence and is usually the culmination of continuum of violence and discrimination that women face in their lifetime.

In recent years, the highest homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants are found in the countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras)¹⁰(Table 16).

Table 16. Homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants 2016 (both sexes)

Country	Percentage
Guatemala	27.3
El Salvador	81.2
Honduras (year 2013)	59.1
Nicaragua	7
Costa Rica	11.8
Panama	9.3
Dominican Republic	Und

Source: Insight Crime and UNODC, 2016.

10. WHO, UNODC, UNDP (2014). Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014. Geneva.

In this context, the countries of Central America with the exception of Costa Rica, note a significant number of women who die based on a gender-violence act. The use of firearms is increasing and most of these violent acts are committed in public places, with the participation of organized crime groups and networks (Table 17).¹¹

Table 17. Number of femicides and femicide rate (2014, 2015 and 2016)

Country	2014	2015	2016	Femicide rate per 100,000 women (2016)
Guatemala	217	201	211	2.5
El Salvador	292	275	371	11.0
Honduras	531	471	466	10.2
Nicaragua	38	53	49	-
Costa Rica	14	12	13	0.5
Panama	26	29	19	0.9
Dominican Republic	188	77	70	-

Source: Costa Rica: Statistics Section, Judicial Branch Planning Department; El Salvador: Office of the Attorney General of the Republic; Guatemala: Judicial Branch and Public Ministry; Honduras: University Institute in Democracy, Peace and Security (IUDPAS, for its name in Spanish) - National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). Observatory of Violent Deaths of Women and Femicides; Panama: Sixth Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office of the Public Ministry. For 2014, the data for El Salvador comes from the National Civil Police; in Guatemala from the Guatemalan National Police; 2014 from the Public Prosecutor's Office; for Nicaragua the data for 2014 and 2015 come from the Public Prosecutor's Office; and for the Dominican Republic the data for 2016 come from the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic.

Violence in all its expressions limits the integral development of girls, adolescents, young, and adult women, and the full exercise of their universal human rights, including sexual, and reproductive rights. Additionally, it is important to note that physical or sexual violence exercised by the husband or life partner predominates.

Adolescent pregnancy has risen in recent years, causing the postponement of girl's education or dropping out of school, the deepening of poverty, and the intergenerational transfer of patterns of inequality. Adolescent pregnancy contributes to higher levels of maternal mortality and morbidity, since it is associated with the possibility of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, which is aggravated because adolescents do not usually seek or receive the necessary prenatal care.¹²

11. 75% of the acts of violence in the Americas are committed by firearms, 16% by short-stabbing weapons and 9% by another type of weapon. Ibid. page 12.

12. Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Proposal of indicators to the Observatory of Gender Equality in Latin America.

When referring to the health of women and life cycle, about 2% of deaths of young women aged 15 to 29 are due to causes related to pregnancy, childbirth, or puerperium (ECLAC, UNFPA, 2011). Every year there are 1.2 million unplanned pregnancies, of which 49% occur among adolescents. According to PAHO, in the CA4¹³ -Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua- and the Dominican Republic, the percentage of adolescents who are already mothers or are pregnant for the first time amounts to 21 to 25%.

On the other hand, on the panorama of migration, the Preliminary Report of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting of Female Experts and Male Experts on International Migration (2017)¹⁴ makes reference to migration of Central Americans emphasizing that in the last two decades it has acquired greater intensity and complexity. With the exception of Costa Rica and Panama, all countries show negative net migratory balances; mainly, the countries of the Northern Triangle. The United States is the main recipient country and by 2015, 78% of Central American emigrants (3.13 million) resided in that country. Likewise, the Report indicates that intra-regional flows are smaller, but there is a population flow of Nicaraguan population to Costa Rica, and of Guatemalan population to Mexico.

Although the migrant population is predominantly male, it should be noted that this phenomenon shows an increasing participation of women. In the arrests made by Mexican authorities, women only accounted for 12% of arrests in 2012 and a systematic increase is observed with women's arrests increasing to 23% in 2016.¹⁵

Globally, the Region is experiencing a set of demographic transformations that poses challenges not only for labor markets but also for social policies. According to ECLAC estimates, life expectancy in the Region has increased by an average of 12 years in the last three decades, but this represents a relative advantage for women, for whom a longer life has not been automatically translated into a healthier life, but, on the contrary, into a "functional disability".

13. CA4 refers to the Convention for the Creation of a Central American Single Visa.

14. Preliminary Report of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting of Experts and Experts on International Migration Preparing the Global Compact for Secure, Ordered and Regular Migration (ECLAC, United Nations, IOM) (2017).

15. Given that Mexico and Central America are in fact a "migratory corridor", with movements of people with different origins and destinations, human trafficking and migrant trafficking have become of unusual importance. According to reports on the subject, the subregion (Central America and Mexico) works as a provider of people to trafficking networks that will be exploited in other countries (region of origin), it is a space that receives and hides victims who are being transferred to other countries (transit) and it supplies a demand of foreign victims that will be exploited in the sub-region in diverse activities (domestic, agricultural employment, construction, fishing, sexual commerce, begging, among others). Regarding the illicit traffic of migrants, the subregion has become a space where local and international networks operate to transfer migrants from the different countries of the same subregion, but also from other countries of the continent and even from other continents, including people of African and Asian origin. In both types of illicit activities, there is a lack of knowledge about the precise dimensions of the number of actors and resources involved, which is why the measures adopted to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants have been limited in scope. (Ibid, page 39)

According to the Presidential Secretariat of Women of Guatemala, in this country there has been a steady increase in cases of violence against women since 2008, when the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women came into force. The National Institute of Forensic Sciences carries out evaluations in cases of possible sexual violence, among which, 90% are carried out on suspicion of rape and 60% of the women evaluated for sexual violence among are comprised of girls and young women from 10 to 19 years old.

During 2016, the Public Ministry of this country registered 200 complaints of femicide, which represent 30% of violent deaths in women. During the nine years since the establishment of this crime, there have been 1,988 reports of femicide in Guatemala.

According to the National Maternal and Child Health Survey of Guatemala, the total fertility rate was 5 children in 1995; meanwhile, for the period 2014-2015, it has been reduced on average to 3 children per woman. However, in women who have not had access to education and who live in poverty, the average number of children is five (MSPAS, 2017).

In this country, maternal mortality fell from 153 in 2000 to 113.4 in 2013. Nonetheless, it remains one of the highest indicators in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, on average, has a maternal mortality ratio of 77 for the same year. In 2016 alone, Guatemala registered 37,624 pregnancies in adolescents aged 10 to 19, of which 4% were girls aged 10 to 14 (MSPAS, 2016).

According to the Observatory of Violence in Honduras, the femicide rate in 2016 amounts to 10.2 (per 100,000 women) and 466 in absolute numbers. According to the Statistical Report of Domestic Violence of the 911 System, from January to September of 2017, 35,991 complaints were received, of which the data on those prosecuted is not available.

The National Survey of Demography and Health (ENDESA, for its name in Spanish) 2011-2012, regarding sexual and reproductive health, states that, in Honduras 54% of women share decisions regarding their health care with their partners, maternal mortality is 73 (per 100,000 women), the overall fertility rate is 2.9 children, and teenage pregnancy nationwide is 24% of women aged 15 to 19 years.¹⁶

El Salvador is considered one of the most violent countries in Latin America, a situation that also affects women, girls, and adolescents in a differentiated manner. According to the statistics collected by ISDEMU, since the entry into force of the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women (LEIV), in 2012, until June 2016, a total of 1,930 women have been murdered.

16. Data provided by the National Institute for Women of Honduras, November 2017.

Although in 2016, a slight reduction in the rate is reflected to 15.19 deaths per 100,000 women, compared to the 16.79 reported in 2015, the figures continue to demonstrate the risk that women face daily as a result of violence.

In response, the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), in what refers to health, highlights the increase in coverage in maternal care related to hospital birth above 90%. During the last three years, a 60% reduction in maternal deaths has been achieved, going from a ratio of 45.6 in 2014 to 27.4 per 100,000 live births by 2016, making it the lowest maternal mortality ratio in the country's history and one of the best in Central America.

Likewise, this country maintains a sustained decrease in cases of HIV due to transmission from pregnant mother to child at a level of 1.20%, and of the HIV mortality rate of 3.27 per 100,000 inhabitants. The Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR) of El Salvador reports that on average it receives more than 6,000 women victims of crimes against sexual freedom each year (Title IV. Criminal Code rape and other sexual assaults.) For 2016, the figure amounts to 5,970 women, girls and adolescents¹⁷, this represents a rate of 173 per 100 thousand women.

The study Map of Pregnancies in Girls and Adolescents in El Salvador 2015¹⁸, point out that "the Ministry of Health reported that by 2015 a total of 13,146 Salvadoran girls aged 10 to 17 years were enrolled in prenatal care, of which 11% (1 in 9) were 14 years old or younger." For 2016, the maternal enrollment of girls from 10 to 17 was 11,194 of which 1,171 were in the age range of 10 to 14 years¹⁹.

In Costa Rica, the National Institute for Women (INAMU, for its name in Spanish) reports an average of 24 women deaths per year due to violence, although it notes that more women come forward to report violent situations experienced by couples or ex-partners of all ages. The Ministry of Health of Costa Rica reports domestic violence as a public health event that is notified by different institutions through the Individual Compulsory Notification Form known as VE-01, the rate of notifications of domestic violence cases in the period 2012 to 2016, averages 24 events per ten thousand inhabitants in the country. The provinces of Guanacaste, San José and Puntarenas are the ones that reported more cases of violence during the last two years.

17. The crimes of Article 158 CP to 173-A CP where the victims are female.

18. Available in: <http://www.inclusion-social.gob.sv/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/El-Salvador-Mapa-de-Embarazos-2015.pdf>

19. Source: Ministry of Health of El Salvador. Online Morbidity and Mortality System (SIMMOW).

Costa Rica also reveals important vulnerabilities regarding women's sexual life and their sexual and reproductive health. According to the data of the Population Fund, in this country 11% of the women begin their sexual life before the age of 15; there are 12,000 pregnancies a year among young people between 15 and 18 years of age, and 47% of women report that their last pregnancy was unwanted. 9.1% of girls and adolescents between 12 and 19 have had at least one child or daughter born alive; 10.8% of adolescent mothers reside in rural areas compared to 8.4% of those who live in the urban area. 18.9% of the adolescents who called themselves indigenous have had a son or daughter. 55.8% of adolescents with a partner have children and only 4.1% of single women.

Panama, on its end, reports 39 cases of femicide in 2014; in 2015, there were 29 cases and a total of 19 cases by 2016. During the months of January to September 2017, 13 cases were registered, according to figures from the Public Prosecutor's Office, which shows a decrease in the femicide index.

However the differences that can be found between countries, the Region must move towards the harmonization of regulatory frameworks with existing international agreements and standards; it is necessary to strengthen regional and national responses to all manifestations of violence against women, with emphasis on prevention at all levels, care, prosecution of crime, eradication of impunity, real access to justice, effective protection of women, social reintegration, and the search to strengthen women's personal and economic autonomy; likewise, it is fundamental to strengthen the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the right of women to live free of violence.

1.2.3. Political Autonomy

COMMCA/SICA countries in the last three decades have reckon on with the presence of women in the first national judiciary council: President Violeta Chamorro (1990-1997), in Nicaragua, President Mireya Moscoso (1999-2004), in Panama, and President Laura Chinchilla Miranda, in Costa Rica (2010-2013).

The participation of women in the different instances of government of the SICA countries is, in general, favorable. However, it is still low compared to the participation of men.

In the executive branch, with the exception of Costa Rica and Nicaragua (with 35% and 56% respectively), women represent between 11% (Dominican Republic) and 21% (Panama) of the people who were in Office during the previous government²⁰. As for legislative bodies,

20. Data from PRIEG/SICA published in 2013.

the presence of women is also varied. In 2012, participation was from 3.1% in Belize, to 38.6% in Costa Rica.

It is possible to emphasize an improvement in the local scope regarding municipal councils. But, when examining the participation of women as mayors, the figures are still considerably reduced, since the result of the regional average is less than 15%. In Guatemala and Panama, women represent 10% of the municipal councils, while in the rest of the countries they are below these percentages, with the exception of Costa Rica, which exceeds 40%, and the Dominican Republic, with 33.3%. % (COMMCA/SICA. Torres García, June 2012).

In Guatemala, the electoral roll registers 7,517,096 people registered for the year 2016, of which 4,045,345 are women, representing 54% of the roll. However, women have little representation in decision-making spaces, an example of which are the elected or appointed positions in the public administration.

The Government Office of Guatemala has 12 men ministers and 2 women ministers, the Secretariats are occupied by 12 men and 3 women. In the Congress, only 22 women were elected as deputies by national list or district deputies of the total of 158 that make up the Congress (TSE, 2015). By 2017, a total of 26 women were registered occupying a seat, which represents 16% of the total. It is important to highlight that for the Judicial Branch there has been an advance, since there are 13 magistracies, of which 7 are occupied by women. At the local level, among the 340 municipal corporations, only 8 women are mayors.

Honduras, on its ends, given the reform of the "Electoral Law and Political Organizations", the participation quota of women was modified, so that in the 2012 electoral process, it went from 30% to 40% in the payroll for positions of political parties and of popular election; and 10% of the public debt of the political parties was redirected for the training and political promotion of women. From the primary electoral process of 2016, the principle of parity with alternance of women and men was established, 50% for women and 50% for men.

In the last electoral period 2014-2018, the main female lower chamber representatives in the National Congress are 33, that is, 25.8% and substitute deputies are 38, which represents 29.7%. In relation to local governments, the participation in posts of mayors continues to be low, in total there are 19 women, representing the 6.4% of 298 positions at the national scope.

The main indicators that refer to the political autonomy of women in El Salvador, show that the percentage of women in decision-making bodies is lower than that of men, as in the rest of the countries, with a very low presence of women in all instances.

The 32.1% of representatives of the lower chamber in the Legislative Body for the period 2015-2018 are women; only 23% of the ministerial positions are in charge of women; the 23.8% of viceministers are women and 22.4% of managers in autonomous institutions are women. At the regional scope only 35% of the deputies in the Central American Parliament are women, as the principal deputy or as substitute deputies for that same period.

The municipal governments have 10.7% of mayors that are women, 18.4% of compliance officers, and 26.3% of councilors. In the case of the Supreme Court of Justice, for 2016, female magistrates reach 33%, according to data provided by ISDEMU.

Nicaragua shows a more encouraging picture. The United Nations Organization and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in the global ranking map on women's political participation, place Nicaragua in first place with the largest number of women in ministerial positions and fifth in the parliament, with 46% of women's participation in politics.

Similarly, it is important to point out that within the Top 10 of the World Economic Forum/Global Report on the Gender Gap 2017, Nicaragua stands out with a sixth place worldwide; reflecting a large increase in its overall index, with almost 81% of its general gender gap closed; recognizing that Nicaragua continues to have the best result in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region, for the sixth consecutive year.

Data show that in the Executive Power of Nicaragua, 56% of Ministerial positions (education, health, government, work, family, environment, family economics, women, and defense) are served by women; in the Judicial Branch, 57% is headed by female magistrates, judges, judicial secretaries, conciliators, and other areas; and in the Legislative Branch, 59.7% is represented by women. In local governments, more than 44.4% are represented by female mayors and 55.5% by vice mayors in the 153 municipalities. 50% of the total of councils are also served by women.

In turn, Costa Rica closes 2017 with a cycle marked by the analysis and the expectation that national elections will be a space that demonstrates the effective limits for equal participation that will allow a greater number of women in positions of popular elections. According to figures provided by INAMU, there are a total of 6 female ministers and 14 ministers appointed in 2016. In the case of the deputy ministries, the figure is a little closer, since 52% corresponds to men, while 48% of those charges correspond to women. By 2016, only 14.8% of local governments are served by women. In the Assembly, 35% of the councils are served by women and in the central government 31%.

A progress on women's human rights, in terms of political autonomy in Panama, has been the approval of Law No. 56 dated July 11, 2017, which establishes the participation of women in the State Boards of Directors.

This Law No. 56 sets forth that at least 30% of the members of the boards of directors of state bodies must be women; specifically, Article 2 of said Law establishes that in central government institutions, decentralized bodies, public enterprises, financial intermediaries, and those regulated by them, which have in their organizational structure a board of directors, an administrative council, or similar bodies, at least 30% of the total number of women in office shall be appointed.

In the Government Period 2015-2019, in the Executive Power, women represent only 20% of the members of the Office (Table 18).

Table 18. Percentage of women elected in Panama - 2014 Elections

Position	Main		Substitute Deputy	
Vice President	1	100%	0	0 %
Deputy PARLACEN	4	20 %	11	55%
Female Lower Chamber Representative, Assembly	13	18.2%	9	12.7%
Mayor	12	15.6%	18	23.4%
Councilor	0	0 %	2	28.6%
Legal Representative	70	10.8%	172	26.5%

Source: Electoral Tribunal of Panama

1.3. SICA's progress on gender equality

SICA's Bodies have adopted a series of decisions and measures to advance on gender equality and equity at all levels and in all sectors, from the reactivation of regional integration efforts in 1991. The first milestone in this process was the incorporation of COMMCA to SICA through Agreement No. 13 of the XXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA, in June of 2005. With this fact, the will to undertake the institutionalization of the gender perspective is manifested, by providing SICA with a specialized entity with leadership functions in the area of equality.

In this institutional strengthening path for equality, is important to highlight the establishment of a Functional Cooperation Framework Agreement with the General Secretariat of SICA on July of 2007, through which the Technical Secretariat for Women of COMMCA is linked to this superior administrative body.

The guidelines chosen in the COMMCA strategy have been the establishment of alliances and the strengthening of capacities of SICA institutions and organizations with mandates on the prioritized issues, with a view towards positioning the rights of women in the Region, in the

agenda of SICA's institutionality. These alliances have been expressed in the signing of Understanding Letters that state commitments for the continuity of joint efforts for gender equality.

The institutionalization of the gender perspective is shown at the political level in the approval of COMMCA resolutions, presidential mandates and agreements of Councils of Ministers, which welcome and issue guidelines for the assumption of equality in the integration process and in sectoral prioritized issues. A significant milestone was the Declaration of Panama "On Gender, Integration, and Development", adopted at the XXXV Meeting of Presidents of June 2010, as a result of the Resolution with the same name issued by COMMCA and that was raised to the Male Heads and Female Head of State and Government.

Declarations on sectoral issues included the 2005 Declaration issued during the XXVII Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government, which recognized the importance of strengthening national institutions to prevent and combat trafficking of persons and to provide assistance to victims; and the Agreement generated in 2011 during the XXXVIII Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government, which mandates the provision of specific instruments and tools to SICA to promote the participation of women in disaster and emergency events.

At the inter-institutional level, it has also been possible to approve several letters of understanding that answer to the presidential mandates; among these, the Letter of Understanding and Mutual Collaboration signed in 2010 between the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and COMMCA for the promotion of the political participation of women; and the Letter of Understanding between COMMCA and the Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD), signed in 2012, for the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the production of statistics and national and regional indicators in the SICA countries.²¹ In addition, Constitution Instrument of six Sectoral Technical Committees have been signed, integrated by regional instances who have Operating Frameworks to promote the implementation of the PRIEG/SICA.

These types of political expressions constitute a way to strengthen the incorporation of equality in the sectoral interventions of the different subsystems of SICA. At the same time, they support the foundations that provide institutional viability of PRIEG/SICA.

21. Appendix 3. Agreements on equality

1.4. Equality policies in the countries of the SICA Region

State policies have the power to guide public action beyond a government administration because they are presented as long-term commitment to social change. Having policies and legislations is the first step to move from expressed commitments to concrete realities.

During the last two decades, the countries of the Region have made progress in the creation of regulations and instruments for equality achievement, empowerment and the inclusion of women. International and regional treaties and regulations have guided national policies in SICA countries. It is noteworthy that during the last ten years, the update and creation of criminal codes, national policies, multiannual equality plans, and the strengthening of governing roles of national mechanisms of women have thrived. In short, equality policies are already part of the institutional frameworks of States Parties of SICA. The preparation of PRIEG/SICA provides an additional impetus to the implementation of these national frameworks by establishing a joint position that provides feedback towards the works for equality, and strengthens intergovernmental and intersectoral cooperation in this area.

General balance of the equality policies in force in SICA countries

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has been a pioneer in the enactment of laws on equality and equity in Latin America. Since the beginning of the 1990s, it has had a Law for the Promotion of Women's Social Equality, being the first country in the Region to legislate in terms of gender equality (the rest began in the mid-1990s and with specific themes, mainly considering domestic violence).

The reforms of labor and electoral codes, the creation of laws and national plans, have been constant movements in this country. During 2013, the Equality and Gender Equity Policy was developed which was presented jointly with those of El Salvador and Nicaragua as pioneers in Latin America. This Policy is valid for 10 years and is accompanied by a 5-year Action Plan that covers all areas.

Efforts undertaken have ensured that the principle of equality is incorporated in article 33 of the Constitution, and the inclusion of non-discrimination principles in legal instruments. Thus, in the Labor Procedure Reform of January 2016, gender discrimination is prohibited (Article 404). In addition, article 1 of the Political Constitution was reformed to establish the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of the country.

In recent years, it has carried out strategic actions to close the financial, technological, and employability gaps for the economic empowerment of women, among them, the visibility of unpaid work and its contribution to the economic development of women of the country can be mentioned, through the creation and approval of Cuenta Satélite (information system that allows knowing the economic characteristics of the culture); and the creation of a special regime of part-time insurance for domestic workers, which will allow them to leave their informal status.

Also, the Management System for Gender Equality was created, which consists of a certification scheme that includes recruitment and promotion criteria, procedures for sexual and work harassment, measures to reconcile productive and reproductive work, with private companies and public institutions that promote the competitiveness and inclusion of women.

Among other relevant actions, the creation of mechanisms and procedures for inspection of labor rights by the Ministry of Labor is registered, generating qualitative changes in the inspection of non-traditional situations under the protection of conventional control, for example, the inspection not only on minimum wage but also on the salary difference between men and women.

The productive sector and ministries of Economy, Industry and Trade, Agriculture and Livestock and Foreign Trade, develop coordinated actions aimed at improving women's entrepreneurship and employability through their own businesses.

Within this framework, the program for the Promotion Fund for Productive Activities and Organization of Women (FOMUJERES) is being developed, with which productive ideas presented by women are financed through the transfer of non-reimbursable resources for the delivery of seed capital for entrepreneurship. Another one of the projects, Emprende (Strengthening women's entrepreneurial capacities to enhance their economic autonomy), has worked with 996 micro and small enterprises led by women, 5% of these women with disabilities, through technical assistance and support processes and the basis of interinstitutional articulation in communities; this Project is developed with an investment of more than 4 million euros. On the other hand, the Ministry of Science and Technology and Telecommunications (MICITT, for its name in Spanish), public universities and the Ministry of Public Education (MEP, for its name in Spanish) promote the creation of scientific and technological skills and knowledge of adolescent women as well as the promotion of scientific careers for women.

Guatemala

Guatemala has developed various policies and legislations focused on the fight against violence and any type of discrimination against women, such as: the Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Domestic Violence (Decree 97-1996); The Law to Dignify and the Integral

Promotion of Women (Decree 7-99); the Law against Femicide and other Forms of Violence against Women (Decree 22-2008); the Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents (Decree 27-2003); the Law for the Protection of the Elderly (Decree 80-96); and the Law against Sexual Violence, Exploitation, and Trafficking of Persons (Decree 09-2009), among others.

In this country, the National Policy for the Promotion and Integral Development of Women (PNPDIM, by its name in Spanish) and the Opportunity Equity Plan 2008-2023 stand out. The National Policy has been the first to be evaluated and updated in a participatory process, with women's organizations of civil society and governance mechanisms. The PNPDIM is made up of 12 thrusts, which include racism and discrimination, equity, and identity in cultural development, demanded by Mayan, Garifuna, Xinka, and Mestizo women.

In legal matters, another progress has been through the approval of Decree 13-2017, which reforms the Civil Code and which regulates the minimum age for marriage (18 years), and repeals exceptions for minors to marry.

Since 2016, the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM, by its name in Spanish) undertakes the approach and development of a strategy, to position its role as a coordinating and advisory body for the monitoring of public policies for the integral development of women. This includes a series of actions for the institutional strengthening of SEPREM and other bodies, such as: The National Coordinator for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and against Women (CONAPREVI, by its name in Spanish), the Women's Specific Office and the Commissions of Women in the Council System of Urban and Rural Development (SCDUR, by its name in Spanish).

Likewise, SEPREM has strengthened its methodological strategy for the technical support it provides to public institutions for the PNDIM follow-up and has set up the Inter-institutional Budget Table for Equality between Men and Women, which is aimed towards identifying the cycle of public planning, programming, budgeting, and investment, elements and critical moments for the incorporation of CEDAW and PNPDIM's priorities. One of the technical elements that were recently revised and updated is the labeling of expenditure, through the application of the Thematic Classifier with Gender Equality contained in the Budget Law²².

The country is developing strategic agendas, understood as public policy tools that respond to problems that are addressed succinctly in the PNPDIM and that require immediate attention, in accordance with national development priorities.

22. Article 17. Decree Number 101-97 Organic Budget Law. This classifier arises initially in compliance with Article 36 of Decree Number 54-2010, Law of the General Budget of Income and Expenditures of the State for Fiscal Year 2011.

Within this framework, the Agenda for Women with Disabilities will be made official, and those that will respond to the demands of migrant women, women living with HIV, sex workers and LGBTI groups, among others. On the other hand, the country is also updating the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (PLANOVI, by its name in Spanish) for a new period.

Another of the efforts is the validation process of the dignified and transforming Reparation Policy for sexual violence, forced pregnancy and forced maternity cases in girls and adolescents. This constitutes a strategic instrument for the prevention, care and restitution of rights to girls and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence.

Guatemala's progresses are framed in the construction of the National System for Equality between Men and Women, which represents the country's mechanism for political management and technical coordination to follow national and international normative frameworks on women's human rights.

El Salvador

The Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women ISDEMU is the national institution that guides public policies for the advancement of women's rights in El Salvador. The provisions established in its framework legislation and regulations govern its scope of action.

In El Salvador, is worth mentioning the adoption of the following legislative measures: Law on Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women (2011); Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women (2012); Law on the Promotion, Protection, and Support of Breastfeeding (June of 2016); Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA, by its name in Spanish) (April 2009); Law on Development, Protection, and Development for Micro and Small Enterprises (2014); and the Special Law against Trafficking in Persons (2014).

The country has also achieved the adoption of public policies that promote women's rights, among them, the National Equality Plan 2016-2020 which contains the vision, commitments, and priorities established in each of the institutions with legal powers for the advancement of substantive equality in El Salvador and is the main public policy tool of the Salvadoran State in terms of equality for women, with national, sectoral, and municipal scope.

Since 2013 the National System of Substantive Equality (SNIS, by its name in Spanish) has been in operation, an inter-institutional coordination mechanism involving the institutions of the three State bodies and the Public Prosecutor's Office, responsible for complying with national regulations on equality and responsible for complying with the National Equality Plan.

Another of the instruments of special relevance is the National Policy for the Access of Women to a Violence-Free Life and its 2016-2021 Action Plan. The purpose of the Policy is to establish a set of guidelines, objectives, strategies, working mechanisms, and intersectoral coordination of public nature, aimed towards the detection, prevention, care, protection, reparation, and sanctioning of violence against women; in order to protect their rights to life, physical and moral integrity, freedom, non-discrimination for any reason, including, sexual orientation and gender identity; dignity, effective tutelage, personal security, real equality, and equity.

This country has a Specialized Technical Commission (CTE, by its name in Spanish), which since 2012, works as the inter-institutional coordination body with responsibility for the operationalization of the mandates of the Special Comprehensive Law for a Violence-Free Life for Women. 20 institutions of the three organs of the State integrate this Specialized Commission.

The country also has a Training School for Substantive Equality (EFIS, by its name in Spanish), which has been operating since 2012 under the coordination of ISDEMU; it represents an innovative effort that aims to contribute to the reduction of gender inequalities and discrimination against women through the institutionalization of a professional training policy for public sector personnel; in such a manner that the capacity of the State institutions to respond to their obligations of respect, protection, and guarantee of the rights of women and in the advancement of substantive equality is progressively strengthened.

Honduras

Honduras has made progress in its equality policies, as reflected in the National Policy on Women and its Second Gender Equality and Equity Plan (2010-2022). These instruments were formulated with the active participation of representatives of government institutions, the civil society, and feminist and women's organizations. Both constitute the reference framework of the policies of equity and gender equality of the country and contain the basic guidelines of the National Plan 2008-2030.

An article has been incorporated in the General Provisions of the Budget of the Republic that orders the allocation of resources to execute actions aimed towards reducing gender gaps; and as a result, the National Institute for Women (INAM, by its name in Spanish) is part of the Executive Committee and the Budget Committee's Technical Committee.

Under this context, advice has been provided on the formulation of technical proposals for institutions of the Central Government to incorporate equality approaches. Likewise, the capacities of 142 Municipal Women's Offices (OMM, by its name in Spanish), which represent 48% of the country, have been strengthened through systematic training processes on women's human rights and public management at the local scope, generating at the same time, local gender policies in 11 municipalities.

In the legal framework, the National Plan Against Violence against Women and the Credimujer Law were approved. In addition, the Special Investigation Unit of Violent Deaths of Women and Femicides was created.

Inter-institutional coordination has been strengthened in areas such as: The Commission on Sexual and Commercial exploitation, and Human Trafficking; Gender Commission on Education; and Commission Against Violence Towards Women. Also, the Presidential Program "Ciudad Mujer" was created as a new management model that integrates 14 public institutions under one roof to facilitate women the exercise of their rights, access to services for their well-being and empowerment of their development opportunities. INAM assumes the responsibility of ensuring the articulation of public gender policies with all the services offered by the Program.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua has a National Human Development Plan that includes the Policy for the Development of Women; promoting and guaranteeing the establishment of policies, plans, and programs that strengthen and make visible the empowerment and prominence of women in the political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional spheres; likewise, it has the Government's Gender Policy, the Peace and Security Strategy for Families and Communities, and the State Policy for the Strengthening of the Nicaraguan Family and the Prevention of Violence, which contribute to the construction of positive conditions and the removal of obstacles so that the equality of men and women is real and effective.

Since 2007, Nicaragua has made an important and sustained progress in terms of gender equality, which has allowed it to be positioned as the country in the Americas with the greatest participation of women in political, social, and economic spaces; thus, it is the only Central American country that has closed the gender gap by more than 80%; occupying the sixth position worldwide, according to the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum that analyzes 144 countries in their progress towards gender parity, data published in 2017.

These progresses have been recognized by the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which place Nicaragua on the world ranking map on women's political participation, reaching the first place with the largest number of women in ministerial positions and fifth, in parliament.

These achievements are the result of the political will that was consolidated with the approval of new laws in support and restoration of women's rights since 2007, among which the Equal Rights and Opportunities Law (Law 648) stands out; the Law Creating the Fund for the Purchase of Lands with Gender Equity for Rural Women (Law 717); the Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women (Law 779) and Amendments to the Law of the Criminal Code

(Law 641); the Law on Reform and Addition to Law 40 (Law 786); the Law on Municipalities, which includes the gender component for municipalities; the Law on the Reform of the Electoral Law (Law 790); the Law on Amendment and Addition to Law 290 (Law 832); the Law on Organization, competencies and procedures of the Executive Power, through which the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Youth are created.

Likewise, the Law of Paternal and Maternal Responsibility is registered (Law 623); the Special Law for the Protection of Families in which there are multiple pregnancies and births (Law 718); the Law on Partial Reform of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua (Law 854); the Law for the Creation of the Heroine and National Hero Title (Law 859), the Family Code (Law 870); and the Law Against Human Trafficking (Law 896), among others.

Panama

Panama has an Equal Opportunities for Women Act (Law dated January 4, 1999), regulated by Executive Decree 53 dated June 2002; a National Women's Council (CONAMU, by its name in Spanish), parity between the Government and civil society; and the Network of Government Mechanisms for Equal Opportunities, with at least 36 women's or gender offices.

It also has important instruments such as the National Plan Against Domestic Violence and Citizen Coexistence Policies (2004-2014) and more recently, the Public Policy on Equal Opportunities for Women (PPIOM, by its name in Spanish). Since 1997, Panama has incorporated the female electoral quota of 30% through the Law of July 22nd, 1997; and in terms of women's labor rights, undertakes the modernization of labor relations and breastfeeding promotion.

One of the most significant advances has been the Criminal Code reform, through the approval of Law 82 dated October 24, 2013, which typifies femicide and sanctions other forms of violence against women with penalties that can be up to 30 years of imprisonment and creates the National Committee against Violence in Women (CONVIMU, by its name in Spanish).

Since 2015, the increase in the historical budget of the National Institute for Women has been achieved, which translates into the redefinition of budgetary priorities to contribute to reducing gender gaps and in the promotion of women's rights, achieving a total of B/.6,144,400 balboas (compared to B/.2,962,900 balboas received in 2014) to strengthen women's institutions.

This increase is reflected in the institutional growth with the establishment of at least 14 Centers of the National Institute for Women (CINAMU, by its name in Spanish) between 2015 and 2016, which are the new face of the entity, with greater geographical coverage and true national presence, constituting a local strategy to work more closely with the citizens of this country.

In this way, all women have the opportunity to receive attention in case of violation of their rights, through free and confidential services of specialized personnel (psychologist, social worker, and legal staff) and in their native language, in the cases of the indigenous regions.

In the CINAMU cases are channeled involving shelters that provide protection for women at high risk, women receive assistance in labor, economic, entrepreneurship, among others. Likewise, in the last two years at least two shelters and a Short Stay Center have been rehabilitated and by 2018 the opening of a second Short Stay Center is planned.

In addition to this, since 2015 efforts have been made to influence the budgets of other State entities, in order to incorporate the implementation of gender investment. These initiatives led by the National Institute for Women, are linked to inter-institutional actions and articulation in favor of public policies for women such as: The Intergovernmental Agreement to Reduce Domestic Violence and Femicides, signed on July 29th, 2015, by ministers representing the State and municipal authorities of the districts with the highest incidence of violence against women.

In addition, momentum has been achieved for the establishment of the Specialized Police Service in Gender Violence in the Ministry of Security, in compliance with Law No. 82 dated 2013 (which, in 2017 begins its phase of internal organization within the National Police) and those that correspond to the promotion of rights for women within the framework of the National Committee against Violence against Women (CONVIMU), as they were: the National Protocol of Women Victims in Couple Relationships (signed on December 10, 2015) and Decree No. 100, which regulates Law No. 82 of 2013, approved in April 2017.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic has the Ministry of Women was created by Law 86-99, dated August 11 of 1999, as Secretariat of State for Women. In 2010, it became an official Ministry with the proclamation of a new Constitution for Dominican Republic, which incorporated the principle of equality between men and women and the gender approach as a cross-sectional thrust in the National Development Strategy 2030.

In recent years, the Ministry of Women has made various alliances in terms of equality with state entities such as: The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (2006), the Ministry of Education (2012), the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (2008), the National Police (2005), the National Statistics Office (2005), the Dominican Association of Women Entrepreneurs (2006), among others.

In 2011, the organizations that make up the National Commission for the Prevention and Fight against Domestic Violence (CONAPLUVI, by its name in Spanish) strengthened their

articulation links and joint work, and launched the Strategic Plan for the Prevention, Detection, Attention and Punishment of Violence against Women and Families 2011-2016.

In addition, the National Gender Equality and Equity Plan (PLANEG II, 2007-2017) was launched as a framework for the definition of a State policy that incorporates the institutionalization and integration of the gender perspective in all programs, plans, projects, and policies, from its design to its execution. Work has been done on the implementation of two Gender Equality and Equity plans, PLANEG I (2000-2004) and PLANEG II (2006-2016). Both tools constituted official frames of reference for actions aimed towards achieving equality for Dominican women and men. Currently, the evaluation of the implementation of PLANEG II has just been completed and starting in January 2018, the design of the new PLANEG III will begin.

In addition, the Ministry of Women is working on the mainstreaming in public institutions from a gender perspective through the implementation of the National Development Strategy to 2030, which is the national development plan framework that sets out the other policies being implemented in the country. This Strategy includes the implementation in the country of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, the mainstreaming process has managed to develop policies for the gender perspective in the budgets of each of the eight institutions that are working as a pilot.

Scopes and characteristics

2.1. Characteristics

The literature on public policies is considerably extensive. Most agree that public policies are developed by legitimized public entities to make decisions and that in accordance with social needs and demands, they undertake mandates and actions that aim to guide behaviors within and outside the government's institutions, with the goal of responding to collective problems, in order to achieve the common good. Public policies are based on the inescapable intervention of State institutions to correct imbalances regarding access to services and the enjoyment of human rights by the population. In particular, equality policies are aimed at mobilizing the mechanisms that ensure the correction of gender inequality gaps, the inclusion of women and the delivery of services adapted to the specific needs of specific populations.

PRIEG/SICA is the result of a technical and political process convened by COMMCA as a mandate from the highest SICA Body, in which relevant actors of regional life participated: civil servant of SICA's institutionality related to the issues in question, representatives of networks of women's organizations linked to regional advocacy processes, national sectoral institutions, academician equality experts, government, and cooperation sectors. Thus, from the perspective of the participating actors, PRIEG/SICA constitutes a public policy insofar as it has been produced within a framework of procedures, influences, and governmental organizations (Hogwood, 1984). As a regional equality policy, it has a guiding and cross-cutting nature, therefore, it must address all sectors since women are present in all spheres of our societies. The essence of this policy is complex insofar as its approach to comprehensive solutions points to an intersectoral approach that, by itself, also requires the strengthening of national mechanisms for women, both at the national scope and within the SICA institutionality. In short, it should be concretized in a collective intervention among member countries to promote intersectoral changes and at the regional level.

Additionally, it encounters other elements of context that give it a special typology, since it is a public policy driven by a regional institutional framework and is aimed towards achieving gender equality within the framework of the integration agenda a precise historical moment of the integrationist process.

PRIEG/SICA has the following particular characteristics:

1. It is a binding instrument by virtue of the fact that the Meeting of Heads of State and Government, the highest SICA Body, as established in the Protocol of Tegucigalpa to the letter of the ODECA, have approved PRIEG/SICA.
2. It is a policy recognized as the SICA's gender agenda. Therefore, it is a platform in which the themes of the integrationist agenda and the equality agenda are "found."
3. It is a cross-sectional policy, therefore, an instrument that "goes through" all the issues regarding the integration process and is placed in the center of the mainstream of regional sectoral policies; that is, PRIEG/SICA establishes a "structural thematic cross" between gender logics and analytical and programmatic structures of sectoral policies. It is a useful instrument for the equality mainstreaming in the joint regional actions of the States Parties of SICA.
4. It is a guiding policy. It is located at a strategic level, therefore, it issues applicable guidelines to the institutional framework of SICA and its States Parties. Its guidelines should be further developed into sectoral and institutional action plans.
5. It is a policy with a limited intervention framework. In institutional terms, it is delimited by the organizational regional integration framework. In thematic terms, it is delimited by the cornerstones of regional integration and by the priorities expressed in sectoral policies and strategies. And, regarding time terms, it is a long-term policy (2014-2025) which shall be revisable and updated in intermediate terms.
6. This policy expresses consensus and in this sense, it is a framework of common denominators among the countries regarding on how to address gender inequality and discrimination against women in the region.
7. Consistent with the predominant integration modality, PRIEG/SICA is a call to intersectorality and intergovernmental cooperation for the advancement of gender equality in the Region.
8. It is a policy that can be monitored and evaluated based on indicators that become institutional commitments. Likewise, to be implemented, it will set forth conditions and measures for the strengthening of the institutional framework that ensure the sustainability of the efforts undertaken.
9. It is a policy which content must provide a "regional added value" to sectoral policies and specific policies for gender equality. Therefore, its measures are not the sum of the measures of preexisting equality policies at national levels.
10. PRIEG/SICA consolidates COMMCA's position on gender inequality and discrimination against women in the Region. PRIEG/SICA positions equality between genders.

2.2. The process of formulating PRIEG/SICA

The preparation of PRIEG/SICA has been developed in a progressive course of approvals in which some milestones are distinguished, among them, COMMCA's approval of the frame and, most importantly, the approval of the Chiefs of State of the Region. The process route followed is summarized in the following phases:

Phase I. Initial political conditions

This phase corresponds to the strategic and political arrangements that concluded with the issuance of the *Resolution on the Guidelines of PRIEG* by COMMCA, which were received at the XXXVIII Meeting of Heads of State and Government (San Salvador, December 2011). Subsequently, a series of activities was carried out within COMMCA and STM-COMMCA, promoted through the Technical Secretariat of Women, aimed towards sustaining exchanges and discussions on the philosophical and strategic elements of PRIEG/SICA.

Phase II. Preparation of the framework

It was focused on the document preparation of conceptual and methodological orientations, called "Framing of PRIEG." These guidelines were approved during the XXXIII Regular Meeting of COMMCA (San José, May 2013). During this meeting, the profile of actors participating in the elaboration process was approved: representatives of the SICA's institutionality, organizations of the women's movement linked to regional agendas, experts in equality policies, national sectoral institutions, and national mechanisms for women. The approval of the Framework allowed opening the process to the consultation stage.

In this case, COMMCA agreed to request the constitution of an Interinstitutional Technical Committee *ad hoc*, which was summoned by the Secretary General of SICA, through an appeal to all System's instances, requesting the appointment of high-level technical personnel. The Interinstitutional Technical Committee for PRIEG/SICA was made up of representatives of the national mechanisms of women that constitute COMMCA and representatives of all the regional institutions linked to sectoral issues.

Phase III. Collective construction

It involved a series of activities for the collective construction of PRIEG/SICA measures. The modality of specialized consultations and meetings by strategic thrusts was chosen. The topics that were the subject of specialized consultations were: political participation and the agenda of rural women. In the regional meetings by thrust, an inventory of proposals collected in different previous spaces was discussed; it was from these preliminary proposals that, through a constructive dialogue, the participating actors agreed on the content of each strategic thrust of PRIEG/SICA. These events resulted in three areas: improvement of the legal status and standardization of regulations, institutional strengthening and improvement in the quality of

sectoral policies. Between meetings and consultations, it was possible to call a total of approximately two hundred and fifty people, mostly women from the aforementioned sectors.

Phase IV. Approval

It began with the validation of the first complete draft by the Interinstitutional Technical Committee. With this instance, the revision of the programmatic portion of the Policy was prioritized: the strategic thrusts and the institutional architecture proposal. Subsequently, the Policy was presented to COMMCA, which approved it through Agreement No. 1 of its Extraordinary Meeting dated November 7, 2013. As a conclusive milestone of this phase, PRIEG/SICA was approved at the XLII Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA, held in Buenaventura, Panama, on December 14, 2013.

Phase V. Operationalization

It is a phase dedicated to the formulation of sectoral and operational instruments that guide the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Policy. In this phase the institutional monitoring and accountability mechanisms are installed, both at regional and national scopes and the respective regulations are drawn up.

Table 18. Role of the Pro Tempore Presidencies of the COMMCA on the route of the PRIEG/SICA

In 2010, during the PPT (by its name in Spanish) exercise of Panama (Mrs. Markelda Montenegro de Herrera), COMMCA approved the Resolution "Gender, Integration and Development", which was approved that same year by the Meeting of Heads of State and of Government.

In 2010, under the leadership of the PPT of Dominican Republic (Mrs. Alejandrina Germán Mejía), the Regional Conference on "Gender, Integration and Development" was held with the presence of Michelle Bachelet, at that time Executive Director of UN WOMEN.

In 2011, during the PPT of Guatemala (Mrs. Sonia Escobedo Escalante), the Presidents approve the project profile "Violence against Women" as part of the Security Strategy portfolio, a valuable antecedent for the Security and Life Free of Violence thrust of PRIEG/SICA.

In 2011, in the period of the PPT of El Salvador (Ms. Yanira Argueta Martínez), COMMCA approved the Resolution on the Guidelines for PRIEG/SICA, which was embraced by the Meeting of Presidents that same year.

In 2012, with the Pro Tempore Presidency of Honduras (Mrs. María Antonieta Botto de Fernández), began the work towards the definition of the philosophical framework of PRIEG/SICA: principles, approaches and strategies, and bases for framing the Policy.

In 2012, during the PPT of Nicaragua (Mrs. Arlen Vargas Padilla), began the execution of the project "Support for the Program for the Institutionalization of Gender Equality in SICA (PROIGUALDAD, by its name in Spanish)" with resources from the Government of China (Taiwan). At this period, two consultations were held: one on citizen and political participation, and the other on priority issues related to PRIEG/SICA Guidelines.

In 2013, during the PPT of Costa Rica (Mrs. Maureen Clarke Clarke), the Framework of PRIEG/SICA was approved, document that marked the methodological and strategic route of the Policy; and a specialized consultation is held on the agenda of rural women.

In 2013, under the PPT of Panama (Mrs. Markelda Montenegro de Herrera), the Interinstitutional Technical Committee for PRIEG/SICA was created and four Thematic Regional Meetings were held, two in Panama (Economic Autonomy for Women and Political Rights and Citizenship of Women) and two in Guatemala (Health and Security).

In 2013, PRIEG/SICA was approved at the XLII Regular Meeting of the highest SICA Body.

In 2018, COMMCA approves the Resolution Relating to the Updating of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of the Central American Integration System (PRIEG/SICA) at the XLII Regular Meeting of February 7, 2018, in the city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, during the PPT of the Dominican Republic (Janet Camilo).

Principles, approaches and strategies

PRIEG/SICA welcomes the principles and goals of regional integration mentioned in Art. 4 of the Protocol of Tegucigalpa to the ODECA Charter: a) protection, respect, and promotion of human rights; b) peace, democracy, development, and freedom; c) regional identity; d) regional solidarity; e) gradualness, specificity, and progressivity of the integration process; f) globalization of the integration process and the democratic participation of the social sectors; g) the legal security of relations between Member States and the peaceful settlement of their disputes; h) the good faith of the Member States when fulfilling their obligations; i) Respect for the principles and rules of the Charters of the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Declarations issued at the Central American Presidential Meetings since May 1986.

3.1. Guiding principles

It is a cross-sectional policy aimed towards contributing gender equality in and from different integration issues, and is based on the following guiding principles:

1. Equality

PRIEG/SICA assumes the concept of equality developed by the Committee of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee). Thanks to their doctrinal contributions, equality is understood as a complex concept formed by three elements or principles: substantive equality or results, non-discrimination, and state responsibility. "True equality" is, according to this approach, the conjugation of these three elements.

"...the concept of equality established by CEDAW does not imply the need to equalize women with men, but rather it is an equality in the recognition, enjoyment, and exercise of the human rights of both. (...) This new way of understanding equality includes de facto equality and de jure equality, equal opportunities, equal access to opportunities, and equality of results, as well as the elimination of all prejudices, customs or traditions, which are based on the idea of male superiority "(Facio, UNIFEM, 2009).

According to this position, this principle binds States to bring about changes at all levels of society; changes in the culture and practices of their institutions, as well as in the structures of social and economic power. Changes aimed towards the elimination of obstacles that prevent women from fully exercising their rights, their citizenship.

2. Non-Discrimination

It is a concept intrinsically linked to the principle of equality. CEDAW in its first article, defines discrimination against women as follows:

"any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, financial, social, cultural, civil fields, or any other field".

3. Social inclusion

It has to do with State's obligation to promote economically, socially, politically, and culturally, those population groups that face greater disadvantages, groups in conditions of greater vulnerability. Generally, the cause of this disadvantage is discrimination, whether due to gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, etc. The essence of this principle is that all people must be and feel valued, that their differences are respected, and their basic and specific needs are met so that they can live with dignity and fully exercise their rights. Likewise, social inclusion is understood as a "process that ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion have the opportunities and necessary resources to fully participate in economic, social, and cultural life, enjoying a living and well-being standard that is considered normal in the society in which they live" (Ivanov, 2008).

4. Regionality

It shall be understood as respect for consensus in decision-making and the pre-eminence of actions in which the synergy between all the countries of the region add value to efforts at national levels.

5. Solidarity

It refers to the commitment to the objectives of the region, its origin, and common destiny. From the feminist perspective, solidarity also takes the form of sorority, sisterhood among women.

"Sorority is part of an effort to deconstruct the culture and ideology of femininity that each one embodies, as a process that begins in the friendship/animosity among women and advances in the friendship of female friends, in search of new

times, new identities... it means friendship between different women and peers, accomplices who set out to work, create, convince, who meet and recognize in feminism, the means to live life with a deeply libertarian meaning. The alliance of women in commitment is as important as the struggle against other oppression phenomena and for creating spaces in which women can develop new life prospects "(Lagarde, 'Enemistad y sororidad: hacia una nueva cultura feminista', undated).

6. Democracy

It refers both to universal, free, and secret suffrage, which is the basis of the existence of elected governments, as well as to the unrestricted respect for human rights (Tegucigalpa Protocol).

3.2. Approaches

1. Gender Equity

It is understood as the application of differentiated treatment according to particular interests and needs, all in order to approach the achievement of equal results. This principle is present in PRIEG/SICA in the form of positive action measures, as a tool to correct inequalities or discrimination against specific groups of women.

"Equity is what will enable those who are disadvantaged to be treated differently, so that they have the possibility of achieving their common goals on equal conditions with others. Therefore, equity implies differential treatment in favor of those who are disadvantaged. (...) This equity that is achieved through fair treatment, in accordance with different needs and interests, requires the application of deliberate actions that correct the disadvantages and eliminate inequalities caused by differences, whether they involve gender, age, ethnic origin, or any other factor that produces discriminatory effects on rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities, on men and women" (García Prince, 2008).

2. Human Rights

This approach allows a shift from looking at women as beneficiaries to focusing them as rights holders.

"On a more instrumental level, the human rights-based approach is to serve as a tool to identify and analyze the inequalities that are part of the most important development problems, in order to fix discriminatory practices and unjust power relations that hinder progress. This vision undoubtedly implies overcoming the

concept of right in its mainly legal conception to also cover the needs, possibilities, and strategies to be deployed, in order to ensure their fulfillment and development. Social plans, policies, and programs should promote rights and the improvement of the exercise of those rights by their holders" (Faúndez, 2013).

One of the criteria for the selection of measures for PRIEG/SICA has been, precisely, that they are able to focus on historically discriminated and excluded groups providing conditions for these groups to access the exercise of their rights.

3. Intersectionality

This approach exposes the different types of discrimination and disadvantages that occur as a result of a combination of identities and realities in which people confine their lives. Its premise is that people live multiple identities, formed by several layers, which are derived from social relations, history, and the operation of power structures. Intersectionality can also be referred to as "a model of social difference analysis that addresses the phenomenon of 'disempowerment' produced by the intersection of multiple discriminations, particularly the relationship between racial and sexual/gender discrimination" (Gil Hernández, 2011).

4. Interculturality

"The intercultural approach is aimed at recognizing the coexistence of cultural diversities in current societies, which must coexist with a basis of respect for their different worldviews, human rights and rights as peoples" (Faúndez, 2013).

Interculturality differs from multiculturalism in that the latter only accounts for the existence of diverse cultural groups. Interculturality refers to the interaction and dialogue between these different groups (Faúndez, 2013).

5. Legality

The actions developed within the framework of this Policy will be subject to the regional legal regulations established by SICA. In this sense, PRIEG/SICA is part of a hierarchy of normative instruments derived from, and binding by, the presidential mandates.

6. Gradualness

This approach is related to the premise that PRIEG/SICA is a historical policy, which should be adapted as the modalities of regional integration progress. These adaptations will be reflected in the emphasis, the periodicity of their action plans, and the gradual and consensual development of proposals that evolve from an intergovernmental approach to a supranational approach.

7. Sustainability

This approach will be operative in the content of PRIEG/SICA, which will set forth the institutional conditions to be met for the monitoring and continuity of the measures.

8. Accountability and Transparency

Programs, projects, and actions related to the implementation of the policy will be subject to evaluation and will be available to all persons, organizations and institutions.

9. Complementarity

PRIEG/SICA is a complementary instrument to international, regional and national regulations, and creates a link between the countries of the region to contribute to and to take advantage of the synergies in the selected strategic areas, where relevant actors of the public sector, the private sector, cooperation, academia, and civil society interact towards a common goal: gender equality.

10. Territoriality

Referring to the reduction of *territorial gender imbalances*, through tools to differentiate private and public interests and needs according to gender roles, for the implementation of tools for conciliation, negotiation, and consensus, with the necessary sensitivity and control systems that prevent the interposition of gender stereotypes. Territorial planning with a gender perspective, in this sense, is a tool that allows a better targeting and effectiveness of public and private investment and, therefore, favors more inclusive development.

3.3. Strategies

1. Empowerment

It consists in endowing people with greater power and control over their own lives. It contains three interrelated dimensions: negotiation, resources, and achievements. Negotiation represents the process through which decisions are made in a manner that challenges power relations; resources are the means through which the negotiation is executed, the manner which they are available and distributed through institutions and relationships in a given society; and achievements represent the consequences of an exercised agency.

It refers to the expansion in people's ability to take strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied (Kabeer, 2001).

2. Knowledge management

It refers to the production, development, management, socialization, and democratization of information. It implies the promotion of learning and exchange spaces for the strengthening of the capacities of the organizations and individuals involved in PRIEG/SICA process.

3. Institutional strengthening of national mechanisms for women

A successful factor in the positioning and steering of equality policies is to have women's mechanisms, both at the national and regional levels, strengthened in their capacities for policy advice, monitoring, dialogue and evaluation.

4. Results-based management

Management by and for results forms an appropriate platform for the requirements of the adoption of the gender approach, insofar as it allows organizations and their members to commit to the achievement of certain results and indicators which through this type of management can even be linked to individual performance evaluations.

5. Links and strategic alliances

Between countries, public institutions, between them and the expressions of civil society, between women, between regional institutions, between cooperation partners and academic bodies, in order to promote synergies in favor of gender equality.

6. Mainstreaming the gender perspective

This is a strategy to place gender equality concerns at the center and in the mainstream of the work of regional institutions, expressing them in procedures, decisions, policies, plans, programs, and budgets that favor the elimination of inequality gaps and all types of discriminatory acts and omissions. It is the most plausible translation of the term *gender mainstreaming*, understood as a "tool for making the interests and needs of men and women an integrated dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, social, and economic spheres. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality "(ECLAC, 1998).

7. Representation and participation

It refers to ensuring the broadest expression of all civil society sectors and ensuring the full right of the bodies representing civil society in the region to participate in the formulation and preparation of initiatives for decision-making in the regional integration process and other regional issues as it is deemed appropriate (Tegucigalpa Protocol, 1991, SICA).

Strategic thrusts and measures

4.1. PRIEG/SICA objective

By 2025, the States Parties to SICA have incorporated the necessary measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, in conditions of equality and equity, in the political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional spheres, both at the regional level and at national scope.

4.2. Strategic thrusts

Guidelines

The PRIEG/SICA is based on eight guidelines contained in the Resolution (COMMCA/SICA, 2011):

1. Strengthen the legal and social status of women in the region.
2. Promote economic autonomy and equal opportunities and employment conditions for women in the region.
3. Achieve the effective mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the contents and practices of education.
4. Incorporate a women's perspective in the comprehensive management and prevention of disaster risk and emergency response by addressing the negative differential effects of climate change on women in the region.
5. Improve the health conditions of women and men in the region according to their practical and strategic gender needs.
6. Incorporate the focus on women's citizen security into the region's democratic security agenda by strengthening policies and programs aimed towards preventing, detecting, addressing, punishing, and eradicating violence against women and gender-based violence in the region.

7. Promote the increase of women's participation in decision-making spaces in the branches of the State.
8. Incorporate the gender perspective into SICA's institutions and countries, including its regulatory instruments, strategic and operational planning, budgets, execution, monitoring, and assessment, affecting its organizational culture, as well as the strengthening of national and regional mechanisms for the advancement of women's rights.

The guidelines, which range from two to seven, are directly related to the purpose of the policies in force in the SICA institutional framework, while guidelines one and eight bring together those issues that contribute to strengthening the capacities of SICA and its States Parties to take responsibility and be guarantors of substantive equality, that is, issues that must be present in all sectoral actions and which, therefore, are expressed in measures in all areas. It also proposes cross-cutting topics for all areas, which will make possible to support and sustain the equality agenda in the region.

The guidelines give rise to the strategic thrusts, which contain measures aimed towards achieving equality, which find programmatic and institutional viability in the policies and agendas in force for the SICA Region, and also those measures that create the legal, social, and institutional conditions for equality to be a practice that is installed, maintained and made operational throughout the integration process.

Strategic thrusts

1. Economic autonomy
2. Education for equality
3. Comprehensive disaster risk management and prevention
4. Equal health
5. Security and violence-free living
6. Political participation and decision-making
7. Conditions for the implementation and sustainability

These thrusts make it possible to address the three areas of autonomy recognized in the regional commitments for the advancement of women: economic autonomy, physical autonomy, and decision-making autonomy; at the same time, they accompany the institutional and social conditions that make it possible to continue the equality agenda at the regional level.

Measures

The measures are defined as strategic guidelines that, subsequently, must be translated into sectoral and institutional action plans for their operation and monitoring. In consistency

with the characteristics of this policy, its programmatic content includes measures of the following type:

- Of a guiding nature, being this faculty competence of: the institutional structure of SICA and the Member states.
- Of a directive nature, that is, they operate as guidelines to improve the status and position of women and to build cultures in favor of equality, both at the spectrum of institutions and in society as a whole.
- Of positive action, aimed towards correcting gaps in inequality, discrimination, and exclusion;
- Aimed towards formal and real equality and the improvement of women's legal status.
- Channeled towards reducing gender inequality at territorial reach.
- Aimed at improving the quality of institutions, the public services they provide and the capacities of their servers.

Responsibilities

Regarding responsibilities, without prejudice to the fact that PRIEG/SICA is the responsibility of the entire Central American Integration System, this document tries to list the institutions that, in a special way, should assume leadership in the coordination and facilitation of conditions for implementation, according to the institutional scope and specific competence areas.

Strategic thrust 1.

Economic autonomy

The conjunction between gender and the economy broadens the horizon of the gaze by integrating a component that has remained inconspicuous to society and policymakers: the care economy, that is, that subsumed sector of the economy which in turn consists of two components: care work and unpaid domestic work developed within households.

This perspective implies the understanding that the interaction between this reproductive and productive sphere is characterized by a conflict that manifests itself in two forms: the exclusion of women from job opportunities, or the intensification and lengthening of the global workload. Women's economic autonomy rests on their ability to make economic decisions, thus, a capacity closely linked to access, use and control of tangible and intangible resources (including time). Own income and use of time are positioned, from this concept, as important variables.

"If it is assumed that production and reproduction raise the problem of the articulation between the employment system and the family and that the latter has been the space from which the work of women has contributed to substantiate the right to care for people, it is necessary that this implicit pact in the formulation of public policies be transformed into an explicit pact addressing it from the perspective of the ownership of the rights of those who give and receive care" (ECLAC, 2012).

To make the scenario more complex, the reduction in fertility rates and the aging of the population have had a decisive impact on the region's population profile, which poses additional challenges and, with this, the need for a change in the concept of social security instruments, pensions, and care services from the perspective of care as a right.

Although Central American and Dominican women have increased their participation in the economically active population, this incursion has not been reflected to the same extent in labor market indicators. Although, the wage gap has been narrowing and equaling downside, it is still an obstacle for the empowerment of women, as well as the occupational segregation continues being one of the main forms of discrimination in employment.

More than a third of women in the region do not have their own income, while they dedicate more than twice as much time as men to household chores, which means that their overall workload is greater and as a consequence, their access to the labor market and leisure time is limited. The lack of income prevents access to assets and, with it, the possibility of offering guarantees in exchange for financial services resources. In this way, inequality in the world of labor is expressed in a vicious circle in which many women are involved.

On the issue of land ownership, gender barriers are commonly related to cultural, legal, and economic factors. Among the cultural factors are preferences for men in cases of inheritance; among the legal ones are the privileges that some matrimonial relationships grant to men to the detriment of women; among the institutional ones, biases in the degree programs can be mentioned; and economic factors include the scarcity of women's sources of monetary resources, which directly impedes their ability to obtain property through the market. Studies in Latin America have shown that when the gap has narrowed, it has been thanks to the execution of positive action measures such as legal mechanisms of inclusion, such as joint titling, or directly favoring women heads of household or other groups of specific women (Deere & Leon, *The gender dimensions of land access*, 2011).

Furthermore, the region is well known by the high presence of the employed population in the informal sector. The majority of women are located in the lower segments of the business pyramid, in the management of productive units operated at subsistence and simple accumulation levels, compatible with reproductive activities and, therefore, constituted in a strategy of conciliation of the conflict between the need for employment and the dedication to domestic work.

Some regional policy instruments that would make this strategic thrust viable are as follow:

In particular, the Regional Agenda for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (EMPRENDE, by its name in Spanish), approved at the same time as PRIEG/SICA at the XLII Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the SICA Countries in December 2013, marks the route for the implementation of policies to promote MSMEs (MIPYME, by its name in Spanish) within the framework of the regional integration, and is a guideline for the orientation and targeting of the resources that the States of the region and international cooperation allocate to the development of the MSMEs capacities.

The adoption of the "EMPRENDE" Agenda includes a positive action in favor of gender equality by instructing the promotion of entrepreneurship as a means to women's economic autonomy.

On the other hand, the Social Strategic Agenda (AES, for its name in Spanish) offers a wide and varied field regarding issues of the equality agenda of labor, while it raises issues closely related to social security and the protection of specific populations before the crises of current capitalism.

AES has three main instruments: The Regional Program for the Strengthening of Social Institutionality in Central America, the Regional Program towards a Central America with Basic Social Services and the Regional Program for Social Welfare and Human Development.

These programs open opportunities to position equality in emerging issues such as the universality of social protection, anti-poverty measures, and investment in basic social services, key issues for improving the quality of life of women. AES also offers a fertile ground for the design of anti-crisis measures with a gender perspective, as well as for the attention of any specific problems of migrant women.

Another regional instrument that intersects with this thrust of the PRIEG/SICA is the Central American Strategy for Territorial Rural Development (ECADERT, for its name in Spanish), which provides an extensive ground for the approach of measures related to the incorporation of women in productive development, the access to assets, particularly legal security over land and credits, and the organization of production.

It also brings opportunities for the reconsideration of peasant family agriculture from more inclusive approaches; and it raises the possibility of incorporating the issue of water and watershed management from the perspective of equality between men and women, and between populations with diverse ethnic origins. It also generates possibilities for the incorporation of institutional strengthening measures for organizations that meet the demand for access to land, technology, water, financing, and other resources or productive assets. Also, it offers space to consider care services as part of the support services for the better integration of women's entrepreneurship (a space for the issue of work/time-life balance).

In addition, the Central American Agricultural Policy (PACA, for its name in Spanish) mentions that gender equity is in "first order", providing an opportunity to link the specific needs and agendas of rural women, particularly those related to access and control over productive and financial assets. PACA is a policy that makes visible the multiple discrimination experienced by rural women, for example: the relationship between some productive activities and women's health; the effects of migration on the dynamics of rural productive/family units, and women as actors of the latter, as well as the faces that violence takes against women in rural areas.

Objective

The thrust of *Economic Autonomy* is aimed towards promoting the removal of institutional, material, and cultural obstacles that prevent Central American and Dominican women from fully enjoying their economic rights in equal conditions.

Institutions summoned for implementation

- Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Agricultural Council (CAC, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)
- Central American Monetary Council (CMCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Secretariat for the Central American Social Integration (SISCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Secretariat for the Central American Tourism Integration (SITCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Center for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in Central America (CENPROMYPE, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Council for Consumer Protection (CONADECO, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Real Estate Registry Council of Central America, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (CRICAP, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Commission for the Scientific and Technological Development of Central America and Panama (CTCAP, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Council of Ministers of Finance of Central America, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (COSEFIN, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)
- Fisheries Sector Agency (OSPESCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Parliament (PARLACEN, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Ministries of Economy, Ministries of Labor, National Standardization Bodies, Ministries of Agriculture, National Mechanisms for Women, Ministries of Industry, specialized national bodies for MIPYMES, institutions in charge of agrarian reforms, ministries or vice-ministries of housing, state-owned development banks, social development secretariats, national planning entities, state microfinance institutions, vocational training institutions, ministries of finance, national parliaments, national statistics institutes, comptrollers, and central banks.

Measures

Approval and harmonization of regulatory frameworks

- 1.1. Promote the updating and creation of national legal frameworks in accordance with international agreements and conventions related to women's labor rights, in particular, those related to domestic work and respect for the principle of equal pay for equal work.
- 1.2. Remove explicit or implicit obstacles to access to land ownership by rural, indigenous, and afro-descendent women, and those that impede women's access to housing in particular, women heads of household who are sole providers, from all relevant legislations.

Policy strengthening

- 1.3. Encourage co-responsibility for care and domestic work as a determining component in national and local policies, plans, programs and projects for employment, productive development, cash transfers, social security, health and education.
- 1.4. Promote the development of policy instruments that guarantee the universality of social protection under the right to life-cycle care approach.
- 1.5. Adapt and create business development, market and financial information services (seed and guarantee funds), so that they are appropriate to the specific needs of women heads of household, women entrepreneurs of microeconomic units, in all productive sectors, with criteria and instruments that make them inclusive for rural, indigenous and afro-descendent women.
- 1.6. Articulate the undertakings developed by women with productive chains that provide conditions for the generation and appropriation of added value that allows them to expand their levels of accumulation and their power of individual and collective negotiation.
- 1.7. Guarantee training and work tools that promote the progressive elimination of occupational segregation and access to Information and Communication Technologies (TIC, for its name in Spanish), facilitating the equitable and competitive insertion of women in employment and productive development.
- 1.8. Improve the working conditions of women in formal employment by adopting an approved and standard norm aimed at creating management systems for equality, with emphasis on small and large enterprises.

- 1.9. Strengthen national policy instruments and intergovernmental and intersectoral cooperation among the actors involved in the agricultural and health sectors, so that these instruments guarantee and make food and nutritional security operational with emphasis on rural areas, ensuring gender equality, a rights-based approach and the intercultural nature of interventions.

Institutional strengthening of the sector

- 1.10. Generate territorially disaggregated economic statistics that reflect the contribution of women to the development of the nations of the SICA Region, especially statistics that make visible the contribution of the MSMEs, the contribution of rural women, the distribution of the global workload and the contribution of unpaid domestic work to national and regional GDPs.
- 1.11. Produce and manage useful knowledge to evaluate the progress of women in key issues of economic integration related to the financial autonomy of women in the region.
- 1.12. Encourage and improve the quality of women's participation in employment generated by the public sector, either as public servants or as service providers to the government sector.

Strategic thrust 2.

Education for equality

As has occurred in the Latin American region, the SICA sub-region also reflects positive changes in the educational status of women. However, there are notable differences between countries²³, where rural and indigenous women are excluded from their right to education.

By educational level, it has been found that the participation of women is significant among the population with secondary education and is also reflected at the top of the pyramid of people with higher education²⁴. However, the segmentation of careers in secondary, technical and higher education persists.

Despite the efforts of non-governmental and governmental organizations to mainstream a gender perspective in curricula and educational materials, the design and use of materials with sexist content that promote stereotypical images of women and men persists.

On the other hand, women who access training for work are inserted in areas that reinforce occupational segregation, while they are clearly minorities in areas related to computing, applied technical careers, and metalworking, that is, in traditionally male careers.

With regard to information technologies, they have already positioned themselves as a tool in the fight against occupational segregation and income gap.

"(...) insofar as women successfully enter the labor market, for example as wage earners, they are even better off than men in terms of the percentage of female users of technology. It can be surmised that this is a result of the fact that, given the relatively low rates of female participation in the labor market, possessing TIC skills is a variable considered in the selection of many employed women" (ECLAC, 2013).

23. In Guatemala, the disadvantageous gap for women is evident in the different levels of education, while in Panama and Costa Rica, the education levels of women are already higher than those of men.

24. In Panama, women already represent two thirds of the global university enrollment.

In the institutional framework, the sector faces several challenges. One of these points aims to an urgent paradigm shift in vocational guidance for children and young people, and another to the need to re-conceptualize the role of educational institutions as agents for the deconstruction of patterns and prejudices that foster inequality. There is also the challenge of vertical segregation of employment among teachers.

For SICA, Education for Development is one of the cornerstones of the Social Strategic Agenda (AES). This priority is also set out in the Central American Education Policy (PEC 2013-2021, for its name in Spanish), approved by the XIX Meeting of Ministers of Education of CECC/SICA, which establishes the following objective:

"provide the Central American Region with a guiding framework for education that supports the effort to fight poverty by facilitating the link between educational policy decisions and their corresponding mechanisms and instruments of application, interlinking educational management with financial management, social cohesion, and environmental awareness, from an integrated approach of respect for human rights, multiculturalism, and gender equity" (CCEC-SICA, 2013).

Objective

The focus of *Education for equality* is aimed towards strengthening public action in critical areas for the development of capacities and the social and productive insertion of women in the region.

Institutions summoned for implementation

- Central American Cultural and Educational Coordination (CECC, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Secretariat for Central American Social Integration (SISCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)
- Central American Agricultural Council (CAC, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Commission for Science and Technology (CCTC, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)
- Ministries of Education, vocational training institutes, ministries of Health, regulatory bodies for communication, national statistics institutes, research and training centers, academia, and universities.

Measures

Approval and harmonization of regulatory frameworks

- 2.1. Harmonize and align national education regulations with regional and international commitments regarding the right to education with a gender, inclusion, and intercultural perspective.
- 2.2. Promote the adoption of norms and protocols with standards and criteria to measure the inclusion of gender equality and the intercultural approach in educational processes at all levels.

Strengthening sectoral policies

- 2.3. Eradicate direct and functional female illiteracy, with emphasis on adult women from rural, indigenous, and afro-descendent populations.
- 2.4. Strengthen efforts to eliminate sexist content from school textbooks, giving way to the use of materials that promote equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion, making women's contribution visible to the social, cultural, and economic life of our societies.
- 2.5. Facilitate women's access to professional training programs in the scopes of science and technology that improve their insertion, permanence, and adaptation to the demands of the economy markets under equitable conditions.
- 2.6. Promote equitable access for women and girls to scholarship programs in all scopes of science and technology, arts and crafts, from primary to higher education.

Institutional strengthening of the sector

- 2.7. Incorporate the life-cycle approach progressively, with an inclusive and intercultural perspective, into education policies at all levels.
- 2.8. Promote a regional network of "Schools for Equality" to encourage the exchange of experiences and good practices in the field of mainstreaming equality in education policies.
- 2.9. Put into operation regional actions of awareness and continuous training in education for equality, aimed at teachers and public servants in national and regional educational institutions.

Comprehensive disaster risk management

The region is exposed to multiple socio-natural hazards. Various events have left human, livelihood, and infrastructure losses, making the general population vulnerable to disaster risks, but it is the people most excluded from the development benefits who show a tendency to structural vulnerability through the encounter between poverty and disaster risk (Caballero, 2007). Women are not vulnerable by nature, but due to their social and gender disadvantages.

Gender inequalities are intertwined with the risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change. Women's historical disadvantages, their limited access to resources, restrictions on their rights, and their difficulty on influencing decisions in this matter, make them highly vulnerable to climate change. The nature of that vulnerability varies greatly, so generalizations should not be made. But climate change is likely to increase existing gender gap patterns (UNDP, 2007).

Although disasters have been recurrent in the region, it is after Hurricane Mitch that has begun an alternative process of dealing with disasters demonstrating slowly that, early warning systems, new constructions and, progressively, humanitarian aid delivery systems have improved. To that extent, it has been possible to identify with greater clarity some realities that are not always evident.

The inclusion of the gender approach to the disaster risk management shows, for example, that women are responsible for household chores within shelters, and are more likely to lose their jobs or increase their household burden for household chores in shelters. They are also the ones who are at greater risk of harassment and rape, given the conditions of insecurity and promiscuity that may arise in these places.

In reconstruction processes, particularly when the loss of housing and household goods has occurred, single, unmarried women or elderly heads of households are often left out of support benefits when priority is given to households. In the event of drought, water, and food shortages increase the number of days of domestic work due to transport and collection.

New lessons are always to be learned due to the frequency and severity of disasters, for example, regarding the impact on the period of time these events takes place and the most vulnerable people affected by the disaster. Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, for example, left a lesson on the impact on domestic workers who could not leave their jobs, women who had to care for sick people, older adults, or women whose husbands or partners did not allow them to evacuate.

The region has begun to assume planning, management, and land use planning as a powerful tool for disaster risk prevention. Within this framework, it is necessarily evident that there should be a link between gender and territoriality approaches that would result in a public value, if it is brought to the territories, place where the gender relations are put into practice influencing the condition and quality of life of people.

At the international scope, the Hyogo Agreement recognizes that gender perspective must be mainstreamed into all disaster risk prevention and reduction activities at the community, national, and international tiers.

At the regional policy reach, there are two instruments that explicitly articulate the principle of gender equality and provide important starting points: The Central American Strategy for Territorial Rural Development 2010-2030 (ECADERT, by its name in Spanish) and the Central American Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy (PCGIR, by its name in Spanish). The latter admits that in order to reduce the gender gaps it is necessary to start by making visible the differentiated way in which women and men are affected by disasters in the region.

The PCGIR gives the first approach to the inclusion of favorable conditions for women's access to the reconstruction process of social infrastructure and housing, of programs for damages compensation, participation of women in the decision-making on resource management and land use planning and management.

In addition, the Central American Regional Environmental Plan (PARCA, by its name in Spanish) provides conditions for the planning of land use and risk management measures with a gender perspective, as well as the incorporation of the principle of equality in the finance scope regarding climate change actions promoted by the Region.

Objective

The thrust of *Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management and Prevention (Gestión y prevención integral del riesgo de desastres, its name in Spanish)* focuses on minimizing practices that reproduce inequalities in public planning, organization, and implementation of efforts dedicated to risk management and adaptation to climate change.

Institutions summoned for implementation

- Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC)
- Central American Council for Environment and Development (CCAD)
- Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)
- Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA)
- Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources, national systems of civil protection, mechanisms of women, ministries of Education, ministries of Health, institutions for the protection of children, local governments, among others.

Measures

Approval and harmonization of regulatory frameworks

- 3.1. Approve and standardize the conceptual frameworks on risk management, climate change, and land use planning with a gender and intercultural perspective.
- 3.2. Adjust the Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (EDAN, for its name in Spanish) instrument and the Regional Humanitarian Assistance Manuals for the incorporation of a gender perspective into their criteria for assessing damages, delivering humanitarian aid, and planning for reconstruction.

Policy strengthening

- 3.3. Strengthen the leadership, organization and incorporation of women in decision-making spaces around prevention and risk management, territorial planning and financial aid for climate change and housing reconstruction.
- 3.4. Strengthen the mechanisms of inter-institutional coordination and multidisciplinary interaction to address the specific needs of women throughout their life cycle, during and in the stages following the occurrence of a disaster.
- 3.5. Facilitate access to budgets for specific actions with a gender equality approach in the projects presented to the funds specialized in financing climate change matter.

Institutional strengthening of the sector

- 3.6. Establish a regional community of practice oriented to produce and share information and experiences on disaster risk management and climate change, and to strengthen the capacities of the personnel of the national and regional instances with competence in the subject.

- 3.7. Strengthen countries' capacities to implement international agreements, national legislation and policies on gender equality, the right to a violence-free life, and reproductive rights in humanitarian assistance.
- 3.8. Incorporate gender criteria into risk identification, priority setting and planning tools and procedures, both at the early warning, recovery, and accountability stages.

Strategic thrust 4.

Health in equality

The regional health scenario presents changes that demand critical analysis and a shift in the creation of public policies in this field. As well as in other world regions, Central America and the Dominican Republic have seen the outbreak of chronic diseases in the last years. According to PAHO (2009) there is an estimate that seven out of ten causes of death in the Americas are associated with chronic diseases.

The increase in adolescent motherhood and the significant incidence of maternal mortality are striking, situations that highlight the need to evaluate the strategies deployed to date. In the region, in addition, people in full productive stages are the group that contributes the most in the mortality burden.

This change of scenario requires a rethinking of the focus of health services and, therefore, the focus of public resources.

However, "it is paradoxical that health systems often neglect women's needs despite the fact that women contribute greatly to improving health through their role as primary caregivers of the family and also as health care providers in the formal and informal sectors. The women who constitute the backbone of the health system are rarely represented in executive or management positions; rather, they tend to concentrate on jobs with low salaries and exposed to higher occupational health risks. Their role as informal providers of health care in the home or in the community usually does not receive support, recognition, nor remuneration "(WHO, 2009).

Usually, when an allusion is made towards women's health, they are mainly considered in their reproductive role. Reviewing health from a gender equality perspective and from the life cycle logic has important implications for the approach of public policies, insofar as this means taking into account the specific conditions that affect women's health, both those related to their life context and their age and biological condition. Biased views result in institutional failures that prevent women from exercising their right to health and well-being.

In addition, it is well known that the lack of access to health limits the capacities and functioning in other areas of people's lives. Thus, for example, in commodified social welfare regimes (where access to social security is accessed through the labor market), access to current health services and future social protection depends on the current insertion in paid work.

From the institutional perspective, in the health sector there are two important challenges. The first relates to the unequal opportunities for women in public employment, in a sector where women are in the majority in number but occupy lower-paying jobs and professions. The other challenge relates to the adaptation of statistical systems to generate records and indicators that account for access to health rights in the life cycle of individuals; that is, to put people at the center, not diseases themselves.

The regional policy instrument closely related to this thrust of the PRIEG/SICA is the Health Plan of Central America and the Dominican Republic (PSCA-RD, by its name in Spanish). In addition to positioning the gender perspective in the health scope, it also positions gender-based violence as a public health problem, which is a non-traditional perspective that offers the possibility of proposing measures aimed towards strengthening the capacity of health systems and their public servants to identify, treat and refer cases of violence against women.

The PSCA-RD points out the existence of common challenges to the countries of the region, such as preventive health in general, mental health, and those concerning the care of specific populations, for example, the coverage of migrant populations, food security in female-headed households and the need to expand transfer programs to institutionalize social protection systems. All these approaches can easily be found within the pending equality agenda in the region.

Objective

The *Health in equality* thrust is aimed at strengthening the capacities of health systems so that they can operationally integrate the human rights perspective of women and the life-cycle approach in health promotion, prevention and care.

Institutions summoned to implementation

- Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA, for its acronym in Spanish)
- Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)
- Central American Cultural and Educational Coordination (CECC)
- Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP, for its acronym in Spanish)

- Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)
- Council of Ministers of Finance of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (COSEFIN)
- Planning Institutions, Ministries of Health, Ministries of Education, National Women's Mechanisms, Migration instances, Labor Ministries, Ministries of the Interior, Ministries of Security, Ministries of Finance or Taxes, National Institutes of Statistics, academia, Security Institutes Social, local governments, among others.

Measures

Harmonization and approval of regulatory frameworks

- 4.1. Harmonize and align regional regulations with the framework of international rights related to the right to health of women, according to their specific needs, life cycle and place of residence with a focus on human rights, gender perspective, and interculturality.

Strengthening of sectoral policies

- 4.2. Adapt public policies on sexual health and comprehensive reproductive health, incorporating operational and programmatic approaches to human rights, comprehensiveness and interculturality, with emphasis on the care of adolescent, middle-aged, and older women.
- 4.3. Generate institutional conditions to make it possible to carry out social audits of health systems from the gender perspective and women's rights.
- 4.4. Gradually incorporate social security components into public health policies, making human rights, gender, and intercultural approaches operational in its instruments.

Institutional strengthening of the sector

- 4.5. Strengthen intersectoral and inter-institutional alliances to promote gender equality based on the Agenda and the Regional Health Plan.
- 4.6. Consolidate the integrated networks of health services, to improve access, availability, affordability and quality, in conditions of equity for men and women, and reduce territorial imbalances in access and quality of health services.
- 4.7. To deepen the development of institutional capacities and competencies in the countries of the region to make gender mainstreaming in health effective, and to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights in the sector.

- 4.8. Encourage intergovernmental cooperation in health matter, for the care of non-communicable and communicable diseases in migrant population, with emphasis on indigenous and afro-descendant women in situations of exclusion from health systems.
- 4.9. Improve statistical systems and administrative records for the generation, analysis, and dissemination of timely and reliable information with territorial disaggregation, which takes account of gender gaps and collects information on the impact of interventions on women and men for decision-making.

Security and violence-free life

The Inter-American Convention on Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the Convention of Belem do Pará, in its Article. 1 defines violence against women as "any action or conduct, based on gender, that causes death, injury or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, whether in the public or private sphere."

Additionally, Article 2 clarifies that this includes "physical, sexual, and psychological violence:

- a) that takes place within the family or domestic unit or in any other interpersonal relationship, whether the perpetrator shares or has shared the same address as the woman, including, but not limited to, rape, mistreatment, and sexual abuse;
- b) that occurs in the community and is perpetrated by any person, including, among others, rape, sexual abuse, torture, trafficking in persons, forced prostitution, kidnapping, and sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as in educational institutions, health facilities or any other place; and
- c) that is perpetrated or tolerated by the State or its agents, wherever it occurs".

Among the protected rights mentioned, in Article 3 of the Convention points out that "every woman has the right to a violence-free life, both in the public and in the private sphere."

The region observes important advances in aspects such as the approval of special laws, the installation of observatories, free assistance services for victims, the prohibition of conciliation and training for civil servants in the justice sector. However, challenges remain in the production of knowledge and the implementation of wide-ranging campaigns, as well as the application of scientific judicial investigation procedures and ongoing forensic science services for victims of sexual violence. There are also challenges in terms of secondary victimization, regional monitoring frameworks and in relation to strengthening cooperation on migration and border issues, normalizing violence against women, and gender and impunity (CCJ, 2012).

Femicide is increasingly alarming and is one of the clearest expressions of discrimination and violence against women's bodies. Its accelerated growth shows the problems that States have in confronting them. Problems of under-registration and weakness of administrative registers persist, and work is underway to achieve single registers at the national level, which will prevent the invisibility of information.

Although femicide is the crudest expression of violence against women, gender violence must not only be seen and measured by mortality. This is a key issue for rigorously examining important aspects of violence against women, such as sexual violence.

SICA has appropriately adopted the concept of "democratic security", which goes beyond the notion of national security to include addressing the institutional efficiency of the State apparatus in terms of guaranteeing the security of individuals; in other words, it places people at the center of public policy action in this matter. This approach offers to the regional equality agenda multiple opportunities, in the sense that it provides a platform for improving the institutional capacity of States to guarantee the right to a violence-free life for women.

The Central American Security Strategy (ESCA, by its name in Spanish) is a platform for institutional viability that positions the prevention of gender-based violence in general, femicide, in particular, and promises spaces for combating trafficking and violence against women along the migration route, as well as for conceptual, programmatic, and statistical validation of violence against women.

Objective

The thrust of *Security and violence-free life* is oriented towards promoting the incorporation of the right to a violence-free life in public policies, programs and actions aimed towards preventing, detecting, responding to, and eradicating violence in the public and private spheres.

Institutions summoned to implementation

- Central American Court of Justice (CCJ)
- Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA)
- Council of Ministers of Women (COMMCA)
- General Secretariat of SICA (SG-SICA)
- Executive Committee of SICA
- Democratic Security Directorate (DSD/SG-SICA)
- Council of Tax Authority and Finance Ministers (COSEFIN)
- Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD)
- Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)
- Ministries of Tourism, Ministries of Security and Justice, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Women's Machineries, Ministries of Health, Ministries of Information and Communication, national parliaments, planning institutions, migration agencies, governing bodies for children and adolescents, national statistical institutions, academia, universities, research and training centers, among others.

Measures

Approval and harmonization of regulatory frameworks

- 5.1. Update national regulations and instruments to guarantee the right to a violence-free life, in accordance with the regional and international commitments of which the countries of the region are signatories.
- 5.2. Create and enforce laws that prevent the criminal use of ICT for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography, and trafficking of women and girls.
- 5.3. Approve the conceptual framework on violence against women throughout the course of life, with emphasis on femicide, smuggling and human trafficking.

Strengthening of sectoral policies

- 5.4. Strengthen the assistance, protection, and reparation of rights to women victims of violence, with emphasis on those facing illicit smuggling and human trafficking.
- 5.5. Strengthen intergovernmental cooperation for the protection of women victims of violence in bilateral and peripheral border, land, air, and sea areas, with emphasis on the crimes of trafficking and smuggling of migrants, through protocols and inter-institutional mechanisms approved at the national and regional levels, to prevent the re-victimization of women.
- 5.6. Promote the transmission of egalitarian, plural and non-stereotyped images of the roles and functions of women and men in society, through mechanisms that support the observation and monitoring of advertising that generates violence and discrimination against women.

Institutional strengthening of the sector

- 5.7. Promote spaces, mechanisms and instruments dedicated to the production and exchange of knowledge on security policies with a gender perspective.
- 5.8. Develop a regional statistical subsystem to generate indicators and comparable data among countries of the region on the different forms of violence against women, to be progressively incorporated as part of the regional statistical system.
- 5.9. Generation of training, education and updating processes - linked to performance evaluation instruments - on violence against women, aimed at institutional officials in health, education and justice sectors.

Political participation in the powers of the State

Citizenship can be understood as the set of legal rights and obligations that are acquired by the mere fact of belonging to a political community (Valdés, 2001). It is an inherent and inalienable right of the individual, which the guarantor is the State. In this sense, citizenship in general and women's empowerment, in particular, refers to the empowerment of women at the political level, emphasizing that women have the right to have rights (Arendt, 2005) (Bobio, 1998).

The definition of citizenship is not static and is subject to constant change and revision; however, centuries have passed, maintaining the male subject as the only one who can exercise the right to citizenship. It has been in the last century that the most important changes have taken place: broadening the definition including the exercise of economic and social rights, respect for diversity, incursion of women in politics, among others.

Citizenship is, therefore, the main element of representative democracy in our time, and it is essential to rethink changes, thus consolidating the democratic health of our society and public institutions. One of the most important changes is the recognition that women's political participation is not limited to casting suffrage and that it not only implies the exercise of their political rights by participating in popular elections as candidates, but also in the institutional framework of governments and in the elaboration of public policies; that is, direct participation in politics.

Different strategies have been tried for the political representation of women, positive actions that promote women's access to power such as quotas and parity. In this sense, most countries in the SICA Region already have a quota system in their electoral regulations.

Although promising, the participation of women in political decision-making bodies is still low in the Region. According to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the existence of particular differences, this situation is more pronounced in legislative and executive bodies.

With the inclusion of women in politics, new situations of violation of their rights have appeared, which until a few years ago remained hidden, that is: women threatened, dismissed or replaced after elections, use of quotas for purely electoral purposes, discrediting political women, harassment at work, difficulties in accessing relevant information, undeserved work of women, among others. That is to say, harassment and political violence are the main problems that women must face when they come to power and which need to be solved immediately. Currently, only El Salvador addresses this issue with a timorous approach in its Equality Act.

The Political Participation Thrust was already a priority theme in COMMCA's Strategic Plan 2009-2013; within this framework, a High-Level Meeting was held (Honduras, May 2012) that gave rise to the instrument entitled "Agenda and Regional Common Mechanisms of Action for the Promotion of Women's Political Participation". This Agenda became the basis for the construction of PRIEG/SICA measures in this strategic thrust and its institutional mechanism, the Coordinating Committee, in a body that has assumed the promotion of PRIEG/SICA in its working regulations.

Objective

This thrust of *political participation in the powers of the State* aims towards a double objective: to establish a regional route for the homologation/standardization of national legislations with the international legal mechanisms adopted by the States in the area of women's political rights and citizenship; and to generate technical capacities within regional and national institutions for the guarantee and enforceability of women's political and citizen rights.

Institutions summoned to implementation

Bodies brought together in the Coordinating Committee for the Political Participation Agenda: national women's mechanisms of the SICA member countries, the Council of Ministers for Women's Affairs of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), the electoral bodies of Central America and the Dominican Republic, the Women's Commissions of the National Parliaments, the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and civil society organizations. In addition, national parliaments, electoral courts, political institutes, academia, and political training centers.

Measurements²⁵

Approval and harmonization of regulatory frameworks

- 6.1. Harmonize national legislation on political rights in order to increase the participation and political representation of women in their plural and ethnic diversity in the lists of assembly members, management bodies and lists of candidates for elected positions, taking into account the specific characteristics of the electoral system and/or political parties in each country.
- 6.2. Establish a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of recommendations of the United Nations System (CEDAW Committee and others) and the Inter-American System related to women's human rights, based on the recommendations already made by CEDAW and the Inter-American Commission of Women.

Institutional strengthening

- 6.3. Develop a monitoring compliance system with international commitments undertaken in the area of Central American integration for gender equality and women's citizenship.
- 6.4. Establish mechanisms for knowledge production, collection and exchange on harassment and political violence against women, jurisprudence and good electoral practices and training of female leadership.
- 6.5. Harmonize data and information on women's political participation in elected positions, in appointed positions, in public institutions and State powers, as well as in political parties and their decision-making bodies.
- 6.6. Establish mechanisms for reporting political violence and protecting women's political rights.
- 6.7. Strengthen inter-institutional coordination and cooperation between regional and national public and civil society bodies for joint work in the promotion, observation and enforcement of women's political rights and citizenship.
- 6.8. Strengthen regional and national capacities to address and operationalize the principle of gender equality and the approach of women's political and citizens' rights, especially in electoral, monitoring, and election observation bodies.

25. Due to its specific but not sectoral nature, this Thrust only encompasses measures for the homologation of regulatory frameworks and institutional strengthening.

Conditions for implementation and sustainability

The conditions of implementation refer to those cross-cutting themes across all sectors, which are critical for the effective operation of this policy, in particular, and for the sustainability of the equality agenda.

Measures

Financing for equality

- 7.1. Promote the incorporation of the gender perspective in public budgets, within the framework of the reforms of financial management systems and the adoption of budgets by program with focus on results and medium-term fiscal frameworks.
- 7.2. Promote the labelling of public budgets and international cooperation by allocating specific resources to policies, programs and actions for equality at national and regional levels.
- 7.3. Establish intergovernmental verification and coordination mechanisms to operationalize and verify the alignment of cooperation with gender equality policies.

In this area, coordination with the Council of Finance Ministers of Central America, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (COSEFIN) and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs will be crucial.

Information and statistics

- 7.4. Incorporate a regional subsystem of gender indicators as part of the regional statistical system within the framework of the regional statistics strategy.
- 7.5. Promote the creation of a policy observatory, as a feedback and knowledge management mechanism on public policies for equality at the regional scope.

In this matter, coordination with the Central American Statistics Commission (CENTROESTAD) should be strengthened.

Promotion of cultures for equality

- 7.6. Develop a regional program for the professionalization of public servants, aimed at the homogenization of concepts, exchange of good practices and development of instruments for mainstreaming the principle of equality and the operationalization of the human rights approach in intergovernmental and regional policies and actions.
- 7.7. Develop a permanent regional campaign to make gender equality visible and the approaches and strategies related to this principle, with emphasis on the strategic thrusts of PRIEG/SICA. Relevant issues will be co-responsibility for care and the right to a life free of violence.

In these areas, coordination with the Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP), national media monitoring bodies, the media, academia and women's organizations will be essential.

Regional architecture for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of PRIEG/SICA

PRIEG/SICA will demand the implementation of a Regional Inter-Institutional System for Equality that ensures the following powers in its functioning:

- To be able to strengthen the steering role of COMMCA and the national women's mechanisms that comprise it.
- Allow for a healthy distinction of roles at two levels: between institutions with cross-cutting and sectoral mandates; and between regional and national institutions.
- Act as a "transmission line" of responsibility for the implementation of the measures adopted, from the regional to the national scope.
- To have an ad hoc structure that allows agility in communication, generation of information and decision-making.
- To have a body responsible for gathering information on the policy progress.
- To have feedback and accountability mechanisms and instruments on PRIEG/SICA itself and related policies.

5.1. Mechanisms of the architecture of PRIEG/SICA²⁶

The Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)

COMMCA, as the highest political body of the regional architecture for equality, will be the governing and coordinating body of PRIEG/SICA. In line with its mandate, it will issue the recommendations and resolutions it deems appropriate to promote the progress of PRIEG/SICA and will submit to the Meeting of Presidents the proposals it deems necessary.

26. Appendix 1. National Women's Mechanisms, Regional Executive Committee and Sectoral Technical Committees of PRIEG/SICA.

Regional Executive Committee (CD-PRIEG/SICA)

Formed within the framework of the Commission of SICA Secretariats, by means of an instruction from SG-SICA so that this body may function as the governing body of PRIEG/SICA. This Committee will be responsible, among other things, for issuing strategic and operational guidelines to enable compliance with PRIEG/SICA measures, assessing policy progress on the basis of reports, issuing recommendations on sectoral plans and promoting inter-institutional coordination.

STM-COMMCA/SICA will be responsible for facilitating this space, as well as consolidating PRIEG/SICA reports to be submitted to COMMCA.

Sectoral Technical Committees (CTS-PRIEG/SICA)

They will have the role of supporting the implementation and monitoring by promoting inter-institutional coordination, discussing and consolidating action plans and reports, drawing up proposals for the advancement of measures and promoting the exchange of experiences and good practices in mainstreaming equality in sectoral issues. The Committees shall be composed of staff delegated by COMMCA and representatives of regional and national institutions with competence in related matters, according to each strategic thrust of PRIEG/SICA.

Instances emerged from specific instruments, from which lessons can be learned and models of organization can be drawn:

- COMISCA's Technical Commission on Gender and Health (CTGS, by its name in Spanish) According to its regulations, its objective is "to contribute to the continuous improvement of the incorporation of gender approach in health actions in the SICA Region, through the promotion of regional political, technical, and administrative proposals promoting national actions, within the scope of the Health Agenda and Plan of Central America and the Dominican Republic" and it is defined as the "technical advisory body of COMISCA for the planning, implementation, follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation of the programmatic and political instruments of health with a gender approach at the regional and national levels". The CTGS is made up of representatives and alternates from the Ministries of Health and the women's mechanisms of each of the countries that belong to SICA. In the PRIEG/SICA process, the CTGS took an active part in the consultation, whose measures were validated and formulated on the basis of the Agenda and Plan of Action for Gender Mainstreaming within the framework of the Health Plan of Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- Coordinating Committee on Women's Political Rights and Citizenship According to its rules of procedure, the objective of this coordinating body is: "To promote women's political rights and citizenship, the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality (PRIEG/SICA), the Agenda and Regional Common Mechanisms".

By its nature, in this mechanism the ministers and representatives of the national mechanisms of women are represented; the Women's Commissions of the national parliaments, the national electoral bodies and the Central American Parliament. This mechanism emerged from a platform prior to PRIEG/SICA, the "Agenda and Regional Common Action Mechanisms for the Promotion of Women's Political Participation" and, after consultation on the Political Participation thrust and revision of its regulations, took over PRIEG/SICA as the object of its action.

In the countries, the national women's mechanisms that compose COMMCA will be called upon to extend their own steering role to the sectoral policies addressed by PRIEG/SICA. At the national level, therefore, it will be the women's national mechanisms that will design the coordination and follow-up models best suited to each context/country, in dialogue with the sectoral institutions and in full accordance with the priorities established in the national regulations on equality and rights of women.

The regulations and detailed operating frameworks for each entity of this structure will be issued in the Operationalization phase of the PRIEG/SICA (Phase V).

5.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

COMMCA, as the highest political body of the regional architecture for equality, will be the governing and coordinating body of PRIEG/SICA. In line with its mandate, it will issue the recommendations and resolutions it deems appropriate to promote the progress of PRIEG/SICA and will submit to the Meeting of Presidents the proposals it deems necessary.

Regional Executive Committee (CD-PRIEG/SICA)

As has already been said, the PRIEG/SICA is a cross-sectional policy that concerns all existing sectoral policies in the cornerstones of regional integration. Such sectoral policies are implemented at a national level, so PRIEG/SICA must find a way to channel them to these areas. The instruments that will guarantee this transmission will be the Inter-Institutional Equality Sector Plans (PSI, by its name in Spanish), which will be worked out between the STM-COMMCA/SICA, the sectoral secretariats and the specialized institutions (regional/national) representative for each strategic thrust.

These sectoral plans will take as a starting point the measures of PRIEG/SICA and will develop the Result Frameworks that specialized institutions of SICA and sectoral institutions will guarantee for the fulfillment of the measure. Its temporality will be three years and will be the basis for the submission of annual progress reports on the implementation. At the national level, it will be up to the national mechanisms for women to accompany sectoral institutions in the process of appropriating responsibilities for the actions defined in each PSI.

PSIs must contain relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation, therefore, intermediate and result indicators will account for the progress towards results and, consequently, towards the measures (insofar as they constitute ends). Each competent institution will present the progress reports annually.

This set of indicators will be the foundation of the evaluation subsystem of PRIEG/SICA. Considering that this is a long-term policy, evaluation reports will be drafted according to the periodicity of the cross-sectional plans, that is, on a three-year basis (one in 2016, another in 2019, another in 2022). For each three-year period, adjustments or updates to the intervention strategy of PRIEG/SICA may be made if deemed convenient. Likewise, spaces of accountability will be promoted before civil society organizations linked to agendas for equality in the regional sphere.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Executive Committee of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of the Central American Integration System (CD-PRIEG/SICA)²⁷

General Secretariat of SICA
SG-SICA

General Secretariat of the Central American Economic
Integration SG-SIECA

General Secretariat of Central American Social Integration
SG-SISCA

General Secretariat of the Central American Educational and Cultural
Coordination SG-CECC

Executive Secretariat of the Council of Finance or Finance Ministers of Central America, Panama and the Dominican
Republic SE-COSEFIN

Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican
Republic SE-COMISCA

Center for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in Central America (CENPROMYPE)

27. Setup Record of the CD-PRIEG/SICA, dated December 15, 2015.

Sectoral Technical Committees of the Regional Policy on Equity of the Central American Integration System (CTS-PRIEG/SICA)²⁸

CTS-Thrust 1-PRIEG/SICA (Financial Autonomy)

Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA)
Technical Secretariat for Women of COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)
Regional Center for the Promotion of MSMEs (CENPROMYPE)
Regional Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Central America (OSPESCA)
Executive Secretariat of the Council of Finance and Finance Ministers (SE-COSEFIN)
Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SE-CAC)
Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)
Central American Social Integration Secretariat (SISCA)

CTS-Thrust 2-PRIEG/SICA (Education for Equality)

General Secretariat of the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination (SG-CECC / SICA)
Technical Secretariat of the Woman of the COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)
General Secretariat of the Central American University Superior Council (SG-CSUCA)
General Secretariat of the Central American Social Integration System (SG-SISCA)

CTS-Thrust 3-PRIEG/SICA (Integrated Management of Disaster Risk)

Executive Secretariat of the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (SE-CEPREDENAC)
Technical Secretariat of the Women of the COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)
Executive Secretariat of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (SE-CCAD)
General Secretariat of the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination (SG-CECC)
General Secretariat of the Central American University Superior Council (SG-CSUCA)
Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SE-CAC)
Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (SE-COMISCA)
Regional Committee of Hydraulic Resources (SE-CRRH)

CTS-Thrust 4-PRIEG/SICA (Health in Equality)

Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health (SE-COMISCA)
Technical Secretariat of Women of the COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)
General Secretariat of SICA (SG-SICA)
General Secretariat of the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination (SG-CECC/SICA)
Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP)
Central American Forum and the Dominican Republic of Drinking Water and Sanitation (FOCARD-APS)
General Secretariat of the Central American Social Integration System (SG-SISCA)

CTS-Thrust 5-PRIEG/SICA (Safety and life free of violence)

General Secretariat of SICA (SG-SICA), through the Democratic Security Directorate and the Gender Unit.
Technical Secretariat for Women of COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)

CTS-Thrust 6-PRIEG/SICA (Political Participation in the Powers of the State)

Commission for Women, Children, Youth and Family of the Central American Parliament (COMFAM/PARLACEN)
Technical Secretariat for Women of the COMMCA (STM-COMMCA)

CTS-Thrust 7-PRIEG/SICA (Conditions for implementation and sustainability)

Financing for equality: Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Finance or Finance of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (SE-COSEFIN)
Information and statistics: Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD)
Promotion of cultures for equality: Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP)

28. Data obtained from the Articles of Incorporation of each Sectoral Technical Committee, signed on the following dates: CTS-Thrust 1-PRIEG/SICA (May 28, 2015); CTS-Thrust 2-PRIEG/SICA (December 8, 2015); CTS-Thrust 3-PRIEG/SICA (December 12, 2016); CTS-Thrust 4-PRIEG/SICA (December 7, 2015); CTS-Thrust 5-PRIEG/SICA (January 24, 2017); CTS-Thrust 6-PRIEG/SICA (November 6, 2015); Letter of Understanding with CENTROESTAD (June 29, 2012).

Appendix 2

International, regional and national commitments related to equality and women's rights

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and its Optional Protocol, 2008	1996	1968	1979	1992	1997	1980	1977	1978
International Convention for the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families (2005)	2001	---	2003	2003	2005	2005	---	---
Protocol to Prevent the Suppression and Punishment of Human Trafficking, Especially Women and Children and Successive Ratifications (2003)	2003	2003	2004	2004	2008	-	2004	2008
Convention on Children Rights (1989) and its Optional Protocol to the Convention on Children Rights on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)	1990 2003 2003	1990 2003 2002	1990 2002 2004	1990 2002 2002	1990 2002 2002	1990 2005 2004	1990 2001 2001	1991 - 2006
ILO Conventions	ILO 89; ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 156; ILO 182; ILO 183	ILO 89; ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 105; ILO 182; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 169; ILO 182	ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 156; ILO 182	ILO 89; ILO 100; ILO 103; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 118; ILO 122; ILO 156; ILO 169; ILO 182	ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 169; ILO 182	ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 169; ILO 182	ILO 89; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 182	ILO 100; ILO 105; ILO 111; ILO 122; ILO 182
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (1995)	1995	1995	1996	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, known as CEDAW, (1979), and its Optional Protocol (1999)	1990 2003	1984 2001	1981 2006	1982 2002	1980 X	1981 X	1981 2001	1982 2001
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966)	2001	1967	1979	1983	2002	1978	1967	1983
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)	Signed year 2000, not yet ratified	1968	1979	1988	1981	1980	1977	1978

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic
Convention on the Citizenship of Married Women (1957)	1957	1957	1957	1957	1957	1957	1957	1957
Convention on the political rights of women (1952)	1952	1952	1993	1953	1979	1952	1952	1952
Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2013)								
Health Initiative for the indigenous peoples of Latin America PAHO, 138 th Session of the Executive Committee (2006)								
Declaration of October 11 th International Day of the Girl Child, United Nations (2011)								
International declaration of people of African descent. (United Nations, 2011)								
Brasilia Consensus Adopted at the Eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held from July 13 to July 16, 2010								
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. United Nations, (2006) The declaration is a detailed document on the human rights of indigenous peoples approved by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007, after 20 years of debate. The document emphasizes the right of indigenous peoples to live with dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to seek their own development, freely determined in accordance with their own needs and interests.								
Gender Equality Policy of PAHO (2005) UN.								
The Durban Declaration and Program of Action, United Nations (2001) - This Conference, which attracted the commitment of 170 States, constitutes one of the most significant events of the 21 st century for the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all the related forms of intolerance in the world and in a very special way for the Americas. It marked a paradigm shift, reaffirming the urgency of protecting fundamental rights for the victims of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and recognizing the new forms of racism and its interconnections with other forms of social exclusion.								
Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, and its post-2015 agenda (2000-2013)								
Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council on Women, Peace, and Security (2000) - Security Council Resolution 1325 covers violence against women during conflicts and recognizes the importance of the role of women in the construction of peace.								
Beijing declaration and Platform for Action (1995) adopted by the governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) - The Declaration and its Platform was a breakthrough to enforce women's rights as it holds the State, private sector and civil society accountable to act to eliminate obstacles that hinder the participation of women in all areas of public and private life. In it, the development agenda is articulated for the first time with that of women's rights and two clear strategies are defined to achieve the objectives: gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.								
1994 Action Program of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) - the ICPD Program of Action called for the elimination of violence against women as a cornerstone of programs with respect to population and the development.								
The Vienna Declaration and Action Program (1993) - The Declaration represents an important victory for activists. It formally recognizes that women's rights are human rights.								
Declaration on the elimination of all forms of violence against women. United Nations (1993)								
Declaration of November 25 as International Day of nonviolence against women. United Nations (1981)								
Declaration of March 8 as International Women's Day. United Nations, 1952								
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Adopted and proclaimed by the Resolution of the General Assembly of December 10, 1948								
Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, (1989)								

Policies, plans, and regional declarations

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dominican Republic
Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, 1969	X	1970	1978	1978	1977	1979	1978	1978
Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women. OAS 1948.	X	1951	1951	1951	1955	1956	1951	1949
Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women. OAS 1948.	X	1951	1951	1970	1955	1956	1951	1949

Consensus of Santo Domingo (2013), within the framework of Support for the implementation of the 2020 Competitiveness Agenda for the Americas, for which principles were established to move towards a more competitive and prosperous region, promoting equity, inclusion, social entrepreneurship, the adoption and application of principles of corporate social responsibility, sustainability, shared value, and gender equity as fundamental factors to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the region.

declaration/Minutes, Permanent Council of the OAS/Organization of American States in which the Inter-American Year of Women is proclaimed. OAS (2007)

Brasilia Consensus, ECLAC (2010), calls governments to action to provide greater economic autonomy and equality for women in the workplace. In addition to stopping all forms of violence against women through the adoption of preventive, punitive, protective, and care measures that contribute to the eradication of gender violence in any of its manifestations, as well as guaranteeing access to women to justice and free legal aid.

Quito Consensus, ECLAC (2007), an agreement that emerged at the X Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, where governments commit themselves to carry out government actions to guarantee parity in the political participation of women in all the areas of political and social life, as well as to promote actions for quality jobs for women.

Consensus of Mexico, ECLAC (2004), the governments of the participating countries in the ninth Regional Conference of Women of Latin America and the Caribbean agree to adopt proactive policies that promote the creation of jobs, recognize the economic value of domestic and productive work not remunerated ensure the full inclusion of the gender perspective, taking into account ethnic-racial and generational diversity, in the design and execution of national development plans, and of public policies and programs in all areas of action of the State, as well as in the budgets destined to finance them.

Lima Consensus, ECLAC (2000), the countries participating in the Eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean are committed to strengthening the implementation of the Regional Action Program, promoting socio-economic policies that promote growth and sustainable development with equity and equality, to combat the intergenerational transmission of poverty through the allocation, redistribution and increase of resources and strengthen democracy in the region through the adoption of policies and measures that facilitate the enjoyment by women of their full rights of citizenship under fair conditions.

Consensus of Santiago, ECLAC (1997), is an agreement that arises after the seventh Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, in which it emphasizes the importance of development an integrated approach that link social and economic policies for the achievement of equity, strengthen in the technical, budgetary, political and administrative spheres the national mechanisms and the governmental offices for the promotion of women.

Policies and equality plans within the SICA framework

- COMMCA Strategic Plan 2009-2013, SICA-COMMCA
- Gender Policy of the CABEL, Central American Integration Bank
- Gender Policy and Strategic Gender Plan of the Central American Court of Justice 2012--2016

Country	National women's mechanisms
Guatemala	Presidential Secretariat for Women Created by Government Agreement No. 200-2000, dated May 17, 2000.
El Salvador	Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women Created by Legislative Decree No. 644 published in Official Gazette No.43, Volume No.330 of March 1, 1996.
Honduras	National Institute for Women Created by Decree No. 232-98, published in the Official Gazette No. 28798, dated February 11, 1999.
Nicaragua	Ministry of Women's Affairs Created by Law No. 832, reform and addition to law No. 290: "Law on organization, competence, and procedures of the Executive Power" of February 2013.
Costa Rica	National Women's Institute Created by Law of the Republic No. 7801, in March 1998. Appointment of Ministerial Post through Agreement 978-P of the President of the Republic of September 3, 2013.
Panama	National Institute for Women Created by Law No. 71 of December 23, 2008.
Dominican Republic	Ministry of Women of the Dominican Republic Created by Law No. 86-99: Creation of the Secretary of State for Women, of August 11, 1999.

Public Policies of Equality

Country	Public Policies of Equality
Belize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Gender Policy: BELIZE - 2002
Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law on the Social Promotion of Women (1990) • National Policy for Gender Equality and Equity 2007-2017
El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law on Equality, Equity, and Non-discrimination against women. • National Women's Policy (PNM): updated: measures to 2014 • Equality Plan 2014-2017
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Policy for the Advancement and Development of Guatemalan Women and the Equal Opportunity Plan 2008-2023. • Law on Dignity and Integral Promotion of Women (Decree 7-99)
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Equality and Equity Plan of Honduras (PIEG) • National Policy on Women 2010-2022
Nicaragua ²⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law of Equal Rights and Opportunities (2008) • Gender Policy of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity

29. In Nicaragua, the Ministry of Women has as a precedent the Nicaraguan Institute for Women (INIM), created in 1987.

Country	Public Policies of Equality
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law No. 4 dated January 29, 1999, Establishing Equal Opportunities for Women. • Law 71 dated December 23, 2008, through which INAMU is created. • Executive Decree 244 dated December 18, 2012 approving the Public Policy on Equal Opportunities for Women (PPIOM)
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Plan for Gender Equity (PLANEG) 2007-2017

Special Laws in the National Fields

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama ²³	Dominican Republic
A life free from violence	<p>Domestic Violence Act, (1991, 2000;2008)</p> <p>Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act (2003)</p> <p>Reform of the Criminal Code, to include marital rape, (1999)</p> <p>Evidence Act, Chapter 95, s74(1) and s92(3) , sexual rape, (1999)</p>	<p>Law on the Criminalization of Violence against Women (2007) and Plan of Action (2008-2012).</p> <p>National Plan for the Care and Prevention of Violence against Women in Relationships and Family for Sexual Harassment and Rape, or PLANOVIMujer (2010-2015)</p> <p>Creation of a Domestic Violence Court in the Second Judicial Circuit of San Jose, (2001)</p> <p>Law against Sexual Harassment in Employment and Teaching (1995)</p> <p>Law against Domestic Violence, (1996)</p>	<p>Protocol of action for femicide research (2012)</p> <p>Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women (2011)</p> <p>Law against Domestic Violence (1996,2002, 2004)</p> <p>Amendments to the Criminal Code, the imposition of security measures; sexual assault on an incapable minor, changes the offense classification Rape; Sexual Harassment raises the penalty of Prostitution, the penalty is raised; Offer and Demand is added for Other Prostitution, (1999 and 2004)</p> <p>Reform of the Criminal Code to classify crimes of rape and their punishment (2008)</p>	<p>Law to prevent, punish and eradicate Domestic Violence (Decree 97-1996)</p> <p>Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women (Decree 22-2008)</p> <p>Reform of the Criminal Code on the crime of human trafficking. (2005)</p> <p>Law against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking (Decree 09-2009)</p>	<p>Reform to the Criminal Code, include crimes against people's freedom and physical, psychological and sexual integrity (2005)</p> <p>Law against Domestic Violence and its Reforms 1997; 2006</p> <p>Reform of the Criminal Code to include sexual violence. (1997)</p> <p>Specialized Court in Domestic Violence (2000)</p> <p>Special Department for Women (1994)</p>	<p>Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women (Law 779/2012)</p> <p>Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women and reforms to Law No. 641 of the Criminal Code (2011)</p> <p>National Program for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (2004-2009)</p> <p>National Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence (2001-2006)</p> <p>Law 150, reforms to the Criminal Code to penalize sexual crimes, (1992).</p> <p>Law Against Domestic Violence (1995)</p>	<p>Law 38 of July 10, 2001 "Against Domestic Violence and Childhood and Adolescent Abuse"</p> <p>Law No. 17 of March 26, 2001, For which the optional protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was approved.</p> <p>Law 82 of October 24, 2013, which typifies femicide and sanctions violence against women.</p>	<p>Law on the Illicit Trafficking of Migrants and Human Trafficking, (2003)</p> <p>Shelter Law (2003)</p> <p>Law of Sexual Offenses, 1998.</p> <p>Law against violence against women and family. (1997)</p> <p>Law No. 7586 against Domestic Violence, (1996)</p> <p>Reform of the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure and Law 14-94, on Domestic Violence (1997)</p> <p>Sexual Offences Act, (1992)</p>

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama ²³	Dominican Republic
			Reform to the Criminal Code, on the crime of domestic Violence, and disobedience in case of domestic violence, (1998)			Amendments to the Criminal Code (1996), to prevent and punish domestic violence; penalize psychological violence and create measures to protect the assaulted person. Law of the National Police, which creates the National Department of the Commissariats for Women and Children (1996)		
Access to Participation		Act on Promotion of the Social Equality of Women the minimum 40% fee for representation for election charges is established and advocates for a greater participation of Women in the political, economic and social field, (1990) Comprehensive reform to the electoral code law 8765 (2009) Equality and Gender Equality Policy of the Legislative Assembly -PIEGAL- (2013)	Reforms to the Municipal Code, which includes the promotion of gender equity through Gender Units (2006)	The Law on Development Councils, the Municipal Code and the General Decentralization Law jointly institutionalize the participation of women from the departmental to the national level, and a municipal commission is created on women, children and families. (2002)	Electoral Law and Political Organizations, approves a minimum quota of 30% of women in the lists of candidates of the political parties (2000)	Reform of the Electoral Code to incorporate the electoral quota of 30% of female participation. (1997)	Executive Decree No. April 27, 2009 that creates the National Council of Women (CONAMU).	Electoral Law establish minimum quota of 33% of female participation, (1997, 2000)

30. Additionally, Panama has the Panamanian Observatory against Violence, and the National Plan Against Domestic Violence and Citizen Coexistence Policies (2004-2014)

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama ²³	Dominican Republic
Employment and Decent Work	Sexual Harassment Act, 2000 Labor Act revised to include Equal Pay Act, Maternity Protection, 2003	Law against Sexual Harassment in Employment and Teaching, 1995 Reform to art.95 Labor Code, on rights in maternity period, 1995 National Policy on Women, Labor and Employment, 1999; Reform of the Labor Code on work of underage women and domestic service, 2009	Law for the creation of the Solidarity Fund for the Small business owner Family (1999, 2003)	Modification of the Civil Code - repeal of the article that reserved the spouse the right to decide whether the wife worked outside the home or not (1998) Law on Civil Liabilities of the State that guarantees licenses and maternity benefits, (1997)		The Law of Urban Planning prioritizes women in the ownership of housing as a measure of access to credit (2002)	Law No. 50 of November 23, 1995, which regulates breastfeeding. Law No. 44 of August 12, 1995 by which rules are issued to regularize and modernize labor relations.	
Family	Families and Children Act, revised 2000	Amendments to the Family Code, about successions, marriage and others, (1976) Reforms to the Family Code, Adoption Act recognition and fatherland (1995) Fact Union Law (reforms to the Family Code), 1995 Alimony Law 1996 Law of Responsible Paternity (2001)	Amendments to the Family Code Benefit of Current Food, for procedures to obtain credits, driving licenses. Passport Migratory Constraint, setting up of the food quota. (2004)	Development of Social Law Includes the protection for responsible fatherhood and motherhood (2001)		Law of Responsible Fatherhood and Motherhood and its regulation. (2007). Food Act. (1992). Law for Dissolution of Marriage by Will of one of the Parties. (1988). Law that regulates the Relations of Mothers, Parents and Children. (1982).	Law No. 3, May 1994, by which the Code of the Family was approved. Law 39 of April 30, 2003 on Parental Responsibility. Law 42 of August 7, 2012 "General of Alimony Pensions"	

Legal Framework	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama ²³	Dominican Republic
Sexual and reproductive rights	<p>Law on sexual and reproductive health. (2002)</p> <p>Legislation was Passed to criminalize the willful Transmission of HIV, 2001</p>	<p>General Law for the protection for Adolescent Mothers 1997</p> <p>Establishment of the Interinstitutional on reproductive and sexual rights, 1999</p> <p>Law of Responsible Parenthood (2001)</p> <p>Reform to Art.95 of the Labor Code. About rights on maternity leave. (1995)</p>		<p>Law of social Development art. 25.- 26. on Reproductive Health (2000)</p>		<p>Reforms to the Social Security Law and its regulations, with the objective to promote the right to breastfeed and to recognize the right to social security of women in free union. (2005)</p> <p>Breastfeeding Act (1999)</p>	<p>Family Code (Title III, Chapter II, Section II, Art 699)</p> <p>Executive Decree No. 268 of August 17, 2001</p> <p>Executive Decree No. 5 of March 6, 2006 ordering the gratuity of the provision of maternity services and assistance in all establishments of the Ministry of Health.</p>	
Others		<p>Integral Law for the Senior citizens, (1999).</p> <p>Law on attention to women in Poverty conditions (1998)</p>		<p>Law of Education Promotion against Discrimination (2002)</p> <p>Comprehensive protection law of childhood and adolescence (Decree 27-2003)</p> <p>Protection Law For Senior citizens (Decree 80-96)</p>		<p>Law No. 22 establishes the option for women to take up her husband's name or not (1990)</p>	<p>Law 22, of December 19 of 1990</p> <p>"For which it is established that it is optional for married women to take her husband's name in personal identity documents"</p> <p>Law 7, of March 201 (sic)</p> <p>That establishes the framework for female sterilization</p>	

Appendix 3

Agreements regarding gender equality in SICA

Date	Actors	Evaluation tools	Agreements
June 30, 2005	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA	Thirteenth agreement of the declaration of Tegucigalpa	Incorporation into the SICA of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA). "Reiterate our commitment to eradicate all forms of violence against women and guarantee their rights in conditions of equality and equity."
July 17, 2007	SG-SICA and Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)	Agreement of functional cooperation for the installation of COMMCA in the General Secretariat of SICA	Creation of the Technical Secretariat for Women as part of the SICA, attached to the General Secretariat (SG-SICA), under the auspices of the Spain-SICA Fund.
July 16, 2009	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)	First Strategic Plan 2009-2013 that integrates the definition of the work thrust Institutionalization of the gender perspective in SICA.	Opening of institutional spaces for women in the regional decision-making process and incorporating and mainstreaming the gender approach into sectoral public policies and issues oriented towards the regional integration of the SICA countries and the Dominican Republic, based on 4 thrusts prioritized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial autonomy • Participation of women in politics • Institutionalization of gender approach • Gender Based Violence
June 29, 2010	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA	Plan of Action that endorses, for presidential mandate, the COMMCA Resolution on Gender, Regional Integration and Development.	Incorporate gender equality and equity in national and regional development policies and plans as a strategic and high priority issue, both in SICA and in the member states, and prepare a proposal for guidelines for the adoption of Regional Policy of Equality and Gender Equality (PRIEG/SICA) for SICA
August 23, 2010	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)	Letter of Understanding and mutual collaboration and assistance of common interest.	Coordinated work for the realization of initiatives that involve the Deputies, Functionaries and technical staff of both institutions, on gender legislation, laws for the protection of women and equality policies, for the development of instruments political and work in SICA.
September 10, 2010	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Regional Center for Small and Medium Enterprises (CENPROMYPE)	Letter of Understanding and mutual collaboration and assistance of common interest.	Promote the execution of necessary activities and coordination for the Mainstreaming of the Gender Perspective in CENPROMYPE.
September 2010	III Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA) and Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD)	Agreement in the framework of the needs to have statistical information.	Incorporate a gender perspective in the production of regional statistics in order to make visible the differentiated reality of men and women.

Date	Actors	Evaluation tools	Agreements
October 10, 2010	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Central American Court of Justice (CCJ).	Letter of Understanding and mutual collaboration and assistance of common interest.	Coordinate actions to carry out studies, research, establish joint proposals for Treaties, Protocols or other initiatives at the national and regional level regarding laws for the protection of women, gender mainstreaming in the Central American Integration process, criminalization of trafficking in persons, exploitation, sexual and domestic violence and the illegal traffic of immigrants, respect for human rights, criminalization of cross-border crimes that derive from trafficking in persons, exploitation and sexual violence.
December 10, 2010	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Executive Secretary of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic, (SE-COMISCA)	Letter of Understanding and mutual collaboration and assistance of common interest.	Carry out necessary coordination, execution and follow-up actions for the Mainstreaming of the Gender Perspective in SE-COMISCA.
December 16, 2010	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA	Seventeenth Agreement, of the Declaration of San Pedro, Belize.	Reaffirm the commitment to advance gender equality and equity in the SICA member countries and reiterate their interest in enforcing the agreements for the advancement of women's rights, reflected in the Plan of Action of the XXXV Ordinary Meeting of Chiefs of State and Government of SICA
December 2011	Council of Ministers of Women (COMMCA) of Central America and the Dominican Republic.	COMMCA resolution on the "Guidelines for the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality of SICA", endorsed by the XXXVIII Meeting Ordinary of Chiefs and Chief of State and Government.	Build the regional policy based on the guidelines and present it to the Meeting of Presidents. The aim of the policy is to guide the processes that exist around regional integration.
October 31 2011	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA).	COMMCA Resolution on Gender, Environment and Climate Change in Central America and the Dominican Republic.	Instruct to deepen the level of coordination of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA) with CEPREDENAC and the CCAD, in such a way that they work together to incorporate the gender perspective in their institutional work at the regional and national.
March 28, 2012	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA). Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)	Letter of Understanding of mutual collaboration and assistance in matters of common interest.	Develop the COMMCA-CABEI Regional Program on the Economic Autonomy of Women in Regional Integration with the purpose of advancing towards the full exercise of women's economic rights in conditions of equality and equity, through the generation of economic opportunities, as well as in the access, use and control of productive resources
June 29, 2012	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Central American Statistical Commission (CENTROESTAD)	Letter of Understanding of mutual collaboration and assistance in matters of common interest.	Opening and beginning of a joint COMMCA-CENTROESTAD work space for the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the production of statistics and national and regional indicators in SICA countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance via consultancy to support the implementation of the COMMCA-CENTROESTAD Letter of Understanding.

Date	Actors	Evaluation tools	Agreements
June 29, 2012	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA.	Declaration XXXIX Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government and its Plan of Action	Mandate to COMMCA and the Regional Security Commission to coordinate jointly to ensure the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the Central American Security Strategy.
August 22, 2013	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), Secretary of Economic Integration, (SIECA).	Letter of Understanding of mutual collaboration and assistance in matters of common interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration in the process of approval and implementation of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality -PRIEG/SICA-. • Development of a Gender Policy for SIECA, applicable to all its dependencies and its external relations. • Development of activities related to the promotion of the Economic Rights of Women.
October 10th 2013	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), General Secretary of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA).	Letter of Understanding of mutual collaboration and assistance in matters of common interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration in the process of approval and implementation of the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality - PRIEG/SICA-. • Development of a gender policy in the regional institutional framework. • Collaboration in the gender strategy in the regional institutionality.
December 14, 2013	Center for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises (CENPRROMYPE), General Secretariat of SICA (SG-SICA), Secretariat of Economic Integration (SIECA)	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA. Agreement No. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To instruct CENPRROMYPE so that together with the SG-SICA, SIECA and with the support of the Pro Tempore Presidency of SICA, position itself before the community international, cooperating and strategic partners, the promotion of entrepreneurship as an effective means for generating employment and new businesses, prevention of violence by facilitating the productive insertion of young people and increasing the economic autonomy of women.
December 14, 2013	Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and Dominican Republic (COMMCA), General Secretariat of SICA (SG-SICA), SICA institutionality	XXXVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA. Agreement No. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Regional Policy on Equity and Gender Equality (PRIEG/SICA) and instruct the institutions of SICA and the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic, so that in coordination with the General Secretariat of SICA, establish the mechanisms that are necessary for its operation.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

PROGRAMA DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL