



UNITED NATIONS



# Normative framework for gender equality



## A. Normative framework

The inequalities existing between women and men have been of concern to the United Nations since its founding. Ever since the first meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women was held in February 1947, the legal basis for the struggle for gender equality and for efforts to combat discrimination against women<sup>2</sup> has been expounded in international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women<sup>3</sup> (United Nations, 1979) and its optional protocol (United Nations, 1999), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1996) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

There are also regional instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (commonly known as the Convention of Belém do Pará) of the Organization of American States (OAS, 1994) and the Regional Gender Agenda (ECLAC, 2017a) adopted by the member governments at the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean,<sup>4</sup> a subsidiary organ of ECLAC.

The Regional Gender Agenda identifies multiple dimensions of the discrimination experienced by women and sets out the human rights commitments assumed by signatory governments with a view to promoting gender quality and guaranteeing the rights of women in all their diversity (ECLAC, 2017a).

The Montevideo Strategy adopted at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a regional accord that is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also a technical policy instrument for the implementation and reinforcement of cross-cutting and sectoral public policies designed to guarantee human rights and women's autonomy.

<sup>2</sup> The Convention for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women defines discrimination against women as: "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, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (United Nations, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is a milestone international agreement because it proposes concrete action and is the only universally recognized instrument in the struggle to uphold women's rights and freedoms. Furthermore, pursuant to its optional protocol, the Convention is legally binding upon the States that sign and ratify it.

<sup>4</sup> The Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean is charged with identifying the situation with respect to women's autonomy and rights at the regional and subregional levels, presenting public policy recommendations for gender equality, undertaking periodic assessments of the activities carried out in fulfilment of regional and international plans and agreements on the subject, and serving as a forum for debates on gender equality. For further information, see [online] <https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/h4/en>.

This text is part of a United Nations publication coordinated by Simone Cecchini, Senior Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Raúl Holz, Consultant of the same Division, and Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer at ECLAC's subregional headquarters in Mexico. The document contributes to the activities of the project "Leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean: strengthening institutions and social policy coherence and integration at the country level to foster equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", financed by the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account. More information on the project, including other relevant materials, is available at: [igualdad.cepal.org/en](http://igualdad.cepal.org/en)

The authors are grateful for the valuable comments of Fabián Repetto to an earlier version of this document and Nicole Bidegain, Fabiana Del Popolo, Andrés Espejo, María Luisa Marinho, Malva- marina Pedrero, Leandro Reboiras, Claudia Robles, Lucia Scuro, José Ignacio Suárez, Varinia Tromben, Daniela Trucco and Heidi Ullmann on specific chapters, as well as the support of Daniela Huneus in the preparation of the document. They also thank all the participants in the discussions at the training workshops "Que Nadie se Quede Atrás en la Senda del Desarrollo de Panamá" (Panama, November 15-16, 2018) and "Políticas Sociales para que Nadie se Quede Atrás" (Santiago de Veraguas, April 9-10, 2019, and Panama, April 11-12, 2019), organized by the Social Development Division and ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico, in collaboration with the Social Cabinet of the Government of the Republic of Panama. Thanks are due to María Elisa Bernal, Simone Cecchini, Raúl Holz, Daniela Huneus, Francisca Miranda, Beatriz Morales, Marcelo Munch, Amalia Palma and Daniela Trucco for their generous contribution of photographic material for this publication.

The opinions expressed in this document, which has not been subjected to editorial review, are the sole responsibility of the authors and may not coincide with those of the Organization.

United Nations publication  
Copyright © United Nations, 2021  
All rights reserved

This publication should be cited as: S. Cecchini, R. Holz and H. Soto de la Rosa (coords.), *A toolkit for promoting equality: the contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/TS.2021/55), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021.

Permission to reproduce all or part of this video should be requested from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Documents and Publications Division, [publicaciones.cepal@un.org](mailto:publicaciones.cepal@un.org). Member States of the United Nations and their governmental institutions may reproduce this work without prior authorization. They are only requested to mention the source and inform ECLAC of such reproduction.