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PARAGUAY'S REPORT FOR THE THIRTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY OF CIM DELEGATES

In the period covered by the present report, from October 2004 to October 2006, the Paraguayan Government, through the Women's Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic (Secretaría de la Mujer de la Presidencia de la República—SMPR), continued to strategically plan its actions to achieve gender equality.

I. LEGAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

Some of the statistical data:

The total fertility rate (TFR) nationwide for women from 15 to 44 years of age is 2.9 children per woman. Paraguay recorded a substantial decline in its TFR between 1998 and 2004. There are major differences depending on the area of residence, level of education, socioeconomic level and language spoken in the household: the TFR for women living in urban areas is 2.5 children whereas for those living in the rural sector it is 3.7 children per woman. Among women who are married or cohabiting with their partners, the need for family planning services using modern methods amounts to 18.9%, with higher proportions being registered in the rural sector. More than half of adolescent girls and young women (15 to 24 years of age) have had sexual relations. Young women who have reported having premarital sexual relations started an active sexual life at a very early age, on average at 16 years of age.^{1/}

At present, the maternal mortality rate is 134 for every 100,000 live births.

In the specific case of HIV/AIDS, 99.4% of women are aware of its existence. Nevertheless, there are still women who believe that there is a cure for AIDS (6.2%), and not all of them know that a person can be infected without showing any symptoms (78.7%). Of the women who were interviewed, 78.8% knew about at least one method of prevention.

According to ENDSSR 2004, of the total number of women interviewed, 33.4% reported that they had been the victims of some of violence by their spouse/cohabitant and that 7.6% had suffered sexual violence at the hands of their present or former husband/cohabitant.

The net coverage rate of the first two cycles of basic education indicates that universalization has virtually been achieved, with a rate of 97% in 2004. The illiteracy rate fell from 8.9% in 1997 to 6.3% in 2004. The distribution of enrollment in the first and second cycles of basic education amounts to 51.6% for men and 48.4% for women, which shows that there is still a considerable gap that has to be worked on. In the third cycle, the gap is smaller, with enrollment amounting to 50.5% for men and 49.5% for women. As for secondary school, the

1. ENDSSR 2004.

enrollment for women amounts to 50.6% and for men 49.4%. Although there is a lower percentage of women enrolling than men, statistics point out that there is a higher drop-out rate among men.

Underemployment affects women more because of the many roles that they are required to play, which contributes substantially to poverty. It is estimated that 25.1% of the population is working less than 30 hours per week. Of the labor force, 28.1% are domestic workers, and of these 40.9% are women. One out of every four households is headed by a woman.^{2//}

Women are facing difficulties because of the sexual division of labor and earn only 70% of the wages earned by a man for the same work. Furthermore, domestic workers are discriminated against, as it is the only job for which the law has established a working day of up to 12 hours.

Indigenous peoples and especially women are suffering from greater discrimination and inequality. Only 2.2% can study, 2.5% have clean water supply, and 9.7% have electricity in their homes. Extreme poverty has led indigenous women to forced displacement to urban centers, where they survive by begging and are exposed to insecurity and sexual trafficking and exploitation.

As for elections, for positions in the branches of government, the executive (President and Vice-President) is comprised of men. Of the country's 17 governors, 1 is a woman. There are women holding the post of minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Secretariats for Women, for Tourism, for Children and Adolescents, for Technical Planning and for Social Action, an achievement that has become a milestone in the MERCOSUR countries.

As a result of the 20% minimum quota established by the Electoral Code, for the 2003-2008 term of office, women account for 8.9% of the Senate and 10% of Congress. As for town councilpersons throughout the country, 71.4% are men and 28% are women, and 26 women were elected to departmental councils.

II. FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

1) Participation of women in power and decision-making structures

The Women's Leadership Center, which has been functioning since 2005, in coordination with the Electoral Justice Court and, since that year, with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), has set the goal of training 2,400 women in women's transformation leadership. This year, the workshops were differentiated by age into two groups: young women (18 to 30 years of age) and adult women (over 30 years of age).

Another example of training in leadership is the Women's Parliament being implemented by the SMPR, National Congress, and the nongovernmental organization Tiempo Nuevo/Mujeres Políticas en Red (New Times/Political Women in Network), with support from the Swiss Embassy. This forum is a Virtual Parliament and is aimed at building up civil society through the empowerment of 125 women leaders from 11 political parties, thus promoting new forums of

2. 2004 Paraguay Household Survey (Encuesta de Hogares Paraguay 2004).

exchange between government entities and civil society, contributing to the development and consolidation of basic skills that foster effective participation making it possible for women to gain access to positions of responsibility.

In a joint activity with the Network of Municipal Women of Paraguay and the NGO ALTERVIDA, training sessions were held in the country's capital and in the interior of the country, entitled "Political Dialogues for Sound Municipal Management with Gender Equality," aimed at women leaders, women aspiring to be candidates for the office of governor and councilperson from all political parties, and the Women's Secretariats of the Governor's Office and Municipalities, as well as other stakeholders committed to this issue.

2) Institutional and legal framework

To exert an impact on the drafting of the preliminary bill for the Criminal Code, a proposal for amending the bill has been submitted and lobbying activities have been conducted by the head of the institution and its technical working team with the Special Committee that is studying and drafting the proposal in Congress. The proposal basically consisted of changing the penalties for crimes against sexual autonomy, child abuse, rape, and domestic violence.

A major step at this time is the partial ratification by Congress of a bill on the Protection of National Budget Resources to protect that part of the budget's resources aimed at purchasing contraceptives by the Paraguayan State.

To disseminate and promote enforcement of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an Inter-institutional Forum was set up, with an Annual Operating Plan and Working Thematic Forums on the basis of the recommendations issued by the Committee of Experts that is monitoring enforcement of this Convention. As a result, Thematic Forums have been established on "Prevention of Maternal Maternity and Abortion" and the "Promotion of Responsible Parenthood." In July 2006, Thematic Forums on "Domestic Work" and the "Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Women" were held.

For the purpose of contributing to improving legal practice and protection of the rights of women, working meetings were held with the Director of the National Institute for the Indigenous (*Instituto Nacional del Indígena*—INDI), the People's Ombudsman, and the Director of the Law School attached to the Judiciary to incorporate the gender perspective into the specialization modules aimed at law professionals.

Likewise, a joint Training Program is being continued by the Office of the People's Ombudsman and the Women's Secretariats of the country's various departments. The First Module developed this year is on "Domestic Violence, Criminal Code, Law 1600/00: Against Domestic Violence," focusing on measures of care and protection for victims in the framework of the Law. Likewise, the public debate has been promoted jointly with this institution on sexual harassment in public institutions and the media.

3) Access to Financial Resources and Work

The SMPR, through its permanent director, is a member of the Social Cabinet, comprised of the Ministers of the Executive. It is aimed at drawing up the major strategies and policies to reduce poverty through work based on social development. To implement the decisions taken by this institution, a Forum Coordinating the National Strategy for the Fight against Poverty,

comprised of representatives of various institutions of the public sector and organized civil society, was established.

As for the access of women to financial resources and employment, the program for this sector has been launched; it consists of the following components: 1) unit of support for the cross-cutting character of the gender perspective, 2) unit of support for women's projects, and 3) unit of support for inserting women into production chains.

At the Tripartite Committee for Equal Opportunity in Employment, comprised of government, business, and trade union sectors, a Project for Training in Nontraditional Occupations was drawn up, aimed at women from marginal urban areas of Asunción. It already includes a participatory assessment, and it is in the process of being negotiated with the Ministry of Justice and Labor.

Through this Committee, lobbying activities and debating panels were held on the study and ratification of ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities.

A project was drawn up with the Paraguayan Industrial Union (*Unión Industrial Paraguaya*—UIP) to facilitate and streamline access to loans from micro-businesswomen as a fundamental indispensable tool for the development of their business projects. Likewise, this project envisages training in business planning, marketing, and gender perspective. This project shall be legalized by the signing of an Inter-institutional Agreement between both parties.

Incentives have been given to micro-businesswomen to enter the domestic and international market supply and demand circuit, presenting their products and services through a no conventional channel for our country, that is, Internet. This Project, which is called the Women into the New Network for Entrepreneurial Reinforcement (WINNER), is aimed at providing training of these women in the use of new technologies.

Organized women from marginal urban areas benefited from the delivery of production tools, on the basis of specific requests and needs for the implementation of production projects. In this regard, sewing machines were distributed to various Women's Committees, with the support of private-sector initiatives.

Likewise, in July, benefits were provided to individual women and to community committees from urban and outlying areas, with the delivery of working kits for various activities (hairdressing, laundry, bread-making, sewing, and others). This assistance was possible thanks to funds raised at events held jointly with B'nai B'rith Paraguay.

4) Education

All the work related to education was carried out through the Program for Equal Opportunities for Women in Education (*Programa de Igualdad de Oportunidades para las Mujeres en la Educación*—PRIOME), installed in the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ministerio de Educación y Cultura*—MEC) by an inter-institutional agreement.

The MEC has the Ñandutí Plan, which has drawn up objectives, strategies, and actions for Paraguayan education up to 2015, which incorporates five specific strategies into the National Goal to reduce discrimination for gender reasons. This Plan is decentralized in keeping with the reality of each department of the country. The technical team of the PRIOME program attends all the workshops to draft the Development Plans of Departmental Education (*Planes de*

Desarrollo de la Educación Departamental—PEDES), which consist of the decentralization of education through the Ñandutí Plan nationwide.

Some traditionally boys' or girls' high schools have opened their doors to both boys and girls for coeducation. The relationships between female and male students led to many internal conflicts, and therefore training workshops were held.

The First National Forum on Gender and Education was held under the auspices of UNICEF; it was attended by 300 education professionals from various levels and coming from various parts of the country. At the Forum, various aspects of equal opportunity in education were discussed.

The textbook materials used by the MEC in education at various levels (school, basic education, high school, and baccalaureate) are in the process of being revised. Technicians from PRIOME, who draw up specific proposals to be incorporated into the textbooks, are participating actively in this process.

The Guaraní/Spanish Bilingual Literacy Program on Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Production and Education, coordinated by the MEC and which is advised regarding gender by this Secretariat of State, has provided literacy training to 7,810 persons, of which 5,857 are women.

The publication "*Sexist Practices in the Classroom*," year 2005, is based on qualitative analysis in education, to contribute to advancing toward equality of treatment and opportunities between boys and girls, women and men.

In the framework of the Agreement with the U.S. Peace Corps and the Union of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (Unión de Profesionales y Empresarios Jóvenes—UPEJ), the Economic and Technical Support Program was developed. In the 2005 school year, on the basis of the program "Promoting Young Leaders with Social Responsibility," young women were trained and given financial support to study in high school, vocational school and college. In 2006, women at different levels are also receiving benefits.

5) Health

Regarding the integral health of women in the framework of the Second National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Segundo Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Oportunidades entre Mujeres y Hombres—II PNIO), an Action Program is being drawn up, envisaging working strategies for the health of women in the different stages of their sexual and reproductive life with the Ministry of Public Health and other health institutions, as well as the scope, analysis, and impact of social security of persons.

Likewise, the institution is part of important entities such as: the National Council on Sexual and Reproductive Health, the UNAIDS Thematic Group, and the National Committee to draft the Paraguayan Health Promotion Policy.

Until 2005, women required permission or the consent of their husbands to gain access to the surgical contraceptive method. With the adoption of the National Guide for Family Planning and Management of the ITS-2006, this decision can be taken unilaterally by women.

With the support of PAHO/CIDA Canada, Thematic Forums were held with the participation of top-level inter-sector authorities, and their main results have been: free testing and treatment of syphilis and HIV/AIDS in pregnant women.

To raise the level of knowledge of rural and indigenous communities about sexual and reproductive health, the institution provides training in the framework of a project benefiting from financial support from UNFPA, aimed at women who are members of the organization CONAMURI, so that they can become multiplier sexual and reproductive health agents in their respective communities.

To contribute to the eradication of priority transmitted diseases (STI, AIDS, TB, prevailing childhood illnesses and *Chagas* disease), training workshops were held on gender and health aimed at those in charge of health services, with the support of PAHO, the Health Science Research Institute of the National University of Asunción (*Instituto de Investigación de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Nacional de Asunción—UNA*).

Last year, the SMPR promoted the Campaign of Women and Girls Defeating HIV/AIDS (*Campaña Mujeres y Niñas Venciendo al VIH/SIDA*), with support from the UNAIDS Thematic Group. During the campaign a Declaration was signed by prominent women holding public positions. In the framework of this commitment, the HIV/AIDS Awareness-Raising and Prevention Project is being implemented in three districts of the Department of *Itapúa*, training and sensitizing groups of women, community leaders, and strategic stakeholders committed to this issue.

6) Elimination of violence

In the framework of sector V: “A Life Free from Violence” of II PNIO, the National Awareness-Raising Campaign entitled “You Harass, I Accuse” (*Tu Acosas Yo Acuso*) was conducted, aimed at education sectors, trade unions, and public officials. Likewise, awareness-raising and training workshops were conducted on the topic, with the participation of male and female public officials from various public institutions, high-school students, and members of private-sector trade unions.

The SMPR, the Women’s Secretariats of the Governor’s Offices and/or Municipalities of the country’s various departments, through the *Kuña Aty* Foundation, provided training to public officials and agents involved in preventing, take care of and punishing domestic and sexual violence.

In November 2005, the handbook “Designing an Alternative Model for the Integral Prevention and Care of Domestic Violence” was launched. Workshops were held for judges and male and female officers of the judiciary; they were called “Introduction to the Assumptions of Attacking Manhood” in the framework of an agreement signed with Assistance for the Prevention of Male Violence and Related Rehabilitation (*Asistencia para la Prevención y Rehabilitación en Violencia Masculina—APREVIM*).

“Capacity Building and Training” sessions were also carried out and Debating Panels were held on the enforcement of Law 1600/2000 “Against Domestic Violence” aimed at players enforcing this Law (national police force, health staff, judges of trial courts, and prosecutors).

Five years after the entry into force of Law 1600/2000, an evaluation was conducted, reflecting the degree of enforcement of the law by the various players involved in the government sector and the level of knowledge about its use by society.

In the framework of Project No. 2210 on Trafficking in Persons, which started up in 2005 by the SMPR with the cooperation of the U.S. Embassy, the following activities were carried out: establishment of a Referral Center on Trafficking in Persons, where information is provided to women victims and their families on the procedures to follow for reporting this type of offense, and the launching of a Handbook for Intervention in Trafficking in Persons, whose purpose is to provide general orientations to address the problem in Paraguay.

At the start of 2006, the Pilot Process Program or Reintegration Plan for Victims of Trafficking in Persons was launched with cooperation from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

In the Women's Support Service (*Servicio de Apoyo a la Mujer*—SEDAMUR), 1,214 cases have been handled in 2004, 2,033 cases in 2005, and 256 cases from January to May 2006.

7) National Institutions Responsible for Women's Progress

One of the most important achievements in terms of institutional capacity building has been the signing of agreements with 17 Governor's Offices and the country's 227 municipalities to establish the Women's Secretariats of the Municipalities (*Secretarías de la Mujer de las Municipalidades*—SMM), of which 135 were installed to work on incorporating the gender's perspective in local development policies.

The SMPR, through agreements signed with Governor's Offices and Municipalities, is developing a capacity-building process for departmental and municipal entities by holding workshops on awareness-raising and action coordination, which are held periodically at the institution, and by providing onsite technical assistance.

At the end of 2004, the First National Congress on Decentralization and Gender "*Mujeres Ñandehaitema*" was held in Pedro Juan Caballero; it brought together representatives from different departments of the entire country for the purpose of developing general and strategic guidelines for political, technical, and administrative capacity building of the SMPR, the Women's Secretariats of the Governor's Offices and the SMMs.

In 2005, the Second National Congress on Decentralization and Gender "*Mujeres Ñandehaitema + 1*" was held in Asunción; its main purpose was to follow up on the actions and conclusions of the previous congress.

8) Regional cooperation

At the thirty-ninth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC, the women Ministers of Chile and Paraguay submitted a draft declaration to promote the egalitarian participation of men and women at all decision-making levels. All presiding officers unanimously adhered to and adopted the declaration and also agreed to give priority to this issue at the Tenth Regional Conference. At the same time, they requested ECLAC to provide its support to hold a Seminar on Gender Equality in the Region, for the purpose of reviewing experiences and adopting a common agenda; it is scheduled to be held in Santiago de Chile, on October 5-6, 2006.

9) Migrations and women in areas of conflict

The Sixth South American Conference on Migrations was held in Asunción on May 4-5, 2006 and was attended by representatives from the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Representatives of SMPR were members of the national delegation. The central topics were: 1) the link between migration and development, 2) the human rights of migrants, and 3) smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, according to the principles of international instruments on the matter, which were ratified by most countries in the region. As a result of this Conference, the member countries signed the Asunción Declaration,³⁾ whereby one of the essential points resolved “to unconditionally respect the human rights of migrants, especially migrant women and unaccompanied minors...”

10) Communications

The SMPR has been conducting the Equal in Everything Campaign (*Campaña Iguales en Todo*) for the third consecutive year, aimed at informing and placing on the public opinion agenda issues related to the areas of the II PNIO. As part of this campaign, various communication tactics have been used, such as TV spots, *radio* microprograms, foldouts, posters, billboards located in strategic places of the capital and neighboring cities. As an alternative component, various activities have been carried out in the course of the years. In 2004, for the purpose of highlighting gender inequalities through photographic language, a contest was organized; it was called “Women for Women” (*Mujeres x Mujeres*) under the auspices of CIDA and the Chinese Embassy (Taiwan) in Asunción and private enterprise. Furthermore, in 2005, street theatre on violence and sexual and reproductive health was organized in public markets, the capital’s main streets and avenues, and inland cities, as well as in public transportation facilities for passengers.

For the 2006 Equal in Everything Campaign, priority was given to focusing more time on certain issues so that they could exert a greater impact on the population. To do this, it was decided to create materials on maternal mortality, trafficking in persons and empowerment. As always, the mass media, printed materials and alternative channels of communication were used.

III. FUTURE ACTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD IN IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

- Training women leaders to secure the empowerment of Paraguayan women.
- Communication campaigns that inform and raise awareness about cultural changes promoting and based on the II PNIO.
- Jointly promoting nontraditional occupations for women of marginal urban areas with the Ministry of Justice and Labor.
- Promoting loans for micro-businesswomen.
- Gender training for managers of the Health Regions of the Ministry of Public Health.
- Public awareness rising about the problems stemming from absent fathers.
- Designing curriculums with a gender perspective for universities.

3. See Annex.

- Direct and free care for women victims of domestic violence, as well as legal and psychological counseling.
- Training for the health sector in caring for victims of violence, case referral and registration.
- Establishment of a Single National Registry based on the gathering of data from all the administrative and legal bodies involved, both in the capital and the country's interior.
- Training for police and judiciary officers in gender, violence, and Law 1600/00 against domestic violence.
- Proposing reforms or expanding national legislation in force on the topic of conformity with international conventions adopted by our country and that are in force.
- Second National Awareness-Raising Campaign on Trafficking in Persons, with the inclusion of television spots.
- Establishment of a half-way house for victims of trafficking in persons, with programs for recovery and educational, socioeconomic and job mainstreaming, as well as psychological and legal support, case follow-up and monitoring.
- Training and awareness-raising for agents involved in trafficking in persons for appropriate care of victims.
- Continuation of the installation of the Municipal Women's Secretariats in the districts where there are none.
- Continuation of the process of building up and installing technical capacities in the Municipal Women's Secretariats that are functioning.