DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

GOVERNMENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
STATE SECRETARIAT FOR WOMEN

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY (2000)

Dominican Republic, April 2004
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2000)

I. Introduction

The following report presents the evaluation done by the State Secretariat for Women of the national action plan developed in the Dominican Republic to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. Its objective is to report on what has been achieved and the shortcomings and problems encountered in the implementation of the Plan, so that the Commission on the Status of Women can give an indication of the areas in which it is most urgent to take measures and implement incentives in the context of the Platform and the outcome of the twenty-third special session (Beijing +5).

The report is divided into four parts. The first part presents a brief analytical synopsis of the Dominican Republic’s experience of the implementation of the Platform for Action, with an emphasis on its main achievements and the main obstacles to implementation encountered since 1995. The second part focuses essentially on the implementation process in areas of particular concern, giving examples of achievements, in particular in the areas of policy development and legislative reform, and on the programmes and projects that have been undertaken.

The third part focuses on the country’s institutional development in terms of establishment of structures to support the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women. The last part provides information on the main problems and difficulties that are still being encountered and the initiatives undertaken to resolve them.

II. Methodology

Information compilation took place in three phases. First, primary information was collected through interviews held both at the State Secretariat for Women and at other ministries directly involved in the implementation of the National Action Plan. Secondary information was also collected, in particular through a review of reports in various areas of interest. Third, a workshop was held bringing together representatives of official bodies, such as women’s organizations.

III. An overview of problems encountered and achievements in the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women.

In 1995, the Dominican Republic, through the Dirección General de Promoción de la Mujer [Department for the Promotion of Women] as the focal point for the country’s preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, carried out a series of consultations with various sectors in order to arrive at a consensus platform for national action to improve living conditions for Dominican women and enhance their position in society. As part of that effort, the government drew up the document “Plataforma de Acción para el Avance de la Mujer Dominicana 1995–2001” [1995–2001 action platform for the advancement of Dominican women], which brings together four policy lines designed to address
the main obstacles identified as needing to be overcome to achieve advancement for women in every walk of life, in particular as regards empowerment, poverty and violence.

The Dominican document focuses on four policy lines, that is:

a. Empowerment of women
b. Eradication of poverty
c. Education, culture and communications media
d. Health and violence

Each of these policy lines included proposals for action that need to be assessed to see what changes have taken place in the status of women in the Dominican Republic. Although that document covered the 1995–2001 period, a number of obstacles prevented all of the actions from being carried through during that period. As a result, this report takes that document as its starting point and seeks to provide a brief analytical overview of the main achievements in implementing the action platform with respect to each of the above-mentioned policy lines.

3.1 Empowerment of women

The main objective of these policy line was to afford women equitable access to power structures and decision-making processes through mechanisms and actions that would enable them to take a real part in the development of full democracy. To that end, three specific objectives were set: (a) women’s participation in public affairs; (b) strengthening of mechanisms for the advancement of women; and (c) modernizing and adapting the legal system to guarantee women equal rights.

The main achievements in this policy line since 1995 have been:

- Electoral Acts Nos. 11-95, 12-2000 and 13-2000. The first Act established an affirmative action quota for women, enacting that 25% of congressional and municipal appointments should go to women. The second Act increased the quota to 33%, while the third made it possible for applications for representative and deputy representative positions to be interchanged.
- The creation of the State Secretariat for Women under Act No. 86-99...
- Increased representation of women on the Supreme Court and in the legal profession.
- Creation of Gender Equity and Development Offices in State Secretariats through Decree No. 974-01 and the associated regulations.

Among the coordination mechanisms set up to implement this policy line are the Women’s Forum of Political Parties of the Dominican Republic, founded on 18 August 1999; the Comisión Honorífica de Mujeres Asesoras del Senado [honorary Senate committee of women advisors]; the Comisión de Mujeres de la Cámara de Diputados [Chamber of Deputies women’s committee]; and the Escuela de Capacitación Política [political training school].

Among the main obstacles to these achievements is the absence of any guideline requiring equitable representation in government leadership positions. Again, the absence of any law on political parties that is consistent with the quota law results in difficulty in fulfilling this policy
objective. Membership in the Congress of the Dominican Republic for 1998–2002 was as follows: of 30 senators, only 2 were women, accounting for 6.7% of the membership, whereas 25, or 16.8%, of the 149 seats in the Chamber of Deputies were held by women. The latest Congressional election, in 2002, made the following changes to those numbers: of 31 senators, 2 are women (6.4%) and in the Chamber of Deputies, out of a total of 150 members, 24 are women, or 16.7%. In other words, the number of seats increased, but the proportion of women in the National Congress fell, either in relative terms, as in the Senate, or absolutely, as in the case of the Chamber of Deputies.

Additionally, there is the fact that the political parties do not support women’s candidacies, and the high cost of political campaigns, which makes it very difficult for women to obtain funding if they wish to stand; also, the media give little prominence to female candidates. And the political culture is such that women leaders are seen as an appendage of the men, and indeed in many cases the woman’s leadership position is owing to her relationship to some man in the political structure, not necessarily to her work in the political party.

3.2 Eradication of poverty

The overall objective of this policy line is to put in place conditions for poverty to be reduced, then overcome, in the context of a process of production modernization and human development that is fair and environmentally sustainable, in order to achieve full democracy. Among the specific objectives of this policy line are the successful integration of macroeconomic and social policies to promote growth and equity between men and women; the achievement of equal opportunity in access to work; easier access by women to production resources; and the priority provision of assistance to groups of women in situations of extreme poverty, while fostering women’s participation in the conservation of natural resources and the environment.

Among the main achievements of this policy line is the enactment of Act No. 55-97, amending the Agrarian Reform Act, No. 58-79. That amendment includes women in the land distribution, granting them the same rights as men to lands awarded by agrarian reform, since under the new law, the family is represented by the couple, whether married or not.

Another important achievement is the existence of the National Anti-poverty Strategy, adopted by the Dominican government in 2003 in response to the commitment made to the Millennium Summit in 2000.

The Strategy sets out a social policy based on a development plan calling for economic growth, between now and the year 2015, not as an end in itself but as a means of ensuring social development so as to provide better opportunities for the social and economic integration of all Dominicans.

In the implementation of the Strategy four fundamental areas have been identified where strategic methods will be employed to serve as a stable base for implementation of the anti-poverty action plan: (a) A suitable, stable macroeconomic environment, achieved through reforms together with consistent fiscal and monetary policies, competitive, declining interest rates and a significant percentage of expenditures dedicated to productive investments; (b) An
increase in the social spending in the areas of education and health, together with welfare restructuring; (c) A focus on poverty; (d) Monitoring and evaluation.

The Strategy’s action plan was structured with a concern for participation by grassroots community organizations in each of the country’s 32 provinces. The leaders taking part were selected from all parties and with a concern for women’s representation (a minimum of 30% women) and a wide variety of players.

Among the main obstacles to the development of the action plan were the obvious deficiencies in terms of specialized management of gender planning. The lack of statistics broken down by sex also makes it difficult for the objectives, actions and indicators of the conceptual context to reflect a deep analysis of the gender problem in the Dominican Republic.

A credit programme has also been developed through the Programme for Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (PROMIPYME). This programme directs resources to those micro-enterprises that have funding needs of less than RD$10,000. It operates through the main non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the greatest experience of micro-financing in the Dominican Republic, acting as financial intermediaries.

At the moment, six NGOs are distributing PROMIPYME resources, which have already gone to some 2,500 micro-entrepreneurs. Of these, some 80% (2,000) are women and the remaining 20% are men.

PROMIPYME also provides management training. As of 31 May of this year, more than 450 training and technical assistance activities had been carried out in the area of the financial management, with 3,375 entrepreneurs taking part.

PROMIPYME has signed an agreement with the State Secretariat for Women (SEM) through which it undertakes to fund and provide technical assistance to all micro- and small enterprises organized by SEM at the national level that comply with the Programme’s standards and regulations.

3.3 Education, culture and communications media

The goal of this policy line is to promote the elimination of cultural patterns that exclude, silence or distort the identity and knowledge of women in all areas of social life, whether these are expressed in the family, education, the media or the arts. Among its specific objectives are to enhance the quality of education and to raise the status of women in textbooks; to promote cultural diversity and a pluralist, non-discriminatory social image of women in the media.

As regards the situation of Dominican women in education, the goal that was set by the Fourth Conference for the year 2000 was to ensure that 80 per cent of all children had completed their primary-school education. In fact, in 1999 UNESCO reported that 75.1% of all children had completed their primary-school education, with a higher percentage of girls (79.1%) than boys (71.4%). According to the 2003 Population and Health Census (ENDESA), 85.6% of children attended primary school, the figure being higher for girls at 87.4%.
In 2002, the illiteracy rate among women 15 and up was 12.2% according to ENDESA figures. However, according to UNESCO data, the illiteracy rate fell by 22.38% between 1990 and 2000, from 21% to 16.3%.

Among the important achievements in the educational area is approval of the General Education Act, No. 66-97, which, in article 4, defines gender discrimination as a bar to the enjoyment of every human being’s right to education. The structure of the State Secretariat of Education includes an office called EDUC-MUJER whose purpose is to successfully incorporate the principle of gender equity into Dominican education.

An element it is important to emphasize in the educational sector is EDUC-MUJER’s contribution, as a department of the State Secretariat of Education, in pushing for compliance with the General Education Act and its goal of eliminating gender discrimination in education. The following are some of EDUC-MUJER’s achievements:

- Promoting the use of non-sexist language by: education staff, textbooks and educational materials, and in the names of parents’ associations
- Disaggregating educational statistics by sex for most indicators
- Revising curricula and textbooks from a gender-neutral standpoint for the basic and intermediate levels of 8 curriculum streams
- Establishing teaching techniques in view of implementing EDUC-MUJER’s work at each regional education authority
- Definition of gender-based competencies at the basic and intermediate level for each area, level and grade.

Among the goals to be achieved in the short and medium term are:

- Train all education-sector personnel in gender awareness
- Include gender guidelines in each administration’s strategic plan, in line with the commitments made by the Dominican Republic at the World Conference on Education for All in Dakar in 2000
- By consensus and systematically, incorporate recommendations for achievement of an education system free of gender bias in the curriculum and in the textbooks of the various levels, grades and areas.

As regards culture, we should mention the enactment of Act No. 41-00, establishing the Secretariat of Culture, which in article 2 recognizes equality between the sexes as a fundamental cultural value. However, culture is recognized as more than just a set of cultural goods. It is defined in article 1 as: the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize human societies and which include not only the arts and letters but also modes of life and coexistence, human rights, value systems and symbols, traditions and beliefs taken as its own by the collective consciousness; it takes shape within a heritage concept of culture wherein it is seen rather as the heritage of the nation or of a specific group, and not necessarily as a complex of social practices that have been perpetuated and are
valued by the entire society and have an impact on the way in which discrimination against women is constructed and promoted.

3.4 Health and Violence

The main objective of this policy line is to guarantee women access to all preventive and comprehensive health services and ensure that the care given is of high quality throughout their life cycle, and to promote recognition and full respect for all women’s rights, as this is the sine qua non for their individual development and the emergence of a society of justice, peace and solidarity. Its specific objectives are to promote women’s total health and to prevent, punish and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Among the main achievements of this policy line are:

- Act No. 24-97 on Domestic Violence
- Decree No. 32-01 creating the Presidential Council on AIDS
- General Health Act No. 42-01
- Act No. 87-01 creating the Dominican Social Security System
- A fair quota for participation in rural internships and managerial positions for women doctors in the health sector
- Act No. 136-03 on the Protection of Children and Adolescents
- Act No. 137-03 on the Illicit Traffic in Persons

Among the mechanisms established to follow up and coordinate the efforts surrounding these Acts are the action plan on violence against women, the National Model for Care and Prevention in the Field of Domestic Violence, national standards for dealing with violence in the health sector, and creation of local networks for dealing with domestic violence. The creation of the National Commission for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (CONAPLUVI) should also be mentioned.

IV. Implementation progress achieved in the areas of concern

The Beijing Platform for Action and its clear definition of the four spheres of action determined the direction of the work to be undertaken by the Dominican Republic, as a lead initiative, to achieve gender equality. The measures adopted by the State may be grouped as follows: (1) development and amendment of legislation, (2) development of administrative structures to make possible the creation of conditions of equality in society and (3) the implementation of specific programmes aimed at meeting the proposed goals.

This linkage is obvious when one takes into consideration the fact that the creation of gender equity units (OEDGs) has enabled the implementation of specific programmes in the various State Secretariats where they were set up. Of these ministries and government offices, one, the State Secretariat of Education, already had an operational department working in a gender-sensitive way; within the State Secretariat of Agriculture, the Women’s Agricultural Sectoral Office (OSAM) had been founded.
On the basis of a linkage between the basic policy lines and the OEGDs, programmes were identified that could be considered examples of good practices calculated to help achieve the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action.

4.1 Eradication of poverty

Within the State Secretariat of Agriculture, the Women’s Agricultural Sectoral Office (OSAM) was set up to administer the Agricultural Sector policy defined by the State Secretariat for Women for the benefit of rural women and carry out projects of benefit to women residing in the rural environment, in particular in the areas of agricultural production, organic farming, income generation and waste processing.

One of the State Secretariat of Agriculture’s programmes is the Programa de Apoyo a la Producción Agroalimentaria (PROALPA RD-CHINA) [agri-food production support programme], which has been operating since 2002 with the support of the China (Taiwan) government with the goal of supporting food production. The project consists of 8 or 9 components, of which 2 are directly related to women, the second of these being exclusively for the benefit of countrywomen. These programmes are implemented through OSAM, namely:

- **Agribusiness management for rural men and women**
  - Its purpose is to foster men’s and women’s development in rural areas.
  - The project provides support for poultry, rabbit and sheep/goat husbandry projects. Training is provided as well as assembly of the structures for livestock husbandry and delivery.

- **Microcredit for Rural Women.**
  - Its purpose is to promote livestock production and service enterprises in rural areas

Staff complements for these projects were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
<th>Amounts paid as of 29 February 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness management for rural men and women</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>8,410,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microcredit for Rural Women.</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>8,645,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between them the two programmes benefited more than 1,000 women. The agribusiness management programme benefits persons of both sexes, though the microcredit programme is for women only.

The Microcredit for Rural Women programme was launched in January 2002. It gives women in rural areas credit they can use to increase production and generate income. The women receive training in the development and operation of their businesses. Credits distributed under this programme are as much as 5.5 million pesos. They go to the following areas:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Programme credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranching</td>
<td>824,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro-industry</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage industries</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services, beauty parlours</td>
<td>283,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail stores</td>
<td>351,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafés</td>
<td>218,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural tourism</td>
<td>281,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a revolving fund, and as funds are recovered they are lent out again. Loans are taken from the Reserve Bank. There is a master account at the Reserve Bank from which loans made to each person are debited. The loan is tracked using a passbook. Recipients are taught how to manage their loans, and when these are repaid they become regular bank customers, using the passbooks for their savings accounts. It is interesting to note that the majority of these women do not qualify for a loan from the formal banking system. The interest rate on these loans is 1%, and the repayment rate hovers around 80%.

What distinguishes the recipients is, first, that they are women; next, the fact that they are organized into producers’ associations or development associations; and, finally, the programme is means-tested, as the goal is to control the level of poverty. The intended clientele is women who have started up a business to generate income, that activity being what is to be empowered by the microcredit; that is, the women are meant to think of themselves as micro-entrepreneurs and not consider their endeavours simply a means of survival. An important consideration is that the guarantee they receive is given in solidarity, that is, an association or people in the community stand surety for the loan.

The programme has 8 regional coordinators, located in each of the regional offices of the State Secretariat of Agriculture, who work with zone and subzone coordinators, processing loans that are paid out by the Reserve Bank’s automatic system from the master account. When a loan is approved, a transfer takes place and the system credits the recipient; thereafter, provided she has a sufficient balance, she is debited each time an instalment is due.

Among the obstacles encountered in developing the system are the following:

- At the time the programme was developed, those taking part in its implementation lacked a gender vision.
- Most of the amounts lent to women are very small compared to those granted men, which are for larger amounts. This may be observed in the Agribusiness Management programme. The same bias appears in the microcredit programme, as it is assumed that the loans women will need are very small, and the same tendency to cut back the loans requested, so that in practice the women receive much less than they asked for.
- There are reservations at the institutional level, when projects are presented, as it is thought that some are at odds with the image or stereotype of the rural woman. For example, when
the idea of including loans for women who run beauty salons was floated, there was some resistance, as people could not see rural women doing that kind of work.

- The majority of the persons on the Committee in charge of approving the loans (two of three) are men and lack a gender-sensitive vision.
- The idea that women will be content with little, so that loans are small and thought of as solving ad hoc problems.
- Things are done in correct form, but the substance of the problems is not dealt with, particularly as regards implementation. When a project is implemented, a gender-sensitive vision prevails formally, in particular in verbal agreements between the various bodies involved. However, this goes by the boards when the project actually begins.

### 4.2 Health and Violence

- **Pregnant Adolescents Programme**

The health data from the Population and Health Census (ENDESA, 2002) indicate that 23.3% of all adolescent girls (for the purposes of this census, women between 15 and 19 years of age) have at some time conceived. On that basis, and in view of other factors involving adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health, the programme to reduce pregnancy among disadvantaged adolescents has been proposed as a response to these problems.

The project was designed to cover a population of 20,000 directly and 60,000 indirectly; the direct population is the adolescents, while the indirect one includes their parents. It relies on inter-agency cooperation to improve the various governmental and non-governmental organizations’ ability to prevent and treat teenage pregnancy.

Its goal is to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and the consequences thereof through the creation of mechanisms for prevention and treatment of teenage pregnancies in the institutional and community areas so as to improve quality of life for the adolescents, their families and communities in general. (DEPRIDAM, 2003)

To achieve that goal, the programme employs four basic strategies, namely:

- Intersectoral and inter-agency cooperation. This seeks to achieve a concerted effort by the various sectors and institutions involved with the health and development of the adolescent population.
- Training. Training of adolescents in healthy behaviours is encouraged, with an emphasis on prevention of pregnancy.
- Separate care. Adolescents are cared for in separate wards in health establishments, with staff that is trained to run a comprehensive adolescent care ward.
- Information, education and communications (IEC). This calls for the design of a strategy to promote healthy lifestyles with an emphasis on prevention of pregnancy.

Implementation of the programme is the responsibility of the State Secretariat for Women, with coordination by the Office of the First Lady. The project was expected to benefit 20,000 adolescents directly and 60,000 persons indirectly.
In addition to this programme, the State Secretariat of Public Health and Social Welfare (SESPAS), under the National Integrated Healthcare Programme for Adolescents (PRONAISA), offers adolescents targeted services including in information and education on the prevention of pregnancy and STDs, with adolescent extension workers carrying out educational activities based on peer models.

- **Domestic violence**

Gender-based violence is dealt with in Dominican law under the term “domestic violence”, which, in certain sectors, makes its discussion and treatment more acceptable and eliminates a possible negative bias due to the use of the term gender, instead empowering social construction based on the family as a part of society that deserves special protection.

Gender-based violence affects many Dominican women; it is estimated that 23.9% of Dominican women have experienced a violent episode in the last fifteen years, and 9.5% during the last 12 months (ENDESA, 2002). The legislation under which violence is prosecuted is Act No. 24-97 on Domestic Violence, which is now in the process of amendment with a view to its possible inclusion in the proposed reform of the Criminal Code. However, discussions are ongoing as to the possible effects of the omission from the amendment of the progress made in the Act, in particular with respect to subjects such as incest or sexual harassment.

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, the main legislation dealing with violence is Act No. 24-97 on domestic violence, which seeks to ensure that Dominican legislation recognizes and makes visible gender-based violence and creates the mechanisms to punish it. Implementation of Act No. 24-97 has involved an effort, not just in terms of having the Act passed, but an ongoing effort, in particular, to ensure its integrity—or the integrity of its achievements within the national legal system; to create the requisite mechanisms to ensure it fulfils its objectives; to educate the people on the Act and its purposes; and to provide victims with help ranging from emotional to legal support.

The Act and its effectiveness may be measured by analysing its legal aspect, which is subdivided for the purpose into three basic elements: regulatory, structural and political-cultural. (Pola, 2004).

Following Pola (2004), in evaluating Act No. 24-97, the following problems affecting it may be mentioned:

- It has no regulations under which it could be implemented.
- It is difficult to interpret in the Dominican Republic.
- It is at odds with the country’s legal context.
- Its legislative context is gender-blind law grounded in economics.
- It depends on interpretations by the judges that must apply it.
- Sexual harassment is not defined as a serious offence.
- Sentences are not effectively followed up, in many cases because of negligence or budget problems.
- Difficulty in obtaining the equitable compensation or reparations ordered.
The Act’s structural underpinnings are the prosecutor’s offices, police squads and trial courts. In this regard, it should be noted that:

- Six prosecutor’s offices work exclusively with domestic violence cases.
- Six police squads specifically charged with protecting women from violence, called “Amigos de la Mujer”, are in operation in the communities of Villa Juana (1997), San Francisco de Macorís (1999), Santiago (2000), Villa Altagracia (2000) and Baní (2002), while in Los Alcarrizos a conflict resolution centre has been created.
- One magistrate’s court and one criminal court, dealing exclusively with gender-based violence, began operating in April 2004 and have jurisdiction in the National District.

A Care Centre for Abused Women also exists that specializes in evaluating victims of violence and filling out legal medical certificates in cases of sexual violence against women. It also functions as a forensic pathology unit and, in the city of Santo Domingo only, is open mornings and evenings.

In each provincial and municipal office of the State Secretariat for Women, the staff work to prevent violence against women and a team of lawyers and psychologists is on hand to prevent and mitigate domestic violence. These small units are the kernel for enforcement of the Act in all communities that so request at the national level. Specifically, talks and pamphlets are offered on the subject as well as other educational documents.

Also, the State Secretariat for Women is developing a training process for the Public Prosecutor’s Office, judges and police forces to improve the quality of intervention in cases of domestic violence.

Among the problems identified (S. Pola, 2004) at the structural level are the following:

- They lack government funding.
- They are dependent on political patronage; tax incentives are granted or removed as the government changes. This is because the Public Prosecutor’s Office depends on the Executive branch, not the Judicial branch, so that when the government changes, many already trained persons are removed from their positions and the cycle of training, familiarization and sensitization must begin again.
- They are concentrated in the capital and Santiago, although this is a side effect of the budget difficulties.
- The aggressor is ignored.
- The concrete protection provided to women who are victims of violence is very limited, even though recently there have been new developments, such as safe houses, which can serve to protect battered women.
- Women have difficulty effectively exercising their rights because of ignorance and a lack of free, appropriate legal aid.
- There is inadequate provision for victim and witness protection during the criminal justice process and court appearances.
Mediation and conciliation are offered in cases of violence against women, even though many persons and organizations take the position that there is no way of mediating with aggressors.

Women living in poverty, in rural or remote communities, indigent women, women with disabilities and shut-ins still face obstacles in making use of the limited services available.

Rehabilitation programmes are lacking for women who are victims of violence.

There is a lack of safe houses.

Services are not provided in rural and marginal communities.

Violent crime statistics are not disaggregated by sex and age.

There is no national registry of violence against women.

Follow-up, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are lacking in this area.

There is no basic policy on the importance of measuring impacts.

However, these regulatory and structural elements are still part of a political-cultural complex that is faced with the problems of a patriarchal vision of justice on the bench, insufficient levels of gender training and a lack of correspondence between and with the other elements.

As regards gender-based violence, follow-up is confined to the legal aspect and does not continue. This is true, first of all, of the government’s efforts, which take the form of punishment rather than prevention of violence—for example, victims’ mental and physical health is not taken into account, nor is the cultural change that must come about if gender-based violence is to be eradicated. Most of the efforts being made in these areas come from the non-governmental organizations.

In the area of prevention, we can cite the National Model for Care and Prevention in the Field of Domestic Violence, which, in its implementation, would conceptualize gender-based violence not just as a problem to be addressed by the legal system through punishment for specific offences, but would stress the importance of achieving an attitudinal and cultural change to eradicate the problem. This model will be analysed under heading VI of this report, on Problems and Measures to Address Them.

- **Sectoral plan for combating HIV/AIDS**

One of the main health problems facing the Dominican Republic is the incidence of HIV/AIDS among the population. According to the National Programme for the Control of STDs and AIDS (DIGECITSS), in October 2003 the number of persons known to be infected with HIV/AIDS was 15,446, and it was forecast that by 2005 the percentage of HIV-positive adults would reach 2.4%.

Men were the most affected, accounting for 62.9% of cases, but an increasing prevalence among women was noted; as a result, the 1.7:1 male/female ratio could change in the next five years. Among pregnant women, between 1.1 and 4.0% were HIV-positive. (DIGECITSS, 2004)

With the goal of establishing policies for the prevention of HIV/AIDS in women, the State Secretariat for Women, with the technical and financial support of the Presidential Council on
AIDS (COPRESIDA) set up an HIV/AIDS prevention unit, which has been in operation since 2003.

The unit’s work is done in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention in women and is based on training strategies designed for women; the training is given to women who are leaders and coordinators of OPMs (provincial offices for women) so that they can then train others.

As part of this sectoral anti-HIV/AIDS plan, three training workshops were given to managers, psychologists and social workers of the provincial and municipal offices for women (OPMMs) in more than 40 municipalities and provinces of the Dominican Republic. Training was provided to 151 women through these workshops, held in July and August.

In October and November five HIV/AIDS prevention training workshops were given for women who are leaders in the communities. However, for budget reasons, only 13 municipalities and provinces were able to send women to these workshops. The first of the workshops took place in Santiago de los Caballeros, with 43 participants, and the second in Baní, with 32; 150 community leaders have yet to be trained.

In addition to the HIV/AIDS prevention programme, other activities relating to women’s sexual and reproductive health were conducted, in particular prevention of cervical and breast cancer, Pap smear testing and follow-up of smears taken earlier, and talks on birth control.

The Sectoral Plan is coordinated by the SEM Health Department and by COPRESIDA. Among the obstacles to its implementation are the following:

- A lack of economic resources that has resulted in the suspension of workshops and other activities.
- A lack of staff to coordinate programming and coordination efforts.

There is insufficient statistical data to carry out research on women infected with HIV/AIDS and women with cancer in order to develop more specific plans.

- Act No. 137-03 on Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Human Beings

Trafficking in human beings is one of the main problems confronting Dominican women. It is estimated that around 30,000 Dominican women engaged in prostitution in Europe are victims of this traffic. To tackle this problem, SEM, together with several international institutions, initiated a process that included:

- In 2001, a programme to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The objective of this programme was to sensitize and inform and to prepare a draft bill for presentation to the National Congress.
- In 2003, inauguration of the safe house for returned victims of the traffic, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund.
- In 2003, promulgation of Act No. 137-03 on Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Human Beings.
The Act is based on the definitions of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000), and provides that: all persons involved at any point in a trafficking chain shall be defined as criminals: recruiters, those who facilitate transfers, those who negotiate work arrangements and those who receive or detain the persons trafficked in. (SEM, 2004: 7).

The Act builds upon the work of the established Inter-agency Committee for the Protection of Migrant Women (CIPROM), created by Decree No. 97-99, whose mission is to help prevent and resolve the social and economic problems resulting from the emigration of persons trafficked in (SEM, 2004: 14).

CIPROM functions as a national coordination mechanism to prevent the unwitting emigration of women. It is made up of 20 governmental and non-governmental organizations, including: SEM, the State Secretariat of Foreign Relations, the State Secretariat of Labour, UNFPA, Cooperación Española [Spanish foreign aid] and the pastoral body on human mobility, among other organizations.

V. Institutional development

The most important institutional mechanism established to promote equality between the sexes and empower women in the Dominican Republic has been the State Secretariat for Women, which was established by the promulgation of Act No. 86-99 on 11 August 1999.

As indicated in article 1 of the Act, the State Secretariat for Women is the organization responsible for establishing standards and coordinating the implementation of policies, plans and programmes for the achievement of gender equity and the exercise of full citizenship by women, at the sectoral and interdepartmental level and in conjunction with civil society.

Among its main responsibilities are: (Art. 2)

A. Regulations and guidelines

a. To set standards and policies to establish the requisite mechanisms to give effect to the government’s commitment to eradicating all forms of discrimination against women.

b. To coordinate with government institutions and civil society the formulation and implementation of a National Gender Equity Plan.

c. To link, coordinate and share in actions by government organizations to ensure that sectoral policies, programmes and projects have gender equity criteria.

d. To evaluate policies in terms of their impact on women and make the necessary corrections:
As regards support for the follow-up to the implementation of the Platform for Action of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing +5), letter B, article 2 sets out the following as the Secretariat’s functions:

a. To coordinate and carry out actions between sectors and in conjunction with civil society to give effect to the Dominican Republic’s international agreements and commitments, which aim to put in place the necessary conditions for empowerment of women in society and in all spheres of public and private life through full and equal participation in the decision-making process in the economic, social, cultural and political arenas.

b. To monitor, evaluate and report to national and international bodies on progress in and obstacles to the fulfilment of the said agreements and commitments by the Dominican Republic.

c. To make the appropriate recommendations and do the requisite coordination so that sectoral plans, policies and strategies will embody such adjustments as are required for fulfilment of the Dominican Republic’s international agreements and commitments.

Also, article 2 lays down the Secretariat’s responsibilities to Dominican society in the area of awareness and education and in coordinating and linking activities with civil society.

The State Secretariat for Women has provincial and municipal offices for women (OPMs and OPMMs) throughout the Republic. As of today, there are 56 offices across the country to enable SEM to implement gender policies, programmes and projects for the advancement of women, mobilizing support for promotion of their rights at the local level.

These offices work on two lines of action, which correspond to the priority thrusts laid down by SEM, that is, the prevention and correction of domestic violence and technical-vocational training.

Also, at the sectoral level, Gender Equity and Development Offices have been created whose mission is to ensure gender mainstreaming in public policies in each of the State bodies where they operate, and to implement the requisite mechanisms for the monitoring and follow-up of that mission. Though these offices will work under SEM’s authority, as indicated in article 2 of the OEGD regulations, each State Secretariat shall be responsible for including in its annual budget the resources required for the offices’ proper operation and the performance of their administrative duties.

To date, since SEM’s inception in 2001, four OEGDs have been established in the following State secretariats:

- State Secretariat of Education
- State Secretariat of Agriculture
- State Secretariat of Labour
- State Secretariat of Public Health and Social Welfare
The National Planning Office too has a gender equity committee. It is important to emphasize that in the case of the State Secretariat of Labour, a Sub-Secretariat exists with specific gender and labour movement responsibilities.

Some other valuable intersectoral mechanisms are:

- The Consejo Sectorial [sectoral council], made up of all State Secretaries.
- The Consejo Consultivo [consultative council]: made up of representatives of the public sector and civil society.
- The Consejo de Articulación [linkage council]: this is the forum for participation by women’s organizations and the State Secretariat for Women (SEM), with a representative of the former directors of the Department for the Advancement of Women (DGPM) and the former Secretaries.

Act No. 86-99 provides that SEM shall operate with resources from the Income Budget and Law on Public Expenditure and with contributions from international organizations and donations from the public and private sectors. Among the international bodies that contribute resources to SEM are the United Nations, the Organization of American States and Cooperación Española. The percentage contribution by international organizations to SEM’s budget, in 2003, was 9% of the total. Other SEM outlays correspond to transfers from the Technical Secretariat of the Office of the President. Over the past year, these transfers amounted to 7% of the total budget. For 2004, SEM has had its approved budget reduced by 18%.

VI. **Main problems and measures to address them**

The purpose of this fourth part of the questionnaire is to provide information on the areas where new measures will be needed in the future. Thus, the State Secretariat for Women will in the coming months of 2004 be reviewing the National Gender Equity Plan (PLANEG), a working instrument that embodies many of the commitments made by the Dominican government under the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and which will set out guidelines for the full implementation of the Platform in the future.

However, reference may be made to a few of the areas where the State Secretariat for Women is developing initiatives:

- With a view to consolidating the violence against women area and enhancing the efficiency of the implementation and fulfilment of Act No. 24-97 on Domestic Violence, the State Secretariat for Women has taken various steps, including development of a National Model for Care and Prevention in the Field of Domestic Violence and 2002 national standards for dealing with violence in the health sector. The standards were developed in conjunction with the State Secretariat of Public Health and Social Welfare (SESPAS) with the support of the Commission for the Reform of the Health Sector, the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Children’s Fund. They are now at the stage of sectoral promotion and training.
The National Model involves 22 governmental and 12 non-governmental agencies. This Model has the following purposes:

- To see to it that government and organized civil society make it a fundamental task to promote a culture where respect for others, equality of opportunity and peaceful resolution of conflicts become a daily way of life.

- To see to it that government and organized civil society make it a fundamental task to provide comprehensive care for persons directly affected by domestic violence, witnesses to such violence, the offenders and the mothers or caregivers that they mistreat.

- To strengthen inter-agency coordination, linkage, follow-up and evaluation of programmes and services, at the various territorial levels, to promote violence-free family life and the detection and treatment of domestic violence.

- To establish an organizational structure that facilitates linkage and interrelation between the Model’s various implementation levels, and to monitor its implementation.

The Model is aimed at three target groups: (1) families, as regards activities to promote a violence-free family life, (2) victims of domestic violence, as regards care activities, and (3) offenders, also in terms of care activities.

The system is called “comprehensive” because the care given goes beyond denunciation or healing of the physical injury and takes the form of a series of intersectoral actions that help to provide the physical, emotional and economic security that makes it possible to break the cycle of violence.

The type of tasks that the various bodies must accomplish to ensure comprehensive quality care for the international problem of violence have been established on the basis of five strategic thrusts: (1) promotion of violence-free family life, (2) detection and prevention of serious harm, (3) specific care for persons affected by domestic violence, (4) legal and police action and (5) support services to consolidate a new life project.

Three areas of activity have been identified to address domestic violence:

- At the national/regulatory level, policies, plans and programmes and monitoring and accountability strategies will be defined, relating in particular to promotion of violence-free family life, detection and prevention, specific care for persons affected and support services.

- At the institutional level, regulations, guidelines, procedures, and the necessary instruments to carry out the actions required by each of the various strategic care thrusts will be developed.
• At the local/community level, institutions to define and coordinate the actions required to ensure a comprehensive response to the problem of domestic violence in the community, district or region will be organized.

To ensure that the model is sustainable, creation of a macro structure is proposed whereby experience gained at each implementation level would feed back into the model; the structure consists in the linkage and interrelation of three bodies which, at different levels, follow up and monitor implementation of the model and, at the same time, identify needs and challenges to be overcome in order to provide quality care.

The structures proposed are:

• A national system or commission for the prevention and correction of domestic violence. Its functions would be to define policies, plans, programmes and to monitor fulfilment and accountability, among other things. It would be made up of authorities, representatives of civil society, and technical staff with experience in the prevention and correction of domestic violence.

• There would be a structure, a national commission of networks, to which concerns, requirements and complaints of non-observance or lack of support by the government’s own institutions would be addressed [these would be taken to the National Commission]... Its function would be to diagnose the way in which society is responding to support persons affected in the various communities or regions, and to exchange experiences through tours or internships at the other networks or institutions that make up local networks.

• Regional and local networks. This structure would bring together the various bodies responsible for supporting victims of assault, for the purpose of obtaining feedback and monitoring the work being done.

In tandem with this macro structure, creation of a micro structure is also proposed whereby each institution would define how it is going to organize domestic violence prevention services.

To consolidate and give permanence to the model, the following actions are proposed:

• The clear and explicit formulation of regulations
• Processes of technical and emotional training and support to enhance management.
• Research.
• Changes in the curriculum.
• Development of a social communications strategy.

Among the main difficulties encountered in implementing the model are:

• Limited access to resources, both at the national and international level, in view of the magnitude of the endeavour. This is reflected in the quality of services provided to women who have survived violence, both in terms of the government and civil society. The very small amounts budgeted by the national government for violence prevention.
• Raising decision-makers’ awareness.
• Improving or changing implementation of the model in order to recruit staff to work on cases of violence. This is complicating the work, particularly in the public sector, because of the way in which the staff are being recruited, namely, without regard to their background.
• No progress has been achieved in enhancing inter-agency coordination as specified in the Model, so that it is difficult to enforce the law and the Convention of Belém do Pará.
• Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

In addition to the PLANEG review, as previously mentioned, SEM is showing leadership by creating new Gender Equity and Development Offices and strengthening those that already exist.

• Women’s human rights

One of the areas in which new measures will be needed in future is women’s human rights. In the Dominican Republic, the State Secretariat for Women is addressing the subject through its participation in formulating a proposal for reform of the Criminal Code, submitted to the Chamber of Deputies in April.

The main objective of SEM’s proposal has been to make changes in a spirit of gender equity to ensure that regulations treat men and women equitably and that women’s rights are respected. This SEM proposal retains the whole of Act No. 24-97 on Domestic Violence, as SEM believes that omission of that Act from the resulting new Criminal Code would constitute a backward step for Dominican women.

Also, the changes the State Secretariat for Women is proposing to the Criminal Code are to be developed with a view to ensuring consistency between the Dominican Republic’s criminal law and the international regulatory instruments it has ratified.

Among the actions taken by the State Secretariat for Women to influence the legislators and ensure that gender content will be in the approved version are the following (CEDAW 2004):

(a) A proposal document was produced and presented to the National Congress on the basis of an internal consultation process in which the advice and assistance of a specialist in criminal law and gender matters were enlisted.

(b) Similarly, SEM undertook an advocacy role vis-à-vis the National Congress, speaking with deputies and other members of the Senate Committee studying the Criminal Code. In that connection, SEM took part in the meetings for discussion of the Criminal Code convened by the Congress.

(c) Similarly, the State Secretariat for Women coordinated actions with the coalition of NGOs for a modern, consensual code, with a view to discussing and reaching consensus on the proposals relating to the Civil Code and making a joint presentation to the National Congress.
Bibliography