URUGUAY

PART ONE: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting equality and women's empowerment

Uruguay has not yet adopted a national plan of action, nor does it have a plan for equal opportunity at the national level. The National Institute for Women and the Family (INFM), a specialized agency created in 1991\(^1\), falls under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). Because of this organizational positioning, as well as other circumstances, its influence in promoting gender equity has been limited.

In March 2002 the INFM invited NGOs to evaluate the CEDAW Committee’s observations on the first report submitted by Uruguay. That evaluation produced proposals to draw up a possible national plan. In March 2003, government organizations were asked to prepare input for such a plan, and Women's Offices and Information Centres in the country's various departments were surveyed to this end. Proposals were also received from the departmental legislatures and from specialized nongovernmental organizations. The resulting materials are now being systematically compiled and put to consideration by the institutions and individuals participating in those stages.

The only experiment to date in preparing a sectoral plan for equal opportunity took place in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS). During 2000 and 2001 an expert in gender and employment worked with the Tripartite Commission on Equal Opportunity and Treatment in Employment to prepare a National Plan for Employment Equality. Unfortunately, the conditions for implementing it were not present, and the MTSS has not approved the plan or applied it.

At the municipal level, the city government of Montevideo prepared an Equal Opportunities and Rights Plan 2002-2005. In 2001 the Governor (Intendente) appointed representatives of various agencies to a Gender Equity Commission, which laid the basis of a plan and launched a permanent process for consulting social and institutional stakeholders. Men also participated in this process.

The first Equal Opportunities and Rights Plan for the city was ratified and put into effect in 2002, and advisory councils were established to monitor it by themes. In November 2003 an initial report and evaluation of its implementation was produced, together with social and institutional stakeholders.

Following the 1999 elections, a so-called "Women's Bloc" was formed in the National Parliament. This "Bloc" consists of representatives of various sectors and parties. It has sponsored discussion, drafting and promulgation of laws and rules dealing with equity and the advancement of women in the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Through its presence and visibility, the Bloc has encouraged public debate on many issues from a gender perspective. Particular note should be made of its efforts to coordinate various public

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\(^1\) The Institute for Women was created in October 1991, and in 1992 became the National Institute for Women and the Family.
and private institutional players, organizations and groups throughout the country interested in promoting gender equity.

The current legislative session has seen the approval of Law 17214 on domestic violence. That law expresses a style of work and negotiation reflected in initiatives from civil society, such as the so-called "Crepe Campaign", the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Domestic Violence, and the Drafting Committee for the National Plan against Domestic Violence.

In 2003 Uruguay, working jointly with the United Nations, launched a process of dialogue and debate on the Millennium Development Goals. The roundtables organized to adapt those goals to national conditions attracted highly qualified and broadly representative participation.

Goal 3, "to promote gender equality and empower women", has as its global target (target 4): "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015". Because Uruguay has in fact achieved greater female participation at the various levels of education, the discussion process concluded by proposing the following specific target for the country: "Eliminate gender disparities in employment opportunities and conditions and at public and private decision-making levels". Adoption of this proposed target will have to be decided during the official process of preparing the national document.

Policies, programmes and actions at the sectoral level

Analysis of the social fallout from globalization has recently begun to incorporate the gender perspective, in order to determine the impact on equality of opportunities and outcomes between men and women. Only a very small proportion of the female population has enjoyed the opportunities and benefits flowing from a more open economy, a more flexible labour market, and the use of new technologies. That proportion is growing steadily, however, in terms of labour market participation. Yet despite this increase, no substantial improvement in women's employment conditions can be discerned for the short term. Some sectors of civil society blame globalization for insecurity and the worsening of employment and living conditions for an ever larger group, and especially for women, as reflected in job loss, rising poverty, increasing social polarization, disparities in access to technology, etc. Employment conditions are deteriorating. The increasing participation of women in the workforce (largely in the informal economy) has been accompanied by lower pay, higher instability, and little or no social protection.

The National Public Education Administration has been pursuing a gender equality policy for the education system, as discussed in greater depth below, since 1995, promoting universal preschool facilities for boys and girls from needy families starting at the age of three.

In this context, the Tripartite Commission of the MTSS has sponsored a number of initiatives to have the Equality Plan effectively adopted. These include the "Programme to Promote Equal Opportunity for Women in Employment and Vocational Training" (Proimujer), financed by the Workforce Adjustment Fund through the National Employment Board and implemented with technical support from the ILO's Inter-American Research and Documentation Centre on
Vocational Training (CINTERFOR). This demonstration project, launched in 2001, is intended to generate input and draw lessons with respect to vocational training and improving the quality of employment opportunities for women.

This highly positive experiment is now in its second phase. The public-private management approach, under which the government delegates powers to specialized NGOs but retains responsibility for the quality and coverage of services, has been particularly successful.

Forty percent of Uruguayan children are born into the lowest income quintile, where families typically have little education and many are headed by women. The "vicious circle of poverty" impacts these families especially hard: the prevalence of teenage pregnancy means that young women must assume family responsibilities too soon and have little chance to join the labour market. A very effective way of breaking this circle of poverty, which in our country entraps women primarily, is to provide spaces where mothers can leave their children and so pursue their education. A key aspect of the search for equity is thus the encouragement of early education for children from needy households starting at the age of three. Since 1996, some 74,670 boys and girls between the ages four and five years have been enrolled in preschool. To this we must add the tens of thousands of children of three years and younger who are served by the Family and Childcare Centres (CAIF). The World Bank has provided a loan to build kindergartens in economically, socially and culturally deprived areas.

The National Institute for Minors (INAME), which provides services for children and youth, has sponsored many programmes and projects dealing with vulnerable groups from a gender perspective. The National Nutrition Institute (INDA), part of the MTSS, has a special maternal-child component under its National Programme for Nutritional Quality (PNCA), designed to promote swift improvement in nutritional status and to prevent the consequences of malnutrition. It is targeted at pregnant women and nursing mothers, as well as infants and preschoolers.

In the health field, there has been progress with legislation for protecting sexual and reproductive rights: the compulsory gynaecological surveillance law; the law on assisted childbirth; the law on prevention of domestic and sexual violence; and the bill on the protection of reproductive health, now in the process of adoption. In terms of strategies, Uruguay has supported the creation of the Intergovernmental Commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) within MERCOSUR. A number of steps have also been taken to improve public health services: introduction of special facilities to provide SRH care for teenagers and young people; the paradigm shift represented by the adoption of a comprehensive model for maternal-child care; the introduction of family planning services, including emergency contraception, using free, safe and high-quality contraceptive methods.

An important step has been the creation of a committee of experts on SRH, drawn from many walks of life, to prepare standards for SRH services, and the preparation, publication and distribution of comprehensive care standards for adolescents.

Using municipal funding under the Equal Opportunities and Rights Plan, the City of Montevideo is pursuing a programme of comprehensive care for women, including contraception services, pregnancy and perinatal monitoring, and early detection of genital and breast cancers.
Under the Public Safety Programme, the Ministry of the Interior is pursuing a subprogramme to address family violence. Staff have been trained and support has been provided to the Centre for Assistance to Victims of Family Violence and to the local police precincts (Comisarías) for the protection of women and families. Although the Inter-American Development Bank provided initial financing, no domestic sources of funding have been secured for its continuation.

The National Police forces have been working since 1996 to achieve gender equity and to empower women in two different areas: internally, they have sought to introduce the gender perspective to the entire process of training personnel of all ranks. They have also eliminated the discriminatory provisions that prevented female career officers from ascending through the ranks to senior positions on a par with male officers. Externally, the National Police service has adopted a community outreach philosophy involving joint initiatives to reduce the feeling of insecurity, to give effect to human rights for all individuals, and to involve the public more closely in co-management of crime prevention plans and activities.

There is no salary discrimination between male and female employees of the Uruguayan government, although such discrimination persists in the private sector. Nevertheless, the gender perspective is not built into the national budget, particularly at its final stage. It has however been incorporated into certain sectors of government, at least in specific programmes and proposals. The only way to calculate funding allocated in a manner consistent with gender equity and women's empowerment is to add up the various ministerial budgets. Thus for example the budget of the National Institute for Women and the Family (INFM) within the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) would have to be included, as well as funding for maternal-child health programmes in the Ministry of Public Health (MSP), the Social Insurance Bank, etc.
PART TWO: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

Uruguay does not yet have a national plan of action for fulfilling the Beijing commitments. Despite this lack, progress has been made in achieving some of the Beijing goals. Closer ties have been forged between the government and civil society, and between the different branches of government, for introducing the gender perspective into public policies.

In this respect, creation of a Gender Equity Commission in the House of Representatives, embracing members of all political persuasions, is helping to achieve the objectives established in paragraph 204 d) of the Platform. In legal terms, the existence since 1997 of a tripartite commission on equal opportunity in employment, the creation of mechanisms to prevent family violence, and the recent adoption of special legislation on procedures for handling cases of domestic violence, with the consequent adjustment to judicial proceedings, are important points of reference in assessing the degree of Uruguay's commitment.

Civil society organizations point out that the actions taken by various government bodies do not amount to any "policy of State" that would transcend the action of specific governments, since those activities depend on the initiative and inclination of individual officials and the support of international agencies, rather than on a sustained political will. They recognize that significant progress has been made in raising the profile of some of the key themes of the Beijing platform. Debates in Parliament on legislative initiatives such as assisted childbirth, domestic violence, gender parity in electoral lists, and most recently on sexual and reproductive health have been widely publicized and given coverage in the media.

Some successful initiatives

On the labour front, the growing presence of women in the country's workforce does not mean that there is equality in employment access and conditions. Unemployment rates for women are systematically higher than those for men. The labour market remains segmented, both horizontally and vertically: women are still found mainly in traditional sectors, and their increased levels of education and training have not translated into positions of professional responsibility. Among employees, women are more numerous than men in so-called "non-standard" or casual employment, and they are heavily represented in seasonal and part-time jobs. Women are not properly protected by the social security system, as can be seen in the coverage rates for each benefit under the Social Insurance Bank. Nor are women free from discrimination when it comes to pay: indeed this is perhaps the most tangible manifestation of occupational inequality between men and women.

On the legislative front, a number of employment laws and standards have been adopted recently, of varying significance and impact. These range from approval of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2001 to Law 17242 of 2000 which establishes the right of female workers in the public and private sectors to take one day’s paid leave a year for Pap tests and mammography examinations. In addition, the regulations to Law 16045 prohibit discrimination on grounds of sex in any sector
or branch of activity, and treat sexual harassment as a severe form of employment discrimination that is subject to administrative or judicial action.

A very significant achievement of the last decade in the labour field was the creation of the Tripartite Commission on Equality and introduction of the Proimujer programme. Social dialogue has played a fundamental role in this area: the inclusion of social representatives in the Tripartite Commission\(^2\) and in the National Employment Board has clearly demonstrated the importance of addressing gender issues as a shared responsibility of all parties to labour relations.

**Experience with Proimujer.** This programme was introduced on a pilot basis in the departments of Montevideo, Rio Negro, Cerro Largo and Rocha, working closely with the departmental governments (*Intendencias*). During this initial phase 25 courses were conducted (12 in Montevideo and 13 in the interior) through 12 training units; a total of 525 women participated and earned qualification not only in areas traditionally occupied by women but also in fields where women are less frequent, such as building and park maintenance, green spaces, gardening and horticulture.

During their training, women prepared career plans to ready them to launch individual and group business initiatives. In some cases these involved the offer of outsourcing services to municipal governments. In other cases, the women formed cooperatives to make and market handicraft products.

The programme's most significant impacts in terms of employability can be seen in the following statistics:

- **66%** of the women participating are now more aware of their strengths and weaknesses for finding and holding a job.
- **50%** say they are more familiar with how the labour market functions.
- **45%** reported that they acquired knowledge and skills that will improve their employability.
- **30%** feel that having set out a clear career plan is an important change.

In August 2003 it was agreed to extend the programme and broaden it to include another 850 women. Its purpose was redefined: it is to contribute to strengthening proactive employment policies by developing skills that will help women enter the labour market under conditions of equity. The specific objectives are: to help reduce gender-based inequalities and promote women's employability; equal opportunities and treatment in training and hiring; mainstreaming of gender equity considerations in employment policies; strengthening training facilities by incorporating the gender perspective and basic employability skills into the instructional offerings of local institutions (NGOs, cooperatives, social organizations, business and labour associations, etc.); and supporting sustainable local initiatives for training and employment, especially in the country's interior.

\(^2\) It is important to note that the members of the Commission belong to the highest governing bodies of social organizations such as they PIT-CMT (the umbrella labor union body), the largest employers’ organizations and the major business organizations (National Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Industry of Uruguay).
Although the programme has been successful, it has encountered some obstacles. The various players involved in employment policies and programmes are still not sufficiently aware of the need to incorporate the gender perspective as a crosscutting, systematic dimension in all activities. This translates into problems of dialogue and negotiation on implementation, and has required much time and effort to be devoted to the programme's policy and operational management. In addition, turnover among officials in the ministry and heavy administrative and financial bureaucracy have affected the programme's operations, both in terms of scheduling and in the relationship with the technical teams and field workers.

The "Project for the development and the economic and social integration of rural women in settlements of the National Colonization Institute and other areas": this project is being run by the National Colonization Institute, under the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, to promote development by providing land for female farmworkers and their families.

This Project, which is being supported by the UNDP and Japanese cooperation, seeks to promote gender equity by empowering rural women through development of their entrepreneurial skills, enhancing their organizational capacity, and encouraging their social participation, through the "Rural Women's Markets". These Markets represent coordinated systems of services for training, information, generation and transfer of technology, and group organization. Training in information technologies constitutes a central and innovative component of the project. Specific objectives relate to strengthening the two existing markets and creating new ones: four have already been set up.

Among other achievements, the project has encouraged the production and marketing of farm products, it has transferred technologies relating to high-quality food production, it has provided women with the skills needed to manage their enterprises, including PC and Internet training, for which telecentres have been set up and equipped in the markets. There is now an Internet-connected network that makes it possible to offer new services to 700 women directly. As a further outcome, rural women have constituted legally established organizations.

Improving women's income:

- 58% of participating women are now earning at least 50% of their family’s total monetary income\(^3\).
- Women have increased their gross income by 21% over the base year 2001.
- Rural women with little or no formal education are participating; of those who have taken training in information technology, 40% had only a primary education (partial or complete).
- Some participants are women from households with no regular monetary income, and they are now earning their own income.
- Some women come from geographically isolated areas where services are unavailable and basic needs go unmet.

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\(^3\) According to a mid-term evaluation by an international consultant.
In education, mention should be made of the programme for "Consolidation of Equity. Development of Early Education (3, 4 and 5 Years)", which was launched in 1996 and is still growing. It is sponsored by the National Public Education Administration (ANEP), the Central Executive Council, the Council on Primary Education, education centres and the World Bank.

Further support to this initiative was provided in 1998 by Law 17015, making early education compulsory. The ANEP mounted a lobbying campaign to have Parliament pass legislation that would expand the period of compulsory education to six years' primary and three years' intermediate schooling.

The general objective of the programme is "to provide schooling for all boys and girls aged 3, 4 and 5 years". Its specific objectives are:

- To enrol children of 3, 4 and 5 years from poor households throughout the country.
- To promote early education for successful performance in primary school.
- To encourage school-dropout mothers to go back to school.
- To help mothers from poor families acquire the skills to enter the labour market.

Some 50,000 boys and girls aged 3, 4 and 5 years have benefited from pre-schooling since 1996. In Uruguay the idea that it is possible and necessary to begin education at the age of three is not new, but it was only with a World Bank loan in 1996 that it began to crystallize. This equity-inspired plan set short, medium and long-term goals. Short-term: to provide schooling for all children of five years; medium-term: to do the same for children of four years; and long-term, to extend universal coverage to children of three years. The targets were exceeded by 1999: between 1995 and that year, the number of children aged four and five years receiving public instruction rose spectacularly. In Montevideo, coverage at age five grew from 46% to 65%, and in the interior, from 55% to 89%. When children enrolled in private education are included, we have universal education at five years, and coverage was almost universal at four years by the beginning of the 21st century⁴. To service this increased enrolment, 300 new preschool classrooms were added to the 209 classrooms allocated within existing schools. Since 1999, US$50,400,000 has been earmarked for building, furnishing and equipping 200 new classrooms. A noteworthy achievement is the heavy enrolment of children of these ages in rural schools. In 1990, 20% of rural children aged four and five were enrolled in the public schools, a record unheard of in the rest of Latin America. Whereas total enrolment in public early education in 1985 was 40,799, the figure for 2002 was 87,795.

With respect to the status of working mothers, a 1998 World Bank study, examining the rationale of funding for gender equity policy, found a 20-point gap between mothers and non-mothers in the employment rate for women of the same age group and with similar education. This suggests that one of the major impacts of Uruguay's policy of expanding preschool education for low-income groups will be to improve the female employment rate and thereby raise family incomes.

Together with the policy of enrolling children between the ages of three and five years in public education, and the effort to build new classrooms, the school day has been extended: the goal has

⁴ See Annex.
been to provide more all-day schools, so that mothers will have a full eight-hour day free for study and work.

The National Institute for Minors (INAME, the former Council on Children) is responsible for policy relating to children and adolescents. INAME has been signing contracts with NGOs, a practice that dates back to 1997 when the Contracts Division and the CAIF Division were created. The Contracts Division works out and negotiates agreements with specialized nonprofit institutions to provide comprehensive attention, on either a full-time or part-time basis, for children and adolescents. A total of 15,050 children and teenagers are covered by these contracts nationwide. Several of these projects, which incorporate the gender dimension, relate to family problems such as violence, mistreatment and abuse. The Institute places special emphasis on services for teenage girls.

The Maternal-Child Unit of INAME sponsors comprehensive care for pregnant women, mothers and their children. The goal is to reinforce the maternal-child bond, with a primary focus on protecting the child. This contributes to gender equity by protecting minors and promoting their well-rounded development. The conceptual framework of the programme has changed from treating motherhood and adolescence separately to dealing with them comprehensively, recognizing that adolescence does not end when a girl becomes a mother. Teenage mothers are given understanding and help in bonding with their child, as well as with their own personal development. The contradictory rule in existing legislation that prevents a teenager from legally recognizing her child is being addressed.

INAME coordinates its efforts with NGOs and with State and public organizations such as the municipal governments, the National Nutrition Institute (INDA), the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Public Health. Female victims of violence and abuse in Montevideo are cared for under contract with the Women’s Conference Foundation of Uruguay (PLEMUU), the National Women’s Shelter, and “Nuestra Casa”. Victims of child abuse are treated through four part-time projects.

The concern for risk prevention and the need to respond promptly to complaints of child abuse led to introduction in February 1999 of a new institutional resource, a telephone hotline that children in trouble can use, known as the “Blue Line” (0800 5050). The telephone call is direct and free of charge, and can be made either by the child or by witnesses, neighbours, relatives, or public and private institutions. A total of 7,651 complaints have been recorded in this way, 4,177 relating to boys and 3,474 to girls.

The Blue Line is able to respond to current demand, but it certainly does not reflect the magnitude of the phenomenon. Outreach and awareness campaigns on violence and on physical, mental and sexual abuse of children are needed. There is no doubt that such a campaign would generate greater demand, and this would require more trained personnel and better infrastructure for the service.

On the basis of this experience, INAME is developing a new response methodology, recognizing that it is not always the family that seeks help in cases of violence, and that active steps must be taken to encourage requests for its intervention. This means working to overcome resistance
against interference by outsiders, especially when it is not specifically requested or wanted. The Blue Line has made it possible to respond to emergencies reported by neighbours, and this has saved lives. It is a valuable tool for protecting children from mistreatment.

Progress has been made in sexual and reproductive health, through the legislative route (highlighting problems and proposing solutions) and the MSP, as well as in the municipal government of Montevideo, the University of the Republic, etc.

As noted earlier, parliamentary debate has already help to set the agenda on issues such as assisted childbirth, family violence as a public health problem, childbirth conditions, the introduction of sexual education and the decriminalization of abortion, in the course of discussing various bills. The most significant legislative advance was the initial approval in December 2001 of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Law, which is now under consideration in the Senate.

There have been other advances as well. In 2001, contraception services were included within the framework of gynaecological consultations at public health units of the MSP (the Public Health Services Administration, ASSE). Three methods are used: oral contraception, condoms and intrauterine devices, as well as emergency contraception. This represents an important step forward, in that policies based on so-called "vertical programmes" supported by international funding are now being replaced by programmes funded with the MSP's own resources.

The SIM programme in Montevideo is sponsoring promotional activities and has published educational materials. This programme seeks to change the care model from a traditional maternal-child focus to an integrated approach to sexual and reproductive health.

A publication on "Standards of comprehensive care for adolescents" was issued in 2003, with specific chapters on sexual and reproductive health.

At the beginning of the year training in sexual and reproductive health was provided for 250 non-medical staff of the MSP public health services, stressing the prevention of teenage pregnancy, in the context of Subcomponent 1.4 of the Programme for Childhood, Adolescence and Families at Risk (Office of the President of the Republic and IDB). Institutions were invited to compete to provide this training, and the contract was awarded to the consortium MYSU (Women and Health in Uruguay) and the Reproductive Health, Sexuality and Gender Programme of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of the Republic.

Training is also being provided for 100 social workers in sexual and reproductive health for young people, stressing the prevention of teenage pregnancy. In this case, the winning proposal was submitted by the organization Iniciativa Latinoamericana. Under the same programme, training was provided for 250 medical staff of the sexual and reproductive health services of the MSP, with emphasis on preventing teenage pregnancies.

Chapter 5 of the Equal Opportunities and Rights Plan of the City of Montevideo includes concrete steps to promote sexual and reproductive rights. An advisory council has been established, including social organizations, government agencies, academics and health
professionals, to provide input and monitor activities. In this context, the Programme of Comprehensive Care for Women (PAIM) has been in operation since 1996 at the municipal level. It provides contraception services, pregnancy and perinatal monitoring, and early detection of genital and breast cancers, and is funded exclusively by municipal resources.

Special attention is given to promoting sexual and reproductive rights among the younger population. The plan includes a chapter on "freeing young citizens from gender conditioning", which includes the Teenagers Programme. This experiment has created meeting places for young men and women, it has provided training in sexual and reproductive health, and it has provided more room for attention at polyclinics.

The obstacles identified by the MSP authorities relate primarily to the Ministry's own services, noting that the stages of staff training and awareness are not completed. As well, demand has not kept pace with the offer of services, because of social resistance that creates a barrier of prejudice against those who might turn to services that, while essential, are new. Because they refer to people's personal life, plans and programmes relating to this issue are also difficult to implement.

Nongovernmental organizations and institutions take a different view. They point out that, despite the willingness of the MSP's current management to include free contraception services in the basic public health programme nationwide, users frequently complain of the lack of availability and continuity of materials, reluctance among public health personnel to provide contraception services, and the failure to publicize the programme adequately among potential users.

Another obstacle to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights is the absence of education campaigns at the national and departmental levels to encourage the recognition, acceptance and exercise of these rights in the context of promoting equity and good citizenship. An example here is the apparent failure of the HIV-AIDS prevention campaigns, as reflected in the latest surveillance report showing a significant increase in the infected population, particularly among women and youth.

Finally, it must be noted that the MSP has not responded to the proposal to issue standards on pre- and post-abortion care that was submitted in 2001 by the Group on Health Initiatives against Abortion under Hazardous Conditions.

Our country has made important progress in combating domestic violence. In the first place, we may refer to the preparation and approval of Law 17514 of 2 August 2002. Although domestic violence was made a crime in 1995, the impact of that move was very limited. The new law, worked out in consultation with various social and institutional circles, fulfills Uruguay's commitments at various international forums. It takes human rights as its frame of reference: domestic violence is defined as a violation of human rights. This law establishes for the first time the need for a national action plan, which is to be pursued through a special Advisory Council on domestic violence consisting of representatives of public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the National Congress of Governors.
A number of programmes and projects have been launched to combat domestic violence with increasing involvement by the State and civil society. Experience in helping victims, who are primarily women and children, has generated a working methodology that in turn has provided feedback to strengthen the conceptual framework. Of special importance in this process has been the Family Violence Subprogramme of the Public Safety Programme, which the Ministry of the Interior has been conducting with IDB financing and the main objective of which is to prevent and treat violence between individuals, and to reduce risks and the feeling of insecurity.

The Family Violence Subprogramme involves three broad lines of action: public awareness, training, and financial support to front-line organizations.

Public awareness activities have included the following:

- Three workshops targeted at parliamentarians, justice system personnel, and candidates and officials of the four political parties represented in Parliament.
- Distribution of 500 copies of the book entitled "Family Violence, a Multidisciplinary Approach", summarizing materials from the workshops. It was distributed to public and private institutions as well as to individuals working in these areas.
- The "Uruguayan Guide for Social Workers", listing some 2000 resources and services dealing with childhood, youth and family violence throughout the country, was published and publicly released: 1000 copies have been distributed. It was prepared under the auspices of UNICEF, the Foro Juvenil (Youth Forum), the Ministry of Education's National Youth Institute (INJU-MEC), the Uruguay Chapter of Children's Defence International (DNIU), and "Programa Herramientas".
- A new edition of the Uruguayan Guide for Social Workers has been published and distributed in 2000 copies, in cooperation with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).
- A poster publicizing the family violence services financed by the Public Safety Programme was printed and distributed to health centres, schools, police stations, and NGOs.
- Two workshops were held dealing with successful experiments in preventing crime and violence.
- With the cooperation of the British Embassy, a publicity campaign was carried out to highlight the training provided to police officers at Montevideo's 24 police precincts for dealing with the victims of family violence.
- A book entitled "Family Violence: an Interdisciplinary Approach" was published and launched, and 1000 copies were distributed. This book summarizes the presentations from the first module of the training course on "an interdisciplinary focus on family violence" that was offered under the contract between the Ministry of the Interior and the University of the Republic.

Training activities have included the following:

- A three-level training programme was designed and implemented, targeted at public officials in health, education, the police and the judiciary who are directly involved in helping the victims of family violence. The courses were offered by various institutions selected by competition.
The three levels were defined as follows: the first level covers front-line personnel who must respond immediately to cases of family violence; the second level is for officials who may be called upon to provide follow-up services; and the third level is designed to train senior officials as instructors who can serve as multipliers by replicating what they have learned in their respective areas of work.

Preparation of modules and provision of courses on "the interdisciplinary focus to family violence" for graduate students in the faculties of social sciences, law, medicine and psychology.

Training course for police officers in the 24 precincts of Montevideo, reflecting the decision of the Chief of Police to decentralize services and to authorize all precincts to handle domestic violence complaints.

The programme was carried out with the cooperation of the British Embassy over a period of two weeks, and involved 104 police officers of varying rank. The objective was to equip precinct officers with the tools for dealing with family violence victims.

Finally, financial support has been provided for eight different projects on family violence, proposed by nongovernmental organizations (PLEMUU, Casa de la Mujer de la Unión, Faro-Foro Juvenil, Mujer Ahora, Mujer y Sociedad, the National Inmate and Parole Board), the National Crime Prevention Directorate, and the Municipal Government of Montevideo.

The family violence programme was discontinued, because of lack of domestic financing, once the IDB funds were exhausted. Its results and findings are still being analyzed, but it is clear that the experiment resulted in considerable feedback, knowledge transfer, and coordination. The learning impact of that experiment is now reflected in the organizations and institutions that participated in it, and in a higher level of awareness among the general public and the media.

In general terms, we may say that the major obstacles the country faces in advancing gender equity are the following:

- The persistent myth about the "egalitarianism" of Uruguayan society, which is frequently characterized as conservative and resistant to change.
- The low ranking accorded gender issues on public agendas and the lack of consistency in the government's position on gender mainstreaming in public policies encourages the "personalization" of policy, in the sense that programmes and actions depend on the interest of individuals who hold decision-making posts. Changes of government and turnover at the executive level thus constitute an obstacle: with every new administration, the situation reverts to zero in terms of information and awareness.
- The chronic discontinuity in State interventions reflects a poor record of coordination and cooperation between, and even within, institutions.
- The lack of any general policy or guidelines such as an Equal Opportunities Plan is a serious obstacle to a comprehensive approach through public policies. This means that the actions taken do not cover all the areas indicated in the Beijing Platform and are inadequate to guarantee the rights of the population as a whole.
- The institutional weakness of the specialized agency (INFM) that is responsible for guiding gender policies prevents it from playing its legally mandated leadership role.
PART THREE. Institutional development

Among Uruguay's institutional mechanisms are the National Institute for Women and the Family, which was created initially as the National Institute for Women (Law 16226 of October 1991) and was given its current name by Law 16320 of November 1992. From the outset it has functioned as a dependency of the General Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Its mandates are:

- To promote, plan, design, formulate, implement and evaluate national policies on women and the family.
- To work with central government agencies to implement those policies through coordination of activities and the training of human resources.
- To advise government agencies on women's and family issues, at both the national and the departmental level.
- To coordinate and supervise the activities of its dependencies.
- To negotiate agreements with international organizations for technical and financial cooperation.

The INFM was funded from the MEC budget until 1995. At that time, it was assigned its own appropriation of US$50,000 a year, and this was doubled in the 2000 budget to US$100,000. Because these amounts are converted to pesos when the budget law enters into force, the resources of the INFM currently amount to about US$30,000. In fact, the INFM budget is topped up by the MEC so that it can meet its operating needs.

Until 2000 the INFM could count on funding from international organizations, and this made it possible to undertake specific research and to prepare reports for monitoring international commitments, to provide awareness and training courses for public officials and the community at large in cooperation with NGOs, to mount media campaigns on domestic violence, and to participate in international meetings. As of 2000, this international support was discontinued.

INFM staff has been built up both through secondments and reassignments within the public service, and through direct hiring based on traineeships and short-term contracts. The Director of the INFM is treated as a management post or "position of trust", not covered by the budget.

16 people are currently working in the INFM: 11 civil servants, three trainees, and two persons on contract. The team consists of:

- Two lawyers, one specialized in labour and family law, and the other in family violence.
- Two social workers, one specialized in working with teenagers, and the other in family violence.
- Five psychologists, specialized in family violence.
- One family counsellor, specialized in working with older adults.
- One agricultural engineer, specialized in gender issues and participatory planning.
- Five administrative staff.
The INFM is decentralizing its activities through contracts with departmental governments, and has established women's offices and information centres for coordinating specific activities. During 2003 the INFM took part in the courses for the Civil Service Preparatory School, giving presentations on gender, the workplace, and domestic violence, and offering two special courses during the summer sessions.

The INFM was created at the urging of the women's movement. It has now been in operation for more than 10 years, but it has yet to consolidate its position or to receive a budget commensurate with its responsibilities. Its current budget is equal to 0.001% of the country's Gross National Product over the period 1996-2000. The scarcity of human and material resources and the lack of interest shown by the executive branch have prevented the INFM from playing a leadership role in policies for defending women's rights. The INFM is a member of various coordination bodies with other State agencies, such as the Ministries of Health, Labour and the Interior, but it does not have the institutional status and organizational ranking that would allow it to have a real impact on areas within its responsibility.

The country has several instruments for promoting gender equity. One example is the coordination body for questions of equality, the Tripartite Commission for Equal Opportunity and Treatment in the Workplace, constituted initially by legislative act of 7 March 1997 with a view to mainstreaming gender considerations within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Subsequently, Executive Decree 365-99 formally instituted the Tripartite Commission for Equal Opportunity and Treatment in the Workplace. It consists of members and alternates from the PIT-CNT, the employers’ organization (COSUPEM), the National Institute for Women and the Family (under the Ministry of Education and Culture), and the National Employment Directorate (DINAE) and the Office of the General Inspector of Labour and Social Security (IGTSS), dependencies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS) which coordinates it. Other private or public institutions can be brought into the Commission, as required.

Its specific duties are:

- To serve as an advisory body to the MTSS on gender issues.
- To help achieve balance in the labour market through strategies to foster employment equity.
- To work with government and society to promote an active policy for equal opportunity in the workplace.
- To advise on actions for incorporating a gender perspective into the substantive programmes of the MTSS.
- To provide coordination to strengthen existing equity initiatives within government and beyond.
- To implement outreach strategies for promoting equal opportunity and publicizing labour legislation.

Since it was established in 1997, the Commission has undertaken various activities that may be summarized as follows: outreach campaigns; sponsoring specific studies on the status of women in the labour market; inspections; preparation of a National Plan for Employment Equality; promotion and support for the preparation, design and implementation of Proimujer; establishing
interagency relations; monitoring the process of regional integration within its areas of responsibility; and securing international funding.

It is perhaps a peculiar feature of Uruguay that, given the weakness of the executive branch's gender mechanism, the national parliament has assumed the role of coordinating efforts in the various areas of government and of civil society. This role is pursued through the Special Commission on Gender and Equity of the House of Representatives, and through the "Women's Bloc", an ad hoc mechanism created by female Senators and Deputies committed to gender issues, drawn from all political parties

Parliamentarians are able to play this role with respect to the other branches of government thanks to their power of oversight over the executive branch. This oversight operates through various mechanisms, including the ability to call ministers and senior officials to account; and to request reports on activities. Parliamentarians have also been able to coordinate their actions with the judiciary, within the limits established by the separation of powers. Relations with civil society organizations have been particularly active: members of the "Bloc" have received complaints and proposals from the public, and have participated in sponsoring various activities to promote gender equity.

The "Bloc" has made the legislature a true sounding board for the women's movement and for the efforts of the various government dependencies interested in equity.

While the number of female legislators increased during the period under analysis, we are far from achieving gender parity among elected representatives. Any measure that will increase the proportion of female parliamentarians is sure to result in more legislation with a gender perspective. Giving female legislators a body of advisers on gender issues would respond to a need that is increasingly evident, both in the increasing legislative work on gender questions and in the growing demands of the public and the need for coordinating government handling of this issue.

With respect to the generation, publication and accessibility of statistical information disaggregated by sex, the agency responsible for preparing and supervising official information is the National Statistics Institute (INE).

The gender statistics that the INE prepares and publishes cover all the basic gender indicators for Uruguay. Starting with the basic concepts prepared for monitoring the Programme of Action from the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994 and 1999 (ICPD+5), the Beijing Platform of Action 1995 and 2000 (Beijing + 5) and the Millennium Development Goals, it has managed to improve and update them in light of available information and for purposes of international and regional comparisons. These indicators cover the following areas: population, families and households, education, employment and income, poverty, health, and housing. The Gender Statistics 2001-2002 are available for consultation at the INE web site (www.ine.gub.uy-biblioteca-genero-genero02.htm).

The work of harmonizing national statistics for gender information purposes is still encountering difficulties in some sectors of the national statistics system.
Nevertheless, we may mention efforts to standardize methodologies, procedures and classifications, which have produced significant advances in the system, although much remains to be done. Greater urgency needs to be brought to the process of training human resources and updating technologies and equipment in line with the quality and timeliness requirements for these statistics.

In the opinion of the University of the Republic, the country does not yet have an integrated system of gender indicators. It is very difficult to find information disaggregated by sex, beyond a few basic variables.

The INFM proposed the creation of a system of gender indicators in cooperation with the University of the Republic and ECLAC, but this project never got off the ground. The INE does not publish systematic information disaggregated by sex. It took a first step in this direction in 2002, publishing a series of statistics at its web page, but they did not include historical series or updates.

Although the INE reports that virtually all statistics produced by the system take account of gender desegregation, it recognizes that further work is required in the areas of:

- Reproductive health.
- Population of African descent.
- Disabilities.
- Rural poverty.

Finally, it must be noted that the monitoring of gender policies has been left almost exclusively to civil society organizations. Since the preparatory work for the Fourth Conference on Women, women's groups have been the driving force behind the debate. Uruguay had an active group, “Iniciativa”, which produced reports on the gender equity situation of the country in areas of particular importance. Generally speaking, it is civil society organizations that have publicized information and the key ideas debated at each of the conferences, thereby helping to bring a new gender perspective to the public agenda.