



Forum: Third General Assembly

Topic: Promoting Gender Equality in Labor Rights and Economic Participation for Women in Latin America

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## Introduction

A movement ignited in promoting gender equality in labor rights and economic participation for American Latin women as they battle conflicts that expose them to economic insecurity and vulnerability. This conflict is a result of past beliefs and traditions that have shaped social norms, which are rules that set the expectations and behavior followed by society, creating a clear conception of gender roles.

These beliefs influence struggles such as wage disparities, where there is a notable pay gap between men and women as women's efforts are not given the proper recognition, as well as informal jobs and limited social protection where women work in working spaces that are not officially recognized or protected, failing to meet their needs. In addition, gender-based discrimination, where women are treated differently and unfairly due to their gender, as well as harassment.

This pressing issue not only requires amendments and improvements in the education sector, which have been previous actions taken regarding this issue but also calls for new, improved solutions and efforts that will guarantee labor equity and economically empower women, promoting work cultures across the continent. Such efforts align with global objectives such as UN SDG 5 (Gender Equality), where individuals are treated fairly and equally regardless of their gender, as well as SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), giving both genders, men and women opportunities for employment, which in turn will sustain and foster economic growth. This emphasizes the importance of combating this pressing issue, as it could result in major consequences and impacts, such as economic stagnation, where Latin American women are less productive due to decreased opportunities for employment, making them prone economic vulnerability.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Gender Pay Gap

Gender Pay Gap is a difference in the average wages earned by both men and women while performing the same efforts. The efforts of Latin American women failed to be recognized, being seen as invaluable or incapable, which leads to earning 19 percent less income than men even when performing the same work, exposing them to economic vulnerability.

## Informal Sector

The informal Sector Part of the economy operates without legal labor laws and is not officially registered with the government. A large number of Latin American women work in this sector, such as domestic workers or informal jobs that do not have access to insurance, health care, or legal protection and face job insecurity.

## International Labor Organization

International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 190: A global agreement that protects employees from harassment and discrimination in the workplace, established by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Protects women from facing discrimination and harassment.

## Equal Pay International Coalition

Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC): A global initiative launched by UN Women, the ILO, and the OECD to end the gender pay gap. This initiative stresses that governments and businesses commit to equal pay policies. Countries such as Panama publicly committed (EPIC) to ensure a fairer, equal labor system.

## Social Protection

Social Protection: Government provided aid during maternity leave, insurance, and retirement benefits. Informal sectors, where Latin American women are often employed, are not officially registered by the government and are not accessible to these benefits, which increases economic vulnerability.

## General Overview

Latin American women face significant issues, suffering economically and physically when it comes to labor rights, as it fails to provided women with equal employment opportunities and economic participation as men, as their efforts were not given the appropriate recognition. This critical problem is rooted in past historical beliefs that have shaped the social expectations of Latin women in society.

During colonial times and the 20th century, Latin American countries obeyed laws that were influenced and founded on patriarchal values, which limited the participation of women in the

private sector. For instance, Bolivia in 1830 had civil codes that required women to obey their husbands, thereby limiting their independence and devaluing their role in the country, as they were perceived as inferior to men. These laws also limited Latin American women's access to education, as they were seen as obedient housewives and mothers. This was evident in a study conducted by 9 Latin American countries using age-heaping data for 28 Latin American countries (1880–1949), which showed a significant gap in access to education between men and women. In addition to these patriarchal values that denied women's rights as well as unequal access to education, Latin American women faced domestic violence, as protection laws against this problem were nonexistent, exposing women to violence and abuse, affecting them mentally and physically.

Due to social norms that denied women's independence and value, it led to the rise of numerous pressing issues, such as the gender pay gap, where Latin American women still earn about 20% less than men for similar work. Furthermore, these patriarchal values limit the participation of women in the private sector, as over 60% of women in the Region are employed in the informal sector, which does not have any social protection or employee benefits. In the Region, women are responsible for 75% of unpaid domestic work, including nursery care and childcare, which accounts for approximately 21.4% of the Region's total GDP. However, this work is hardly acknowledged, limiting and hindering their ability to contribute to economic growth.

Although many countries in the Region, such as Argentina, and Mexico, attempted to combat this pressing issue by legal reforms, such as Argentina's Labor Act, the 1949 Peronist Constitution, which promotes gender equality through social welfare and Mexico's, labor laws in the 1970s that aimed to protect pregnant workers and promote fair wages, true equality was yet not reached as these efforts lacked consistent enforcement of these civil codes by institutions that continued to be deeply rooted in cultural beliefs. As a result, women continued to face discrimination in the labor market, lower wages, and limited access to economic opportunities.

Nevertheless, some of these solutions were able to aid in solving the problem. In the year 2023, the World Economic Forum ranked Latin America third in the Global Gender Gap Index, reaching a score of 74.3%. Other countries in the Region, like Colombia and Argentina, have implemented gender quotas and recognized the needs of women, providing public childcare programs, that allow women to participate in the workforce, ensuring their child's safety. Women in the Region were also able to attend school in larger volumes, with more women excelling than men in formal education. However, this improvement is not directly proportional to equal labor

market outcomes.

Combatting this issue will require addressing both historical and current factors through multilateral discussions held by governments. These discussions will aim to formalize women's rights and recognize their needs, such as establishing public childcare programs and maternity leave. These efforts will guarantee women fair and equal opportunities, ensure labor equality, and foster economic stability.

### Sub-topic 1

A pressing issue faced by Latin American women that truly emphasizes the lack of gender equality they face is the gender pay gap. This problem is deeply rooted in an issue that arose during the 19th and 20th centuries, which was unequal access to education in the past. Latin American women were not exposed to education nor work due to societal norms regarding gender stereotypes and their roles in society being seen as housewives. This was evident in a study conducted by 9 Latin American countries using age-heaping data for 28 Latin American countries (1880–1949), which showed a significant gap in access to education between men and women.

Since society views education as a fundamental foundation that enables individuals to be skilled in professions, its crucial absence allows society to view individuals as less valuable or capable, which reinforces support for gender stereotypes. This is directly related to the gender gap between men and women, as in the mid-20th century when women were able to enter the workforce in greater numbers, which was evident in the years 1960 to 2000, increasing by 30% in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico where women started to get paid less for the same efforts that men performed by men. Latin American women earn 49 to 68 cents for each dollar men make in countries like Guatemala and Mexico, showcasing a pay gap of 19%. This had serious effects on Latin American women earning less and becoming less independent, which can increase the likelihood of poverty and stagnate economic growth in Latin American countries.

Due to the severity of this issue, governments improved justice in the labor system. For instance, in the 1970s, Brazil passed an amendment for an equal pay law. Countries such as Argentina and Chile have begun to encourage equal pay and have implemented laws that improve and increase wage transparency. The World Economic Forum's (WEF) gender parity tools in 2006 took action to tackle this ongoing problem by creating a Global Gender Gap Index that collects and tracks countries' salary data, which led to significant improvements for Latin American women. As

of the year 2023, the gender pay gap has closed by 74.3 percent, making it the third-best progress globally, according to the (WEF).

Tracking the data through records of the gender pay gap allows it to be available for governments, business officials, and shareholders to study and analyze, which encourages deliberate amendments to the labor system. This will enable women to earn a fair and equal salary for their recognized efforts, regardless of their gender and social stereotypes, ensuring they can finally achieve financial independence. This, in turn, promotes economic liberation for women.

## Sub-topic 2

Informal jobs are those without proper legal labor laws. These jobs range from domestic workers to small-scale agriculture to street vendors. These jobs are not accessible to healthcare, maternity leave for women, or any retirement benefits or protection from hazardous work. This significant issue is faced by many Latin American women, which makes them prone to financial and physical problems.

When Latin American countries faced economic crises during the 1980s and 1990s, this led governments and business officials to adjust the labor system, resulting in decreased government spending and a reduction in public jobs that were legally protected. Ultimately, this led to an increase in informal jobs where Latin American women were usually employed to work at rather than formal jobs, which are more flexible and temporary jobs, which, according to societal view, made a suitable match for women as they were seen as secondary workers less capable and valuable compared to men, since men were the main source of income, so firing Latin American or replacing them was easy, as their main priority would be taking care of their homes. This is also rooted in officials who did not trust the capabilities of Latin American women, perceiving them as less productive than men, which stagnated the economy during this crisis. According to UN Women, more than 60% of Latin American women work in the informal sector, and 9 out of 10 domestic workers in the region are women.

Countries such as Uruguay created a Monotax and an insurance system that enables individuals working in informal jobs or small businesses to register officially with the government yet pay simpler taxes, allowing them to be a part of formal jobs guaranteeing health care and retirement benefits. This is used by Latin American women, helping them become protected, gain insurance benefits, and achieve financial independence. The Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social is a national healthcare social security system where the government provides healthcare and insurance benefits to all individuals, protecting them and ensuring their financial independence and access to healthcare.

Government systems and business officials have deliberately created new systems that guarantee individual protection by providing insurance and healthcare to individuals, thereby liberating the dignity of Latin American women and ensuring they are provided with equal pay and employment benefits.

### Sub-topic 3

50% of Latin American women face discrimination and harassment, which makes them prone to lower chances of promotions, rules, and regulations that do not accommodate the needs of women, such as the absence maternity leave, as well as verbal or sexual harassment that women do not report as it could lead to them getting fired. This was particularly in the early 2000s, when a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) conducted in 2002 revealed that more than 40 percent of Latin American women working across the region had in one way been discriminated against or harassed at their workplaces, and the vast majority of them never complained because they were afraid of disciplinary actions and termination. Practical beliefs formed in the 18th to early 20th centuries are deeply rooted in this problem, viewing men as more productive, overseeing most matters, and women as less productive and capable, which leads to them being treated unfairly, limiting their leadership roles in society.

This led to the creation of Convention 190, a global agreement that protects employees from harassment and discrimination in the workplace, established by the International Labor Organization (ILO), which Argentina and Uruguay have followed. Improvements in the business and firm sectors have been notable, offering corporate training regarding behavior. This ensures a well-protected and fair workspace, which increases the leadership roles of Latin American women.

Through comprehensive and open discussions about discrimination and harassment and by setting laws such as the ILO Convention 190, governments, firms, and shareholders can take deliberate and effective actions to ensure women's protection. This will create a liberated, safe, and healthy life for Latin American women, enabling them to confidently grow into leadership roles.

## Major Parties Involved

United Nations and International Bodies

International Labour Organization (ILO): a global agreement that aims to protect employees from harassment and discrimination in workshops in March 2025, (ILO) and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published a “Gender Equality Bulletin” calling for stronger maternity leave and care regulations to protect informal workers, many of whom are women.

UN Women: Monitors female employment in the informal economy and advocates decent work principles. It is estimated that contrary to their male counterparts, at least 60 percent of the women working in Latin America are informal workers and that 9 out of 10 of the domestics lack the most basic of rights. UN Women, alongside (ILO) and (OECD), launched the Equal Pay International Coalition in Panama in 2018, which aims to reduce the gaps in wages by encouraging formalization.

Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC): A tri-partite initiative (ILO, UN Women, OECD), EPIC works in Latin America to promote policies such as pay disclosures and the formalization of women's employment through the use of tax credits.

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO): A nongovernmental organization that has been bringing empowerment to informal women and workers through research, advocacy, and organizing in the area of informal women workers. (WIEGO) also significantly assisted in the adoption of Convention 189 by (ILO) in 2011, which granted protection to domestic workers and capacity building to engage in collective negotiating

## Regional Bodies

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): Collaborates closely with the ILO by promoting care policies and social protection for informal women workers.

## National Governments & Regional Examples

Uruguay Created an insurance system called Monotax for individuals working in informal jobs to register with the government, pay simple taxes, and transition into formal jobs, thereby guaranteeing social security.

Costa Rica Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social is a national healthcare social security system, as the government provides healthcare and insurance benefits for all individuals, protecting them and ensuring their financial independence.

Panama presented the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), publicly showing its support for creating an equal and fair work environment for both genders.

### Timeline of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1948	The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established by the United Nations, and this organization has come to be influential in promoting gender equality, labor rights, and social protection in the region
1970s	Brazil is among the early Latin American nations to enact equal pay legislation, although it is only applied weakly.
2011	Convention 189 is accepted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) to protect domestic workers, who are predominantly women. It induces nations to provide legal entitlements to informal domestic help
2013	This report unveils that women in Latin America have only 87 cents to every dollar of men and that even after taking into consideration education and experience, there exist wage gaps.
2018 (March)	Though collective collaboration from UN Women International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) made a specific branch for promoting equal pay for Latin American allowing the same efforts of Latin American men and women to be recognized equally and earning equal pay .
2019	The signatory country, Mexico, ratified a major reform mandating formal contracts and providing social protection and health benefits to domestic workers, most of whom were previously excluded..

2023	The World Economic Forum also states that Latin America ranks third, after Northern Europe and Eastern Europe, in terms of convergence of the gender gap, largely due to women having better access to education and labor regulations.
2025 (March)	This bulletin encourages Latin countries to increase maternity leave as well as childcare programs especially for women working in the informal sector. This support enables women to work gaining income while taking care of their children highlighting the UNs efforts in implementing new policies that tackle gender inequality.

## Attempts to solve the issue

### Domestic Workers Convention. (2011/6/16) (ILO C189)

Under this convention, member states must grant labor rights to domestic workers such as minimum wage, working hours, rest days, or protection against abuse. It imposes proper protection against violence as well as harassment in the workplace. This has led to more than 40 countries having ratified it so far, and some are located in Latin America. It has enhanced the domestic labor laws of many countries worldwide, allowing domestic employees in countries such as Argentina and Brazil to gain access to social security from labor rights, although with varying degrees of implementation across different each region.

### Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development. (2023/4/26) (77/281)

This resolution advocates for promoting models of social and solidarity economy that collectively collaborate to help formalize informal jobs through legal support, being registered with the government, gaining employment benefits, and creating a safer, more suitable environment. These models offer support to enterprises led by women, empowering women economically and increasing their productivity. In Latin America, actions were taken regarding this resolution, where pilot programs and small tests of businesses working with informal sectors were used to test its effectiveness, as well as policy instruments that helped these models to have clear programs and rules to abide by, which led individuals working in the informal sectors to gain access to benefits and legal protection.

## International Women's Day (1974/12/10) (29/3275)

International Women's Year 1975 was officially proclaimed, and UN institutions and national governments were called upon to promote equality for women in the workplace, in education, and in leadership, thereby accelerating the pace of gender-based policy change. This event helped ignite the World Conference on Women, alongside the Mexico City (1975) conference and the UN Decade for Women, which contributed to establishing new standards and policies in Latin America, including labor rights related to gender equality.

## Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (2015/09/25) (A/70/L.1)

SDG 5 is part of the UN 2030 Agenda, focusing on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This involves ending workplace discrimination aimed at strengthening women and girls in all aspects, including enhancing women's decision-making power and equal economic rights and access to economic resources. In Latin America, governments have revised labor laws, implemented equal pay policies, extended maternity leave, and introduced formalization policies for informal sectors, in line with SDG 5; however, this progress has not been achieved uniformly across all governments.

## Possible solutions

Latin American countries should utilize mandating national pay transparency systems to address the gender pay gap. Governments should force companies, larger or medium-sized, regardless of their size, larger or medium-sized companies to declare the salary and position of every worker. This will encourage individuals facing wage disparities to assert their rights in receiving equal pay with evidence to support their claims. This will trigger a responsibility to assist women facing unfair pay and compel businesses to rectify the pay imbalance. Furthermore, once companies publicly publish their salaries, any gender inequality acknowledged by the public will put companies under legal and social reputational pressure to take prompt action. Such transparency enables governments to take legal actions to reduce the gender pay gap, promoting accountability and equality, and creating an appropriate work environment where both genders' achievements are recognized equally and fairly.

Latin American countries should expand simplified tax and benefit systems for informal workers, as over half of Latin American women work in informal sectors, such as domestic work and street vending, which lack social insurance and employee benefits like healthcare, retirement

benefits, and maternal leave. Governments should establish systems designed to handle the taxes and benefits of informal workers, similar to Uruguay's Monotax system, which allows informal workers to enroll inexpensively in social security, health care, and retirement benefits. Establishing similar systems will formalize informal markets, which in turn will ensure financial independence for Latin American women and broader economic inclusion.

Ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention 190 should be mandatory across the region, as the treaty ensures that employees are not subjected to harassment and violations at their workstations. Furthermore, countries should require companies to undertake preventive measures such as anti-harassment training, which will educate individuals about the consequences of these actions, as well as penalties for violations as well as establishing a grievance system that are anonymous. These systems will help individuals that faced harassment or are facing it in the work environment could properly manage and overcome their problems. This will create a safe work environment not only to ensure the dignity of women but also to work effectively and productively, which can help women reach multiple leadership positions without discrimination, ensuring economic inclusion. This approach aims to reduce harassment and discrimination by educating individuals about this serious problem faced by Latin American women and facilitating preventive measures to combat this issue, ensuring labor equality and a safe workplace.

## Guiding Questions

1. What is the gender pay gap in my country?
2. How many women in my country are employed in informal occupations?
3. Is (ILO) Convention 100 equal pay and Convention 190 (against harassment) ratified in my country?
4. Does my nation mandate companies to disclose gender pay gap information?
5. What are the legal entitlements of women at work in my country?
6. Are there any programs that support women in leadership or business in my country?
7. Does my country offer any government childcare programs?
8. Are there national action plans on gender equality in my country?
9. How many of the women in my country have leadership roles?
10. How many are the average education level of women to men in my country?

## Appendix

- <https://lac.unwomen.org/en>
- <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/lang--en/index.htm>
- <https://www.equalpayinternationalcoalition.org/>
- <https://www.cepal.org/en/work-area/gender-affairs>
- <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2023>
- <https://publications.iadb.org/en/search?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1086>
- <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/violence-and-harassment/lang--en/index.htm>
- [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C100](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C100)
- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>
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