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**ACTIVITIES AND PROPOSALS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING WITHIN THE IACML
WORK PLAN 2018-2021¹**

INTRODUCTION

Achieving equality between men and women in the world of work is a priority issue for the Ministries of Labour of the region, as stated at the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) of the Organization of American States.

At the most recent IACML in 2017, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to "effectively reduce gender gaps in the world of work, eradicate gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence" and "continue to work to integrate a gender perspective into employment and labor policies, as well as into the operations and structures of our Ministries" (Arts. 23 and 24, Bridgetown Declaration), and included two concrete actions to that end in the Work Plan 2018-2020:

- 1) Update the study on "The institutionalization of a gender approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas" (published in 2009 as a result of the Strategic Guidelines), in order to assess advancements in the Ministries of Labor in this area, identify current challenges and provide a solid basis for planning new strategies to support their efforts in the most effective way.
- 2) Hold a Hemispheric Workshop on this topic in May 2020 in Argentina, developed with gender experts, and defined according to the specific needs of Ministries to mainstream gender in their operations, policies and programs. The Workshop would also cover the issue of gender violence in the world of work.

The Work Plan also indicated that these two activities would be funded by the Labour Program of ESDC/Canada through the agreement signed with the General Secretariat of the OAS to support the RIAL.

The Workshop was cancelled by decision of the IACML authorities considering the restrictions and challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In its place, the authorities asked the Technical Secretariat to develop a proposal for virtual training activities (online) to replace it, which was presented and discussed at the virtual meeting of the Working Groups in September 2020.

¹ This document provides a report on the actions taken based on the IACML Work Plan, the Gender Mainstreaming Training Proposal for Ministries of Labour presented by the Technical Secretariat and discussed at the IACML Working Group Meeting in September 2020, and the decisions taken by the IACML authorities.

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

1. Elaboration of the Study "Institutionalization of a Gender Approach in the Ministries of Labor of the Americas: Balance of a Decade".

The Ministries were consulted through a comprehensive Questionnaire, and the first findings of the study were shared during the Meeting of the Working Groups in Quito, in December 2019. The first draft of the Study was sent to all Ministries in February 2020, for their review, comments and feedback on recommendations and actions to be taken. A revised version of the study was distributed in November 2020 and presented at the Virtual Dialogue outlined below. The discussions and recommendations that emerged from that Virtual Dialogue will be included in the final version of the Study, which will be published in 2021.

The Study identifies important advancements within the Ministries, including a maturation process of their Gender Units. In the last decade, Gender Units have managed to legitimize and establish themselves institutionally, and their existence and permanence is not in dispute. Today they face challenges different from those they had ten years ago, linked more to achieving the institutionalization and mainstreaming of a gender approach, than to awareness-raising and internal training. Today, there is a greater urgency to develop actions that allow them to advance in their guiding role of gender policy in the Ministries of Labor, continue contributing to generate changes in the organizational culture, and address specific areas, such as, for example, mainstreaming the gender approach in labor inspection. The Study also identifies that the issue of gender violence is one of the most prominent emerging areas of attention for the Ministries and Gender Units; hence, the relevance of the online course proposed below.

2. Holding of the First Hemispheric Dialogue to advance the Institutionalization of Gender in Ministries of Labour.

This Dialogue was held on 20 November 2020, with the participation of Directors and heads of gender units or areas from 29 Ministries of Labour of the Americas. The delegations discussed the main challenges posed by the pandemic for women in the region, adjusted the recommendations of the study to respond to the current reality, and proposed future cooperation activities.

Some of the results of the dialogue were: 1) Review and verification, by all delegations, of the difficult situation of women in the labor market, whose levels of unemployment, inactivity and informality have increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The delegates coincided in their concern regarding the deepening of gender gaps throughout the region.; 2) affirmation of the interest and willingness to strengthen cooperation among gender units/areas, as a means to strengthen their initiatives and organization; 3) identification of topics of great interest for further cooperation and training; 4) presentation and exchange on various programs and initiatives that target women in general, or some groups in particular (domestic work, for instance); as well as on recent developments regarding gender mainstreaming in the Ministries.; and 5) expression of willingness to share some initiatives and strategies.

More Information on the Dialogue at: http://rialnet.org/en/dialgue_gender_units

3. Update of the Portfolio of Programs on Gender and the strengthening of direct exchanges through RIAL

As a follow-up to the Dialogue, the Secretariat sent Guidelines, as well as username and passwords, for the Ministries of Labor to incorporate and update their gender program in the online RIAL Portfolio of Programs. The aim is to strengthen this section of the Portfolio, which currently has more than 160 programs. The Ministries are initiating the update. In addition, as a result of the Dialogue, some collaborative actions are taking place between Ministries; for example, between Colombia and Paraguay on the gender equality seal. More proposals related to gender equality are expected to be received in the next RIAL Call for Bilateral Cooperation in early 2021.

4. Preparation of the Virtual Course on Gender-Based Violence at work

The preparation of this Virtual Course, which will be developed and hosted on the OAS Educational Portal of the Americas, began in late 2020. Its contents have been defined in conjunction with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and are divided into the following modules: 1) Conceptual framework of gender-based violence at work; 2) The role of the Ministries of Labor in the identification, prevention, attention and sanction of gender-based violence; 3) Good practices to prevent and address violence against women at work; 4) Conclusions, evaluation and survey.

The course will be launched during 2021, it will last 8 weeks (40 hours in total), and will be open first to officials of Gender Units and then to all officials of Ministries of Labour, as well as workers' and employers' organizations.

The steps to develop the virtual course are as follows:

- Course design and development: This stage includes pedagogical, academic and administrative management; curriculum design (content map, structure, learning activities); development of learning units; content curation and development; configuration of the course in Spanish on the platform; internal validation process.
- Training of virtual tutors: Through the course "Training in virtual tutoring" dictated by the Educational Portal of the Americas.
- Development of the English version: Translation of all content; loading and configuration of the course in English, internal validation process.
- Implementation and evaluation: Course will be offered to 100 people through the Virtual Classroom of the Educational Portal of the Americas. The two versions of the course (English and Spanish) will be implemented for 4 groups, each of 25 participants. The first cohort will be a pilot targeting only the Gender Units or gender experts; the next cohorts will be open to all interested officers in the Ministries of Labor. Each cohort of the course will be evaluated.
- Evaluation for future editions and improvements of the course.

The estimated cost of the virtual course is US\$39,500, including an in-kind contribution from the Educational Portal of the Americas valued at US\$7,500. The ESDC/Canada Labour Program, through the Agreement signed with the OAS for the RIAL will fund US\$32,000 for the Course and also covered the costs of the First Hemispheric Dialogue.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE IACML AUTHORITIES

The Technical Secretariat, based on the First Hemispheric Dialogue and the recommendations of the Study, proposes the following actions for 2021:

1) Conduct three additional virtual dialogues among Gender Units.

These dialogues will deepen the analysis and exchange of experiences on priority issues to be defined by the gender areas or units themselves. Between December 2020 and January 2021, the Secretariat is consulting Ministries on the following possible topics:

- Domestic work and ratification of ILO Convention 189.
- Care systems / shared responsibility
- Wage gap.
- Formalization strategies, social security coverage for unpaid work.
- Violence and harassment in the workplace.
- Gender dimension of telework and work from home
- Increased vulnerabilities and discrimination in the labor market due to COVID-19 faced by certain women, including afro-descendant women, indigenous women and women with disabilities, as well as women in rural areas.

It is proposed to hold these dialogues in April, August and November. Each additional dialogue will require resources of USD \$2,200.

2) Work towards the constitution of a network of gender focal points in the Ministries of Labour.

The first virtual dialogue endorsed the idea of setting up a network of gender focal points as a specialized space for dialogue and exchange within the RIAL. To this end, the Technical Secretariat makes available the "Virtual Forums" tool of the www.rialnet.org website as the main communication channel of this network, which will allow participants to initiate discussions on specific topics, share information, news and/or successful experiences, and for the Technical Secretariat to make announcements. The implementation of this network and tool would require the support of a facilitator for a few months to initiate the process, for which approximately US\$5,000 would be needed.

3) Elaboration of Manual or "A-B-C" for Gender Units in Ministries of Labour

Another of the main ideas that emerged from the first virtual dialogue was the elaboration of a "Gender Unit Manual or A-B-C", which should specify the objectives and functions that a gender unit/area

within the Ministries of Labor should have. The elaboration of this document in English and Spanish will require additional resources of USD \$6,000.

** To be considered after the XXI IACML: Prepare a proposal for a Framework Protocol for the Ministries of Labor in the prevention, identification, attention and sanction of gender-based violence at work. This would be a subsequent step to the Virtual Course and will require additional resources estimated in US\$7,000.