GENDER GAPS IN BOLIVIA AN OVERVIEW
GENDER GAPS
IN BOLIVIA
AN OVERVIEW
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Closing the existing gender gaps will be required to boost shared prosperity and maximize poverty reduction efforts in Bolivia over the coming years. Gender inequities are not only unfair from an ethical and social perspective, but also economically inefficient. Greater gender equality can raise overall productivity, improve development outcomes, especially of the next generation, and lead to more representative decision making.\(^1\)

According to a study by Teignier and Cuberes (2016), only the long-term average per capita income loss stemming from excluding women from labor markets amounted to 12.53 percent in Bolivia in 2009. Access to economic opportunities by women is particularly important in the context of a rapidly unfolding demographic transition characterized by the end of the demographic dividend and population ageing in the country.

This review of gender issues aims to uncover the main gender gaps in the country, and to identify potential policy recommendations that could help closing them in the coming years. The note is an input to the development of a Gender Action Plan for the Andean Countries under the Gender Analysis Work Program (P164267). As such the note lays out a descriptive overview of gender gaps in endowments, economic

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1 World Bank 2012
opportunities and agency – the explanation of the observed situation is outside the scope of this note.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The note applies the analytical framework devised by the WDR 2012 on Gender Equality and Development. Chapter 1 covers the legal and institutional framework and the issue of the agency of women – e.g. political representation and violence against women, time use, and attitudes towards women; Chapter 2 provides an overview the situation with regards to the main endowments of health and education; and Chapter 3 deals with the existing gender gaps in economic opportunity – labor force participation and unemployment, the quality of employment, earnings, entrepreneurship and access to finance. The main sources of data used for the analysis are outlined below.

Sources of data for the analysis

- The World Development Indicators World Bank database has been used for the sections on health and education, entrepreneurship and access to finance.
- The SEDLAC database has been used for the education and labor markets section.
- The ECLAC database has been used for femicide rates and political representation.
- Household survey data has been used in the sections on education and labor markets.
- A dedicated survey - EPCVcM 2016- has been used for the section on gender-based violence.
- World Values Survey data (last wave) have been used in the section on gender attitudes.
- Estimations from the UN have been used in the section on contraception use.
- The 2014 Perception Survey data is used across different sections.

This review is the result of the first stage in the assessment process. The note mainly reflects an initial descriptive exercise, and will be revised after the completion of stakeholder consultations in the countries; the results of such consultations will not only help identify additional literature and research on specific issues, but also help to prioritize the key gender gaps to be addressed based on the way discus-

2 World Bank-supported Perception Survey of Gender Discrimination and Exclusion that was recently conducted in Bolivia to shed light on women’s capacity to take advantage of existing services and economic opportunities.
sions on the issue are currently taking place in the country.

1.3 OVERVIEW FINDINGS

Bolivia has made some important advances towards the promotion of gender equality in recent years (see Figure 3). The country, for instance, has signed relevant international instruments in this area, and passed legislation to turn those commitments into domestic laws. The gender gaps with regards to education have substantially diminished over time, while the political representation of women – including indigenous women – has increased and is above the LAC average in most cases, especially since the introduction of parity (50 percent quota) in all candidate lists.

**Figure 1: Key take-aways and priorities identified**

**KEY TAKE-AWAYS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED**

- Women from indigenous peoples groups tend to have much poorer educational outcomes.
- Maternal mortality rates are the second highest in the region, in connection with inadequate access to maternal services especially among rural indigenous populations. 68 percent of maternal deaths affect indigenous women.
- Teenage pregnancy rates are high. Over 1 in 5 girls is married by the age of 18.
- Women are overrepresented among the ni-ni population and in informal jobs.
- Femicide rates are high for regional standards.
- Violence against women is persistent: 1 in 2 women report they have suffered physical violence from a partner. The existing support systems appear to be insufficient and indigenous women are even less likely to reach out to institutional help. Political violence targeting women is widespread.
- Women spend four times more time in domestic tasks.
- Patriarchal social norms are prevailing.
However, some relevant gender equality challenges persist (see Figures 1 and 3). Violence against women continues to be a major social problem, while the country lags particularly behind in some important aspects of women’s health – such as sexual and reproductive rights, maternal mortality, or access to maternal services, which remains especially limited in rural areas and among indigenous populations. The inclusion of women in labor markets has been slow, with women being over-represented in unemployment, informal work and among ni-nis. Gender disparities in labor markets are reflected in the types of jobs that women have and in earning disparities rather than in participation. Political violence targeting women is also widespread.

In a country where over half of the population is of indigenous origin, gender-based disparities are largely intersected by ethnicity. The two main ethnic groups are Aymara and Quechua, which have their own distinctive cultures and values, including those related to the role of women vis-à-vis men. Although gender disaggregated data that allows differentiating by ethnic origin is not always available, there is evidence that indigenous women face a compounded disadvantage in Bolivia; as an example, the 2014 Perception Survey finds that indigenous women feel more exposed to discrimination and indicates the importance of inter-sectionalility between gender and ethnicity.

It is for instance mostly indigenous women that do not have effective access to maternal health services in Bolivia, and also the most affected by the high maternal mortality ratios registered in the country. Given these important challenges Bolivia ranks low in some international measures of gender equality. More specifically, Bolivia’s UNDP gender inequality index value is above the average in LAC (see Figure 2), which indicates a comparatively higher level of gender inequality in most dimensions considered, including maternal health, educational attainment, teenage fertility, labor force participation and political representation. The country ranks 98 out of 188 countries included worldwide in this index, close to other regional peers such as Brazil, Panama or Venezuela but far from the best performers including Uruguay, Cuba, Costa Rica and Chile. Bolivia’s ranking is the poorest only after Venezuela’s among Andean (LC6) countries.

5 World Bank 2015
6 The UNDP methodology considers maternal mortality ratios – one of the outcomes where Bolivia performs worst – as the main indicator of gender gaps with regards to health, while the GGGI focuses on healthy life expectancy gaps and sex ratio at birth. While the UN Gender inequality index focuses on maternal mortality ratios, adolescent birth rate, share of women in parliaments, population with at least some secondary education, and labor force participation rates, the GGGI uses different indicators, including the ratio of healthy expectancy, sex ratio at birth, ratios of enrolment at all educational levels, and more detailed indicators within each category, for instance relative to income gaps or presence in different occupations in the area of labor markets, or share of women ministers in that of political representation.
Some key takeaways from Consultations held in March 2018

After completion of a first draft of the gender notes for the Andean countries, consultations were held in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru with local stakeholders (CSO, academia, development partners) to gather insights, data and information on the key gender gaps and validate the information provided in the notes.

The following priorities emerged during those consultations:

- Gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, and the low quality economic opportunities were highlighted as priority areas.

- The importance of persistent and traditional social norms that identify the role of women in the home as caregivers and not as actively pursuing work and income was referred to strongly and multiple times as one of the drivers behind some of the most pervasive gender inequalities observed.
• More attention is needed to diminish inequalities between rural and urban women: In fact, national or regional average data may not speak to the many different realities of different women (intersectionality).

**Knowledge gaps and areas to focus more:**

• The impact of climate change and resulting migration on gender relations was raised in all three countries as one area where more evidence and knowledge is needed.

• Better use of data: Even if gender disaggregated data may be available in countries, statistical offices may not have the capacity to process and analyze it sufficiently. Valuable information hence remains underexplored.

• The importance of better data on gender-based violence, including the support in setting up a comprehensive information system between different service providers was also mentioned.

• Promoting women’s economic opportunities may have positive preventive effect on gender-based violence – which as mentioned is among the key gender priorities in all the three countries visited.

• The importance of gender-sensitive infrastructure was also raised.
### Figure 3: Main developments and persistent gender gaps in Bolivia

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<th><strong>ECONOMIC OPPRTUNITIES</strong></th>
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<td><strong>NEW AND PERSISTING CHALLENGES</strong></td>
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<td>• Gender gaps in enrolment and completion of primary and lower secondary have disappeared. Only attainment at the post-secondary level appears to be higher for men than women.</td>
<td>• Although the FLFP rate is among the highest in the region, and the gender gap among the smallest, large divides exist between indigenous-rural and urban-non-indigenous populations.</td>
<td>• Significant progress has been made on the legal front.</td>
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<td>• Female labor force participation is among the highest in the region.</td>
<td>• Gender gaps in unemployment have been growing.</td>
<td>• Political representation of women is high in regional terms (50% quota in candidates lists and zipper system).</td>
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<td>• Wage gaps are small by regional standards.</td>
<td>• Women are overrepresented among the ni-ni population and in informal jobs (69 percent versus 60 percent).</td>
<td>• Representation of women at the local level has improved.</td>
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**NEW AND PERSISTING CHALLENGES**

- Women from indigenous peoples groups tend to have much poorer educational outcomes compared to indigenous men and non-indigenous women.
- A major remaining challenge is the high prevalence of maternal mortality rates - the second highest in the region - in connection with inadequate access to maternal services especially among rural indigenous populations.
- 68 percent of maternal deaths affect indigenous women.
- The prevalence of contraceptive use is low for regional standards.
- Teenage pregnancy rates are high in the country if compared to regional levels.
- Although the FLFP rate is among the highest in the region, and the gender gap among the smallest, large divides exist between indigenous-rural and urban-non-indigenous populations.
- Gender gaps in unemployment have been growing.
- Women are overrepresented among the ni-ni population and in informal jobs (69 percent versus 60 percent).
- Women’s presence in firms is high for regional standards but they tend to concentrate in micro-enterprises or small businesses.
- Women’s access to financial products including credit is limited.
- Ethnicity is more important in determining the existing wage gaps for indigenous women.
- Some legal differences exist between women and men in the country (kinds of jobs that women can do are restricted; some exceptions to the legal age of marriage).
- Femicide rates seem high by regional standards.
- Violence against women is persistent and affects a large share of the female population (1 in 2 women report to have ever experienced physical violence from their partner) and is even higher among rural populations. Indigenous women are significantly more prone to violence from a partner.
- Concerns about violence against politically active women.
- GBV: Existing institutional and judiciary support systems appear to be insufficient and indigenous women are even less likely to reach out to institutional help.
- Women spend four times more in domestic tasks - but recent data lacking.
- More than 1 in 5 girls is married by the age of 18.
- Patriarchal social norms are prevailing.
CHAPTER 1: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND THE AGENCY OF WOMEN

1.1 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Substantial progress has been made in building an adequate legal and institutional framework for gender equality in the country. Bolivia is signatory to the main international instruments in this area and has put into place very relevant norms for the protection and promotion of gender equality (see Annex 1). Indeed, the country ranks 26 out of 108 countries worldwide in the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 (SIGI)\(^7\). This indicates a comparatively low level of institutional gender inequality, especially with regards to son (vis-à-vis daughter) bias, access to resources and restricted civil liberties.

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\(^7\) The OECD Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices). The index covers five dimensions of discriminatory social institutions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women’s lives: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties. The SIGI’s variables quantify discriminatory social institutions such as unequal inheritance rights, early marriage, violence against women, and unequal land and property rights.
The country ranks medium – indicating a higher degree of inequality – in the areas of discriminatory family law and restricted physical integrity. However, LAC on average shows good results in the SIGI, and Bolivia still lags behind Venezuela and Ecuador among Andean countries, although it also fares better than Peru (see Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Social Institutions and Gender Index value, LAC 2014**

![Graph showing the Social Institutions and Gender Index value for various countries in LAC 2014](chart.png)

Source: OECD
** 1 imparity, 0 parity

However, some legal differences appear to exist between women and men in the country. Based on the Women, Business and the Law 2016 report six gender differences exist in the country’s legislation. The key gap highlighted refers to the right of married women to work; the kinds of jobs that women can do are also restricted. In addition, there is no legislation on sexual harassment in public spaces and there are some exceptions to the legal age of marriage (18).³

**There are specific institutions and policies for the promotion of gender equality in Bolivia, although their capacity appears to be limited.** The Deputy Ministry of Equality, family status, women cannot do night, hazardous or arduous jobs, there is not legislation on sexual harassment in public spaces and there are exceptions to the legal age of marriage (18).

³ No quotas in corporate boards are mandated, married women cannot get a job the same way as men, the law does not mandate nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring or prohibit prospective employers to ask about

⁹ World Bank 2016
1.2 MANIFESTATIONS OF THE LACK OF AGENCY

1.2.1 Political representation

The Bolivian legislation mandates a quota of at least 50 percent of women in all candidate lists. In addition, there is a zipper system that requires political parties to alternate genders on candidate lists. Quotas generally strengthen the position of women in political parties, increase the number of capable, educated women with the necessary professional experience in the field of politics and management of states and have a symbolic function in terms of women’s political participation.

Indigenous Bolivian women’s lobbying to influence the content of the new constitution (2009) contributed to the adoption of quotas, while helping to strengthen their political participation.

The existence of these measures is likely to explain to a large degree the much higher share of women in parliament in the country compared to the regional average since 2012. Bolivia fares particularly well in this area, even compared to other countries where quotas also exist but are not respected by placing most women candidates at the end of the lists. In 2014, over 53 percent of legislators in

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10 Amnesty International 2015; CEDAW 2015
11 Amnesty International 2015
12 Centro de Promoción de la mujer Gregoria Apaza 2018
13 Centro de Promoción de la mujer Gregoria Apaza 2018b
14 World Bank 2016
15 Poskočilová 2015
16 World Bank 2015
Bolivia were female, much above the shares observed in countries such as Peru, Chile or Ecuador, for instance (see Figure 5, left-hand graph). As shown in Figure 6 Bolivia is the Andean (LC6) country where the share of women parliamentarians is highest.

**Women are also represented, although to a lower extent, as heads of Ministries.** The percentage of women appointed as ministers has increased from 2005-2009 to 2009-2014 and then decreased slightly in 2014, to below 30 percent (29.2) (see Figure 5, right-hand graph). Yet this is probably among the highest shares of women ministers found in the LAC region.17 Women are heads of the Ministries that are more traditionally associated with female activities or concerns – e.g., communication, culture, development, or health. As shown in Figure 6 Bolivia is the second Andean country in share of women ministers only after Chile.

**The representation of women at the local level has also improved in Bolivia over the last decades.** Although the share of women mayors is much lower in Bolivia than the regional average - almost half of it - the opposite trend can be observed with regards to female municipal councilor positions and women’s representation in top judiciary bodies. Only 8.2 percent of elected mayors in 2016 were women in Bolivia compared to 13.2 percent on average in LAC; at the same time, as many as 51.1 percent of elected councilors were women relative to only 28.8 percent in the region. The marked increase in the share of women local councilors in 2010 and the increase up to 2016 are likely to be re-

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lated to the introduction of the 50 percent quota – from a previous 30 percent (See Figure 7).

**Despite the positive progress observed, obstacles to women´s participation persist.** Over one in three women participating in the 2014 Perception Survey reported their family duties as the main reason preventing them from engaging in political activities. This obstacle, together with fear of rejection in the political environment, was more prevalent among indigenous women; also a larger share of this group fears their partner’s disapproval and political violence. Indeed, in Bolivia elected or
appointed female representatives still face discrimination and political violence, oftentimes in the form of intimidation to leave their position in local councils so the alternate male candidate can take it. 18

Bolivia has made important efforts to curtail political violence in recent years. Bolivia remains the only country that has passed a law specifically prohibiting and criminalizing violence against women in politics (Law 243 of May 2012). The Bolivian legislation was the result of tireless advocacy by the Association of Councilors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) and its allies, who documented thousands of incidents of political harassment around the country, particularly in rural areas. The law targets both harassment and physical and psychological violence, provides detailed descriptions of the acts that fall under its purview, and establishes specific administrative, penal, and constitutional sanctions.

1.2.2 Violence against women

Femicide 19 is a concerning phenomenon in all LAC countries. An escalating number of violent female homicides committed by men in the last two decades have compelled Latin American countries to adopt specific measures to curtail this phenomenon, especially after the Convention of Belém do Pará, such as the inclusion of “femicide” as a specific aggravated crime in countries’ legislation. Despite the difficulties in measuring and comparing the incidence of these types of crimes across countries, related to the lack of capacity, under-reporting, etc., the region appears to have one of the highest rates of femicide in the world.

Femicide is also an important social challenge in Bolivia. Notwithstanding the general lack of comparable and accurate information on the incidence of femicide, the phenomenon is being observed in most countries in the region including Bolivia. According to the existing official data, at 1.9 in 2016, the femicide rate in the country is very high for regional standards despite the introduction of the new law in 2013 typifying femicide as a specific crime (see Figure 8).20

Other forms of violence against women are also widespread in Bolivia. As many as 50.3 percent of women report to have ever experienced physical violence from their partners, 20.7 percent in the last 12 months; the share goes up to 69.3 and 39 percent respectively when considering psychological violence (see Figure 9). Around 61 percent of women have suffered some form of violence at work, and 64.7 percent at school or while in education. The consequences of violence are very negative and far-reaching. The 2014 Perception Survey found that 41 percent of women victims

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18 World Bank 2015
19 Femicide is generally understood to involve the intentional murder of women because of their sex, and most usually by their current or former partners.
20 ECLAC - however, comparability of this data remains questionable given the potential differences in capacity and efforts to register and monitor these murders as femicides.
of violence report higher levels of fear and dependency as a direct result of the violence they suffered.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Certain factors including the income level, the geographical location or the level of education appear to be associated with the incidence of violence.} The percentage of women who experienced violence by a spouse or partner both ever and in the last 12 months is higher among rural than urban populations (Figure 10, left-hand graph), and lower among women with higher education (see Figure 10, right-hand graph). Physical violence appears to be more common among women between

\textsuperscript{21} World Bank 2014
\textsuperscript{22} Survey dedicated to the issue of violence against women.
40 and 59 when looking at exposure ever in life. However, in the last 12 months, the share is higher for younger age groups, and tends to decrease with age. In addition, childhood exposure to violence is associated with suffering from intimate-partner violence later in life: 75.7 percent of women who were in this situation had suffered some form of violence, especially psychological and physical, when they were children. Indigenous women also appear to be more likely to become victims of violence; the 2014 Perception Survey found that over 60 percent of indigenous women reported this type of incidents compared to 44 percent among non-indigenous women.23

A majority of women victims do not search for institutional help, especially among indigenous peoples. The Perception Survey finds that most women (58 percent) do not turn to institutions in situations of violence; this share is even higher among indigenous women: Only 19 percent would search for institutional assistance compared to 22 percent among non-indigenous women. As many as 61 percent of these women did not seek any type of help compared to 55 percent of non-indigenous women.24

According to civil society and advocacy organizations in the country, the law on violence has not been adequately implemented and impunity is rampant. Since the law came into force only around 250 cases of femicide have been taken to court, with 47 criminals sentenced to the maximum 30 years of imprisonment.25

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23 World Bank 2015
24 World Bank 2015
ber of women living any situation of violence with their partners in the last 12 months who searched for institutional help, only 67.6 initiated judiciary procedures, and out of these, only 35 percent ended in sanction, whereas 56.4 did not. Furthermore, while 87,718 cases were registered by the Public Ministry between 2013 and 2016, for violating Law 348, only 36 percent resulted in a sentence. The latest CEDAW recommendations highlighted the lack of adequate access to justice for women as one of the key remaining gaps to be addressed in the country, and especially in rural and indigenous areas. The report also called attention upon the lack of adequate knowledge that many of these women have about their own rights.

There are economic costs of gender based violence. According to a study from GIZ in 2015, on average, a company in Bolivia loses productivity equivalent to 1.18 working days per each assault suffered by a woman or committed by a man. The cost of violence in Bolivian companies considering the productivity factor is the equivalent to 6.46 percent of Bolivia’s GDP. Interestingly, the aggressors are more expensive for the companies, representing more than half of these costs: 3.82 percent of the GDP.

1.2.3 Attitudes towards women

Patriarchal social norms regarding the role of women vis-à-vis men prevail in much of Bolivia. The prevalence of patriarchal social and gender norms is evidenced by the persistence of traditional views on the roles of women and men in the family and society at large; the Perceptions Survey 2014, for instance, indicates that one fifth of women strongly agree that men should be the main provider in the family, and over half that the man should earn more money. In addition, over 30 percent of women feel that it is easier for men to find a proper job, and 40 percent that it is more difficult for them to receive adequate pay.

As a clear and concerning reflection of the persistence of gender stereotypes in the country, a large share of women still justifies violence from their partners. As much as 33.8 percent of women in the whole country believe that a man can punish his spouse or partner when she does not obey him, does not take good care of the children, is unfaithful, goes out too much, talks with other men or is not respectful. This percentage increases to a significantly high 53.7 percent in rural areas (see Figure 11).

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26 Observatorio de Género de la Coordinadora de la Mujer 2018
27 CEDAW 2015
28 GIZ 2015
29 GIZ 2015
30 GIZ 2015
31 World Bank 2015
Figure 11: Share of women who agree that a man can punish his wife

If she talks with another man
If she is disrespectful
If she goes out too much
If wife is unfaithful
If wife does not take good care of children
If wife does not obey
Total

Source: EPCVcM 2016
Gender Gaps in Bolivia: an overview
2.1 HEALTH

2.1.1 Life expectancy, mortality and morbidity

As observed globally, life expectancy is higher for women than men and has been increasing steadily since 1996 for both groups in Bolivia. Women live on average around 5 years more than men in Bolivia – 71 years compared to only 66. This gap has slightly increased over time: In 1996, the difference amounted to less than 4 years. Both female and male life expectancy in Bolivia are however much lower than the average in LAC – 78 and 72 years in 2015, respectively.

Mortality rates are correspondingly higher among men than women. Mortality rates are higher in Bolivia for both men and women than the LAC average, although the gender gap is smaller. The main cause of death in Bolivia is cardiovascular and respiratory diseases; determinant risk factors such as smoking and alcohol consumption are more common among men than women (e.g., 48 percent of men smoked compared to 18 percent of women in 2011); on the other hand, obesity rates are much higher among women than men (25.9 compared to 9.6 percent in 2008).32

2.1.2 Fertility trends
The fertility rate in Bolivia is high compared to the LAC average (see Figure 12). The fertility rate has declined from almost 4.5 births per women in 1996 to around 3 in 2015, almost at pair with the average for same-income level countries (lower-middle income). The fertility rate in Bolivia is higher than those registered in other Andean countries such as Chile (1.8), Peru (2.5), Ecuador (2.5) and Venezuela (2.3). The LAC average in 2015 was however much lower – almost 2. The higher fertility rates indicate that Bolivia is comparatively at an earlier stage of the demographic transition marked by ageing that all countries in the region are undergoing.

2.1.3 Maternal mortality and access to health services
Maternal mortality rates are very high for regional standards. There has been a substantial decrease in maternal mortality since 1996 (see Figure 13, left-hand graph); yet, the maternal mortality rate in Bolivia, at 206 per 100,000 women in 2015, is the highest in the region only after Haiti (see Figure 13, right-hand graph) – and thus much higher than in other Andean countries including Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela. Maternal mortality presents a strong ethnic component: Most of the maternal deaths affect indigenous women – 68 percent according to the last DHS (ENDSA 2008). The incidence of maternal mortality also appears to be higher among women with fewer years of education – less than six – and when the birth takes place at home.

The markedly high levels of maternal mortality in Bolivia are likely to be associated with poor access to maternal health services, especially in rural areas and among indigenous women. Despite the increase in the share of births attended by skilled staff in the last decades, the percentage remains below the average for LAC (see Figure 14). Differ-

Figure 12: Fertility rate, total (births per woman)

![Graph showing fertility rate trends in Bolivia and LAC](source: WDI)

33 Poorly performing health services disproportionately affect women. Mothers and daughters often are responsible for caring for the elderly and children when they are sick. In the public system, the lack of an appointment system and frequent stock-outs lead to much loss of time, resulting in a disproportionate loss of productivity for women, as cited by the World Bank report.

34 Government of Bolivia 2011
ent sources indicate that important gaps in access to these and other prenatal services exist in rural areas and especially among indigenous women. \(^{35}\) Indeed, historically, maternal health indicators have been poorer among rural and indigenous populations in Bolivia. The 2013 HHS showed that non-indigenous women gave birth in health institutions to a larger extent than indigenous women. \(^{36}\)

**While most women have access to public facilities, many Bolivian women do not utilize the health services.** According to the National Survey of Discrimination and Social Exclusion elaborated by “la Coordinadora de

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35 Amnesty International 2015, CEDAW 2015
36 World Bank 2015
la Mujer”, that surveyed 2620 women between 15 and 75 years of age, most women had access to public facilities, such as hospitals. Yet 18 percent of the women did not utilize those health services. When the women experienced health conditions such as bleeding, only 18.4 percent of the women went to a health facility. The ethnic divide in access to maternal services is related to different factors. The use of private hospitals and private insurance is much lower among rural and indigenous women, for instance. Giving birth is expensive, and access to insurance uneven. Discrimination also appears to exist: According to the Perception Survey, 20 percent of indigenous women report having experienced discrimination when seeking care compared to 14 percent among non-indigenous.

2.1.4 Contraceptive use and teenage pregnancy

The prevalence of contraceptive use in Bolivia is low for regional standards, especially compared with other Andean (LC6) countries (Figure 15). Although much positive progress has been made over time, the use of contraceptives is still low in the country, especially in the case of modern methods. According to the latest DHS (ENDSA 2008) only 35 percent women in the relevant age groups used a modern contraceptive method - 40 percent in urban and 25 percent in rural areas. The UN estimations provided in the figure indicate that this share had increased to 40 percent in 2015 compared to almost 67 percent on average in LAC. Bolivia lags behind other regional peers such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile and Peru.

The adolescent fertility rate has decreased significantly since 1996, but still remains higher than the regional average (see Figure 16). In 2015 70.4 births were registered in Bolivia per each 1,000 girls between the ages of 15 and 19, compared to 63.7 percent on average in LAC. Teenage pregnancy is much higher in Bolivia than in other Andean countries such as Peru and Chile, although lower than in Ecuador and Venezuela. The proportion of adolescent mothers is consistently higher in rural than in urban areas across countries in LAC– up to twice the rate in the case of Bolivia. In Bolivia, the law sets the minimum age of sexual consent at 14 years old. Yet, it also provides that consensual relationships between adolescents over 12 years old will not be punished, if they have no more than three years of age difference and no violence nor intimidation was involved. Interestingly, teenage pregnancy is not more common among indigenous than non-indigenous populations.

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37 Observatorio de Género de la Coordinadora de la Mujer 2018
38 Observatorio de Género de la Coordinadora de la Mujer 2018
39 World Bank 2015
40 Government of Bolivia, 2011
41 UNICEF 2016
42 World Bank 2015
**Figure 15**: Contraceptive use prevalence estimations

Source: UN 2015

High rates of adolescent fertility in Bolivia is associated with low use of contraceptives. For example, on average, most adolescent mothers gave birth for the first time only 16 months after their first sexual encounter. According to the latest DHS (ENDSA 2008), 75 percent of adolescent mothers gave birth maximum two years after their first sexual encounter. In addition, a study conducted on pregnant adolescents in the city of El Alto showed that adolescents do not talk about the use of contraceptives with their partners because they are embarrassed or afraid that their partners will perceive them as promiscuous.

Teenage pregnancy can have negative consequences. Teenage pregnancy can operate as a mechanism for the inter-generational transmission of poverty and vulnerability, as it can have direct impacts on the education and

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43 This report presents a concise, descriptive analysis of levels and trends in key family planning indicators from Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2015 and the data set World Contraceptive Use 2015, representing 195 countries or areas. The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat provides regular updates of the estimates and projections of family planning indicators as part of its contribution to global monitoring of progress on internationally-agreed targets to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

44 The Bolivian government has taken some action to respond to these high incidences of adolescent fertility. In 2015, the Ministry of Justice, along with the Inter-Ministerial Committee of Public Policies, launched the Plurinational Plan for the Prevention of Pregnancies in Adolescents and Young People 2015-2020, with the aim of preventing pregnancies among women under 20 years of age (INESAD 2016).

45 INESAD 2016

46 Lipovsek, et al., 2002
employment opportunities available to women. A study from neighboring Ecuador also found that teenage pregnancy is often the result of the lack of alternative opportunities for young mothers and related aspirations and agency, together with prevailing social norms around the role of girls as future mothers and the normalization of this phenomenon in their close environment.

2.2 EDUCATION

2.2.1 Gender gaps in enrolment

No gender gaps exist in access to primary and secondary education in Bolivia, while at the tertiary level the existing gap is to the advantage of women. The progress made in granting equal access to education for both girls and boys in Bolivia has been significant over time. No relevant gender gaps can be highlighted with regards to enrolment at the primary and upper secondary levels, while at the tertiary level a small reverse gap exists (see Figure 16: Adolescent fertility rate).
17). It must be however noted that Bolivia has not yet reached 100 percent net enrolment levels at any level; enrolment rates are particularly low in the case of tertiary education: Only 36.7 and 34.6 percent of women and men respectively were enrolled in higher education in 2014.

2.2.2 Attainment/dropout and repetition

Gender gaps in attainment are only relevant at post-secondary levels of education in Bolivia. The gender gap in completion of primary education has been almost fully closed over time. Primary completion rates are however still much lower among both boys and girls compared to the regional averages. Gender gaps in completion of lower secondary education have also disappeared. In this case, however, the rates are higher among both boys and girls in Bolivia than on average in LAC. The gender gap in educational attainment at the post-secondary level, although diminished, still remains: 25.3 of men compared to 22.7 percent of women had post-secondary education in 2012.

2.2.3 Factors that explain differences in completion

Based on HHS data, the reasons for both boys and girls not to be in school are different. The main reasons not to be enrolled in education for boys in Bolivia in 2015 – other than having finished studies, being in vacation or in pre-university academies – were work and economic problems; for girls, dedication to household chores was much more important (See Figure 18). In addition, attainment in general
seems to be much lower in rural areas, while the observed gender gap tends to be larger.

The 2014 Perception Survey also highlights discrimination as a relevant factor. Domestic work, pregnancy, and work are all operating as obstacles for girls to attain higher levels of schooling; in addition, around 44 percent of female students who dropped out from school reported that limited financial resources forced them to do it. Another important factor appears to be discrimination, especially affecting indigenous women. According to the 2014 Perception Survey, an average of one in five female students aged 15 to 24 reported having felt being discriminated in academic environments in Bolivia, 25 percent of indigenous women compared to 19 among non-indigenous female students. 49

Women from indigenous peoples groups tend to have much poorer educational outcomes as compared to both non-indigenous women and indigenous men. 50 Econometric analysis using 2012 HHS data found that indigenous women face an additional disadvantage of 8.5 percentage points, which adds up to a difference of 27 percentage points with respect to non-indigenous men. Aymara women appear to be particularly disadvantaged: The gender gap with Aymara men in secondary completion rates is much larger than among Quechuas. These gaps however appear to have diminished over time and across generations.

49 World Bank 2015
50 World Bank 2015, World Bank 2015b
The inter-section of gender and ethnicity for educational outcomes in LAC

A recent study explored the impact of gender and ethnicity on educational outcomes in Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series-International (IPUMS-I) database. Using an estimation method analogous to difference-in-differences, the paper finds that gender-based differences in literacy, primary school completion, and secondary school completion are larger for minority ethnic groups compared to others, or ethnicity-based differences are larger for women compared to men. The findings suggest that the intersection of gender and ethnicity confers cumulative disadvantage for minority groups, especially in Latin American – as compared to African - countries. In particular for the Bolivian case, the study finds that a large portion of gender and ethnicity based gaps in literacy are borne by ethnic minority women. Ethnic minority women face an additional 7.3 percentage disadvantage because of the intersection of gender and ethnicity. In addition, ethnicity has the largest impact in sorting individuals into the “completed primary education” category.

The main factors explaining their persistency include early pregnancy and marriage, lack of separate toilets for girls in schools, distance to the centre and perceived related risks. \(^5^1\) There is further evidence that ethnicity-based differences are larger for women than for men (see over).

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51 World Bank 2015
52 Tas et al. 2014
Gender Gaps in Bolivia: An Overview
CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The gap in labor force participation between men and women in Bolivia has increased in recent years, although it remains small in regional comparison (See Figure 19). Women participate in the labor market at a much lower rate than men: In 2015, only 54.3 percent of women were working or actively looking for a job compared to 78.7 percent of men.

Figure 19: Labor force participation

Source: HHS
More importantly, the female labor force participation rate in Bolivia appears to have decreased in the last decade, while the gender gap has widened: 24.4 percentage points in 2015 compared to only 18 percentage points in 2006. However, the female labor force participation in Bolivia is among the highest in LAC, while the gap between men and women is also among the smallest, only after Peru and much ahead of other Andean countries such as Chile or Ecuador (see Figure 20). Indeed, the inclusion of women into paid activities has been the main driver of overall increases in labor force participation rates in recent years.53

Different factors appear to be associated with the gender gap in labor force participation. The difference in participation in the labor market between men and women is larger among those living with cohabitants and married due to the much higher labor force participation of men in these cases; the gap is lowest among those that never married, largely in connection with much lower male labor force participation. These differences seem to have kept constant for the last decade (see Figure 21, left-hand graph). The gender gap in labor force participation also tends to be higher when there are children, since male labor force participation increases, and especially when they are 0-3 and 3-6 years old. Women without children show higher rates than the other groups – by between 5.4 and 10.2 percentage points (see Figure 21, right-hand graph).

53 World Bank 2015b
Women also show higher labor force participation rates when living in female-headed households as compared to those headed by men.

Gender-based discrimination appears to be widespread in labor markets in Bolivia. Based on the 2014 Perception Survey almost one quarter of all women report having experienced an episode of discrimination when looking for employment or at work; this percentage is higher among indigenous women (27 compared to 23 percent among non-indigenous respondents). The aspirations of women may be affected by the perception of such discrimination. In addition, 31 percent of women believe that it is easier for a man to get a job than a woman, and 40 percent consider it more difficult for women to receive adequate pay.

### 3.2 UNEMPLOYMENT

The gender gap in unemployment rates has been growing since the 1990s. Unemployment rates have fluctuated for both men and women over the last two decades. However, they have always kept higher among the latter. The gender gap in 2015 amounted to 2.9 percentage points, up from 1.2 in 1997.

Women are also disproportionately represented among the *ni-nis*. Most of the population of young people who are neither working nor studying (ni-nis) is female. The share of

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54 World Bank 2015, World Bank 2015b

55 World Bank 2015
young women (15-24 years old) that was in this situation in 2015 was close to three times that of male *ni-nis*. The percentage of both women and men - but especially the former - affected by this phenomenon has been increasing since 2006 (see Figure 22).

### 3.3 QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT

*It is in the quality of employment that gender disparities become more evident in the Bolivian context.* As an example, one in three women was in conditions of vulnerable employment\(^{56}\) in 2015, which is more than twice the average rate for the LAC region. Women are also over-represented in trade and services, which tend to be more informal.\(^{58}\) Indeed, informality is more common among women than men: In 2015 69.8 percent of women were engaged in informal jobs compared to 60.7 percent of men (see Figure 23). In addition, women work on average 6.9 hours less than men per week, which may be an indication of their over-representation in part-time work or their more frequent engagement in precarious contracts (e.g., temporary). It must be noted that the willingness to change jobs among those employed is however higher among men than women: In 2015, 10.7 percent of men compared to 9.2 percent of women expressed a desire to change jobs or increase the amount of hours worked.

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\(^{56}\) Unpaid family workers and own-account workers.  
\(^{57}\) SEDLAC productive definition: An individual is considered an informal worker if (s)he belongs to any of the following categories: (i) unskilled self-employed, (ii) salaried worker in a small private firm, (iii) zero-income worker.  
\(^{58}\) World Bank 2015b
Employment of rural women

72 percent of employed rural women are involved in agricultural activities. However, in general, women have less access to land and when they have it, it is land of lower quality. According to the 2013 Agricultural Census, only 6 of 31 million hectares of Agricultural Production Units (UPA) were owned or used by women. Furthermore, approximately 800,000 women were employed in the agricultural sector in 2015. Yet women employed in the sector receive a 50 percent lower labor income than men.59

3.4 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ACCESS TO FINANCE

Female entrepreneurship faces particular constraints. Around 60 percent of female firm owners perceive child and family care responsibilities60 to be an obstacle to firm operation and growth.61 Female entrepreneurship concentrates among small-sized businesses: 84 percent of female-owned firms are microenterprises, with fewer than five employees, and 15 percent are small enterprises (5 to 19 employees).62

Access to financial products and thus credit seems to be limited for Bolivian women. As an example, and although the percentage of women with an account in a financial institution has increased between 2011 and 2014, it still remains low – and below the LAC average (See Figure 24). In 2014, only 38 percent of women had an account at a financial institution compared to 44 percent among men.

59 CIAG 2017
60 According to the study “The situation of women in Bolivia: National survey of discrimination and social exclusion” by the Coordinadora de la Mujer (2014), the care work demands the following hours from women: child care (1760 hours), the sick (184 hours), the elderly (400 hours), and people with disabilities (114 hours) (Observatorio de Género de la Coordinadora de la Mujer 2018)
61 World Bank 2015b, 2007 Micro-enterprise Survey
62 World Bank 2015
The impacts of child marriage

Child marriage has large impacts on a wide range of development outcomes for the girls who are married early, their children and families, and societies at large. Child brides are at greater risk of experiencing a range of poor health outcomes, having children at younger ages when they are not yet ready to do so, dropping out of school, earning less over their lifetimes and living in poverty compared to their peers who marry at later ages. Child brides may also be more likely to experience intimate partner violence, have restricted physical mobility, and limited decision-making ability. Most fundamentally, child brides may be disempowered in ways that deprive them of their basic rights to health, education and safety.65

3.5 TIME USE AND CHILD MARRIAGE

A majority of unpaid work is carried out by women in Bolivia even when at times they appear to have different preferences. Canelas and Salazar (2014) show that Bolivian women spend on average four times more time performing domestic tasks than men. Based on the results of a Perceptions Survey in 2014, 43 percent of Bolivian women on average would work and 26 percent would study if they had more time at their disposal.63

Child marriage is still common in Bolivia, especially in rural and indigenous areas of the country. According to the last survey data available (DHS 2008), 3 percent of girls are married before they turn 15 years old, and as many as 22 percent before they are 18 years old.64 The averages for LAC were 5 and 23 percent respectively in 2016. Despite the potentially negative effects of child marriage (see below), the legislation of the country has not totally prohibited them. The minimum age of marriage is 14 for girls and 16 for boys in Bolivia. A parent or a guardian must approve marriages between adolescents under 18. It must be noted that in LAC marriages at this age are often driven by the lack of other options and by social norms that place a strong value in early family formation.

3.6 EARNINGS

Although women have lower hourly wages than men in Bolivia, the difference is relatively small. In 2015, men’s hourly wages were 4 percent higher than those of women. This gap is small when compared to other LAC countries; for instance in Peru it amounted to 19 percent, around 11 percent in Venezuela and 17 percent in Chile (See Figure 25). Hour-

63 World Bank 2015
64 UNICEF
65 Wodon et al. 2017
ly wages have grown at a much lower rate over the last decade among women than men. However, the gap in monthly income is much higher – around 22 percent in 2015. The returns to secondary and college education appear to be higher for women than men; on the other hand, the salaries of men with primary education tend to be higher than those of women. Although much of the earning gap is related to occupational segregation, these results highlight an important market failure. Indigenous women tend to be found in lower paid jobs than non-indigenous women. Several studies confirm that ethnicity-related gaps are larger than those associated with gender, and that ethnicity is more important in determining the existing wage gaps for indigenous women. Social norms may partly explain the prevalence of wage gaps. Wage gaps between men and women are highest in state-owned enterprises and in cities.

66 World Bank 2015
67 SEDLAC, Mincer equations; World Bank 2015b
68 World Bank 2015
69 In a study on gender and ethnic disparities in labor earnings in Latin America and the Caribbean, Hugo Nopo finds that women’s lower access to well-paid jobs or combinations of observable characteristics contribute to the earnings gap in Bolivia. Being indigenous and women are unfavorable conditions when entering the labor market and securing earnings. For example, while the original gender earnings gap in 2007 was -5.5 percent (in the favor of women), the ethnic earnings gap was originally 30.8 percent and 35.6 percent after controlling for gender and age in 2005.
70 Observatorio de Género de la Coordinadora de la Mujer 2018
Gender Gaps in Bolivia: an overview
CONCLUSIONS

Main messages:

• Bolivia has registered good progress in recent years in setting up an adequate legal and institutional framework for gender equality; however, enforcement and capacity challenges remain. The country has also fared particularly well with regards to female representation in political institutions, although women still face particular barriers such as political violence.

• The femicide rate and the incidence of violence against women are concerning in Bolivia; moreover, access to institutional support for women victims is deficient, especially among rural and indigenous women. This may be related to prevalent social norms: A large share of women appear to justify violence in the country.

• Educational gaps have disappeared over time, although they still affect indigenous populations.

• Maternal mortality rates especially affecting indigenous women are strikingly high, in connection with inadequate access to maternal health services among these populations. Teenage pregnancy rates are also high for regional standards.

• Female labor force participation rates are comparatively high; however, female disadvantages in labor markets manifest in the form of a disproportionate representation in unemployment, informality, and generally vulnerable jobs. In addition, a much larger share of women than men are ni-nis.

• Finally, gender gaps in hourly wages deserve attention; indigenous women, once again, face a double disadvantage in this regard.
Knowledge gaps:

- There is a need to properly understand the existing capacity and enforcement challenges that prevent the application of the existing laws and the implantation of gender policies.
- It would also be important to further explore the real incidence of femicide and other forms of violence in the country, and the barriers that women victims face to reach support, especially in rural areas and among indigenous populations.
- There is a need to investigate the factors explaining gaps in access to educational and health services by indigenous populations.
- It is also relevant to study the specific dynamics leading to high rates of teenage pregnancy in the country.
- It would be useful to obtain detailed information on women’s entrepreneurship and their presence in firms in Bolivia, as well as on women’s obstacles in this area.
- The gap in earnings remains unclear – different sources point to diverse results. It would also be important to clarify what is driving these differences.
- Finally, operational teams point to the need for more sectoral-specific gender analysis, concretely related to water and sanitation.
References


Centro de Promoción de la mujer Gregoria Apaza (2018b). Ranking de Gobernaciones Inversión en Igualdad y Equidad de Género ¿Cuánto se invirtió en género el 2016?


Annex 1: The legal and institutional framework for gender equality in Bolivia

LEGAL FRAMEWORK: INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Different international treaties - ratified and incorporated to the national legislation - operate as the framework for the integration of gender equality in government policies in Bolivia. The most relevant include:

1. The **International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights**, ratified in 1992, which established the commitment of the State to ensure that women and men enjoy equal political and civil rights.

2. The **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) and its Protocol were passed in 1990, and mandate that member states adopt the necessary measures to prevent, investigate and punish discrimination against women.

3. The Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence against Women - **Convención Belém Do Pará**71 - was approved in 1994, and recognizes that gender

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71 The Belém do Pará Convention entered into force on March 5, 1995 and was the world’s first binding international treaty to recognize that violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights. As a legally binding treaty, the Belém
based violence constitutes a serious violation of human rights that the States need to prevent, punish and eradicate.

4. The **statute of Rome for the International Court** approved in 2002 recognizes any sexual aggression and trafficking as crimes against humanity.

5. The **UN Convention against Organized Crime** approved in 2001 establishes the obligation of States to assist and protect the victims of trafficking.

6. **ILO Conventions** – Convention 100 on equality of remuneration, 111 on discrimination, 122 on employment policy and 156 on workers with family responsibilities.

Other international commitments are:


8. The **Millennium Development Goals** approved in 2000 and the **Sustainable Development Goals** approved in 2015.


10. **Inter-American program on the promotion of the human rights of women and gender equality and equity** adopted in 2000 (OEA).


13. The **Brasilia Consensus** adopted in 2010.

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL DIMENSION**

The main norms that guarantee the right to equality between men and women include:

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72 The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, 1995), flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. It also laid out concrete ways for countries to bring about change.

73 Regional Consensus adopted after the Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City in June 2004. The governments of the region renewed their commitment to continue adopting measures aimed at the advancement of women’s rights, incorporating a gender perspective into public policies, adopting proactive policies for job creation, recognizing the economic value of domestic work, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights, curtailing violence against women, or addressing HIV/AIDS, among others.

74 The Consensus followed the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Quito, Ecuador, in August 2007. The Consensus focused on two strategic issues: i) political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels, and ii) the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work. Representative governments established specific measures to overcome gender discrimination in political participation, employment, education, health and the economy.

75 Government leaders agreed to facilitate women’s access to new technologies, promote a democratic and non-discriminatory media, improve health and sexual and reproductive rights of women, and promote international and regional cooperation for gender equity.
• The Constitution (2009) recognizes the right to equality and non-discrimination based on sex.
• Ley 26, Ley del régimen electoral 2010 mandates a 50 percent quota in all candidates lists and in the directive bodies of parties.
• Decreto supremo N° 2480 establishes the universal prenatal subsidy for pregnant mothers that are not registered with any social insurance.
• Decreto Supremo de 24 de mayo de 1939, which approves the General Law for Work, turned into law in 1942, and updated in 1992, establishes maternal benefits and leave for mothers.
• Ley Nacional N° 065, Pension Law, establishes special provisions to protect women with children.
• Ley 348 Integral para garantizar a las mujeres una vida libre de violencia 2013 – Law that guarantees women a life free of violence, aims to establish mechanisms, measures and policies to prevent violence and assist and protect women in this situation, and the prosecution and sanction of aggressors. It incorporates femicide to the Criminal Code (art 7).
• Ley N° 243 de 28 de mayo de 2012, Ley contra el acoso y violencia política hacia las mujeres – law against the harassment and political violence towards women prevents acts and behaviors of harassment and violence that affect women directly or indirectly in the development of their public or political functions.
• Ley 1.678, 1997 modifies the Criminal Code to include sexual violence.
• Ley 2494 de 4 de agosto de 2003 modifies the Criminal Code to allow abortion in cases of health risk to the mother, and also when the pregnancy is the result of rape.
• Ley 263, ley integral contra la trata y tráfico de personas 2012 aims to fight the trafficking of women.

POLICIES:
The National Plan for Equality of Opportunity “Women building the New Bolivia, to live well” 2008 is the main strategic guidance in this area. The Plan is the outcome of a long process of consultations with women’s associations across the country, and identifies the main challenges with regards to gender equality, also outlining a long-term strategy to overcome them. The Plan includes different pillars: (1) Economic, productive and labor markets, (2) Education, (3) Health, (4) Violence and (5) Citizenship and political participation. The specific goals under each of these are detailed in Figure 26. The latest CEDAW recommendations highlight the lack of resources allocated to the implementation of the Plan as a key challenge moving forward.\footnote{CEDAW 2015}
Figure 26: Main pillars and goals - Plan for Equality of Opportunity “Women building the New Bolivia, to live well” 2008

First: Economic, productive and labor markets
Promote the employment rights of women and their access to a decent job
Promote women’s access to natural resources, productive resources and public services
Promote women’s access to assets, training and technology
Re-distribute family care tasks between men and women and between the State and the families

Second: Education
Eradicate illiteracy among women.
Increase access for girls, female teenagers and youth to the formal and alternative education system.
Incorporate a gender perspective into the educational revolution.
Create opportunities for the professionalization and training of women in all areas.

Third: Health
Widen the coverage of health services for women.
Promote the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

Fourth: Violence
Contribute to the eradication of violence against women.

Fifth: Citizenship and political participation
Promote effective mechanisms to protect the citizenship rights of women.
Promote and protect the political participation of women in different decision spheres.
Build and strengthen the institutions to promote gender equality.