Despite high levels of economic growth – with GDP increasing by between 4 and 8 per cent a year over the last decade in all countries but Venezuela – and increased attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment, gender-based inequalities are still very high in Andean countries.

The trend for rural-urban migration by men – coupled with the internal displacement of people in Columbia – has increased the number of woman-headed households in rural areas over the last ten years, leaving women with responsibility for both productive and household activities.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru have the highest concentrations of indigenous peoples in the American continent, particularly in rural areas: 77 per cent of the Bolivian rural population is indigenous, and 14 per cent of Ecuador’s. Rural indigenous women are often the most disadvantaged in terms of poverty, malnutrition and access to services such as health care and education. In Peru, 8 per cent of the total population is illiterate, but rates among women are 12 per cent overall and 30 per cent in rural areas. Equivalent figures for the Plurinational State of Bolivia are 13 per cent for the whole population, 12 per cent for women and 26 per cent for rural women.

People of African descent account for 10–25 per cent of the population in Colombia and 5–10 percent in Ecuador and Peru, and are also over-represented among the poor.

Gender-based violence is a major issue in the Andean region; the number of women killed or beaten by their partners or ex-partners has remained constant over the years. For instance, more than 60 per cent of all women and 68 per cent of indigenous women in Ecuador suffered some kind of gender-based violence, along with 37 per cent of women in Colombia and 80 per cent of Bolivian women. In Peru, of the 59 per cent of women suffering gender-based violence, the majority (82 per cent) were living in rural areas.
Economic empowerment

Despite the sustained rates of economic growth and poverty reduction that Andean countries have achieved in recent years, the proportion of women among the poor has increased. Women participate less in the formal economy – in Ecuador only 9 per cent of rural women received a wage compared with 30 per cent of rural men. Women’s income is about half that of men, and their salaries are lower, by up to 25 per cent in Peru. The proportions of women without income or control over the income generated by joint family production activities are 33 per cent in Ecuador (versus 14 per cent of men), 37 per cent in Peru (16 per cent of men), 47 per cent in Colombia (12 per cent of men) and 52 per cent in the Plurinational State of Bolivia (12 per cent of men); these proportions are higher among rural than urban women.

There is a wide gender gap in formal employment. Women entering the job market tend to work in low-paid, insecure jobs such as the export flower industry. Colombia and Ecuador are the second and third largest flower exporters in the world; in Colombia, women make up about 65 per cent of this workforce. Most women working in the flower industry earn less than the minimum wage and work in conditions that are hazardous to their health, with no social protection.

Indigenous women are often subject to customary laws and traditional beliefs that favour men in land inheritance and distribution, overriding national legislation that instead prioritizes women’s access to land and joint titling. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, only 20 per cent of the land titles issued between 1999 and 2004 were allocated jointly to men and women, and only 17 per cent to women alone. In provinces with the highest concentrations of indigenous peoples, only 4–6 per cent of land titles were in women’s names.

Voice and participation

New constitutions in Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia ensure political participation for women, including indigenous women, which has been strengthened by the use of quotas. In 2014, women held 41 per cent of the parliamentary seats in Ecuador, 25 per cent in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and 22 per cent in Peru, but only 17 per cent in Venezuela and 12 per cent in Colombia.

Andean countries have a strong tradition of civil society organizations, particularly in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Ecuador, whose constitutions recognize the role of civil society organizations in political life. Several of these organizations represent indigenous peoples including indigenous women. Organizations for women include Coordination of Andean Working Women (La coordinadora de mujeres trabajadoras andinas – COMUANDE), which focuses on women’s labour rights and political participation, the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru (Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazonicas del Peru – ONAMIAP), Coordination of Indigenous Andean Women’s Organizations (Coordinación de Mujeres Indígenas de la Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas – CAOI) and the Gender Commission of the Andean Union (Comisión de Género de la Coordinadora de Centrales Sindicales Andinas – CCSA).

However, women’s participation in local political life seems to be more challenging. In 2011, women accounted for only 4 per cent of elected mayors in Peru, 6 per cent in Ecuador, 9 per cent in Colombia and 18 per cent in Venezuela; and for 15 per cent of councillors at the local level in Colombia, 27 per cent in Peru and 29 per cent in Ecuador. One major constraint to rural and indigenous women’s access to public life and public services is their lack of identification documents and registration.

Women have little opportunity to practise family planning because of their limited access to contraceptives and family planning services, limited knowledge, and lack of voice within their households. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 20 per cent of women who are married or in a stable relationship do not want to have more children but are not using any method of family planning; equivalent figures in Colombia and Peru are about 7–8 per cent. Teenage pregnancy is also an issue in the region, and appears to be correlated to poverty and lack of education – common characteristics of women in rural areas. In Colombia and Ecuador, 17–20 per cent of pregnant women are aged between 15 and 19 years.
Workloads

Women work an average of eight hours a week more than men, but their share in unpaid activities is much higher. In Ecuador, women over 18 years of age spend an average of 30 hours a week on domestic, unpaid activities; women in Peru spend 35 hours. In contrast, men spend only six and 15 hours respectively. Girls under 18 years of age also work more hours than boys, indicating that gender bias in the allocation of household tasks starts at a young age. Some countries are introducing legislation to ensure recognition of women’s contribution to national economic and social development. In recent years, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador have included the care economy in their national accounting systems, using time surveys to capture paid and unpaid work, and personal activities.

IFAD STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Women are economically empowered in Venezuela

The Support Project for Small Producers in the Semi-Arid Zones of Falcom and Lara States (PROSALFA II) in Venezuela aimed to give women and men equal opportunities to benefit from project activities. A study found that not all household members were able to benefit equally from training and workshop opportunities. The project therefore implemented measures to increase women’s economic empowerment. Under an agreement, the Women’s Development Bank provided specific credit lines for women only, which were coupled with training on basic financial skills and entrepreneurship. Sessions on reproductive and general health were organized, and childcare facilities were set up to enable women to participate in all project initiatives.

People of African descent establish rural enterprises in Latin America

The Regional Programme in Support of Rural Populations of African Descent in Latin America (ACUA) was implemented in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru – among other countries – to create and strengthen enterprises with a strong cultural focus on Afro-descendent communities. The aim was to increase the recognition and appreciation of Afro-descendent traditional knowledge and culture by cofinancing rural enterprises. Most of the enterprises supported were led by women, particularly single mothers, internally displaced women in Colombia and widows. As a result of the economic growth of their businesses, not only did the women’s sales and incomes increase, but also their self-esteem.

Women in Andean countries enhance their access to the formal economy

The grant-funded programme Enhancing the Gender-Sensitive Impact of Remittances for Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean – implemented in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru – supported rural women in using the remittances they received from migrant family members to develop business initiatives. Project proposals were selected by community representatives through a participatory methodology called CLARO (described in the following section on Lessons learned). The programme also promoted women’s inclusion in the formal financial system by encouraging them to open personal savings accounts and providing innovative financial education using ICTs. Women in the three countries participated, and about half of those who opened bank accounts managed to save regularly. The women were also assisted in registering their businesses legally and obtaining identity cards and birth certificates. Access to the formal economy through registration had a strong impact on the women’s social status and access to government services, enabling them to benefit from socio-economic rights.
Women’s groups participate in provincial and district development councils in Peru

The Market Strengthening and Livelihood Diversification in the Southern Highlands Project (Sierra Sur) worked with poor Quechua and Aymara families in the southern highlands of Peru to strengthen their organizations, focusing on women farmers and rural women without access to financial services. The project addressed women’s limited voice in grass-roots organizations by involving women’s groups in provincial and district development councils and mesas de concertación (round tables) at the local level. Women increased their participation thanks to their enhanced leadership capacities, increased knowledge and greater confidence about speaking in public. Strengthened community-based organizations provided 9,141 women with access to financial services by opening savings accounts, 3,382 women obtained microcredit, and 6,526 acquired life and accident insurance.24

Mobile childcare nurseries enable Bolivian women to participate in project activities

The Enhancement of the Peasant Camelid Economy Support Project (Proyecto Vale) in the Plurinational State of Bolivia launched the “mobile childcare nurseries” initiative to facilitate women’s access to project activities and opportunities for improving the management of their cameld livestock. The project recognized that women would not be able to participate in economic development opportunities unless their workloads were reduced, leaving them with enough time to attend training and other activities to strengthen their skills and capacities. The mobile nurseries offered to women attending workshops were staffed by volunteers from local nursery schools in return for a certificate of work from the project.25
LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

IFAD’s Latin America and Caribbean Division has developed projects that address women’s empowerment and gender equality in different ways across the Andean region. Lessons learned and good practices generated in the Andean countries include the following:

- The CLARO competition methodology has been widely used by IFAD projects in Andean countries. Selected community members, including women, assess business proposals and decide which projects to finance. The committees then allocate funds and track the performance of the projects over time. This approach has stimulated women’s entrepreneurial skills, motivating them to improve their business proposals and learn from each other.

- The PROCASUR organization – an IFAD grant beneficiary – has developed the learning routes methodology, which creates innovative knowledge-sharing opportunities using beneficiaries as trainers. The learning routes are followed by development practitioners, rural organizations, community members and government officials, and support peer learning and the exchange of experiences among countries. Dedicated routes for learning about gender have been organized to enhance capacities and knowledge for gender mainstreaming in IFAD projects, while empowering the women beneficiaries who present and share their successful experiences.

- Women’s economic empowerment has multiple benefits. Women who develop their own enterprises gain many benefits beyond the economic; they receive more respect in their communities, are recognized for their initiative, and develop decision-making capacity and credibility within their households. Registering births and obtaining the identification documents required for access to financial services also facilitate women’s access to other social and economic services.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

The outstanding issues and challenges facing IFAD-supported projects in the Andean region, include the following:

- Gender-based violence. The high levels of gender-based violence in this region – particularly within households – have serious implications for food security and overall rural development. By affecting the productive population (those aged 15–45 years), gender-based violence has a devastating impact on families’ economies and food security. It also prevents women from gaining self-esteem and assuming decision-making positions in communities and rural organizations.

- Women’s traditional roles. Most rural women in the region, including indigenous women, are relegated to the domestic sphere and have limited decision-making power in their communities and families. They are engaged in productive activities and are responsible for most household tasks. When involved in productive activities with other family members, women often have little or no access to the income generated. Customary laws often hinder the enforcement of legislation that favours women, such as land redistribution acts or inheritance rights.

- Inequitable participation in rural organizations. Despite the great advancement in women’s political participation at the national level, challenges still remain at the local level, especially in rural areas, where women have to contend with strong traditional norms that can hamper their capacity to exercise influence in rural and producers’ organizations.
THE STATISTICS AND WHAT THEY SHOW

Data from 2012 indicate that several countries in the region have fairly large economies, but information on other factors is needed to provide a fuller picture of human development, gender equality and overall well-being. In all the Andean countries except the Plurinational State of Bolivia, women and men can expect to live to at least 70 years of age, and women can expect to live longer than men in every country. Literacy rates for both women and men between the ages of 15 and 24 are close to or at 100 per cent in countries for which data are available (Table 1).

While most Andean countries demonstrate above average human development (measured as a composite of health, education and income indicators), they continue to face challenges in achieving gender equality. Most have difficulty in addressing gender inequality in such areas as reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market (Table 2).

Maternal mortality ratios range from 71 per 100,000 live births in Venezuela to 190 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. According to the data, a far higher percentage of men than women are economically active across the region, but official statistics do not always reflect informal, unpaid labour, which is often dominated by women. While social institutions are gradually becoming more equitable, discriminatory practices continue to limit women’s ownership of or access to land and their access to credit and bank loans in most countries (Table 3).

Table 1: Key development indicators across the region, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per capita (current US$)</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (years)*</th>
<th>Literacy rate, ages 15-24</th>
<th>Literacy rate, ages 15-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia, Plurinational State</td>
<td>2 576</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>99***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>7 752</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>5 456</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>6 573</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>12 767</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>99***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Andean countries with activities currently supported by IFAD
Table 2: Human development and gender inequality across the region, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Human Development Index (HDI)* (186 countries)</th>
<th>Gender Inequality Index (GII) (148 countries)**</th>
<th>Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (86 non-OECD countries)***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia, Plurinational State of</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes:
* The HDI is a composite measure of health, education and income and an alternative to purely economic assessments of national progress (e.g. GDP growth). Source: http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/.

** The GII is a composite measure that reflects inequality in achievements between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. The index ranges from “0”, which means women fare equally well, to “1.0”, which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all dimensions measured. Source: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii.

*** The SIGI was launched by the OECD Development Centre as an innovative measure of the underlying drivers of gender inequality. The SIGI captures discriminatory social institutions such as early marriage, discriminatory inheritance practices, violence against women, son preference, restricted access to public space and restricted access to land and credit. Source: http://genderindex.org/ranking

Table 3: Key gender indicators across the region, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births)*</th>
<th>Women’s access to land**</th>
<th>Women’s access to bank loans***</th>
<th>Labour participation rate, ages 15+****</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female (% of females) Male (% of males)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia, Plurinational State of</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>64 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>56 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>56 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>68 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>52 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes:
* 2010 data.

** Women’s legal and de facto rights to own and obtain access to agricultural land: 0: women have equal legal rights with men to land ownership and access; 0.5: women have the same legal rights to land ownership and access, but are restricted by discriminatory practices; 1: women have no or few legal rights to land access or ownership, or access is severely restricted by discriminatory practices.

*** Women’s legal and de facto access to loans and credit: 0: women have equal rights with men to obtain credit and bank loans; 0.5: women have rights to obtain some kinds of credit (e.g. microcredit), or have equal rights but face discrimination in obtaining bank loans and credit; 1: women have few or no rights to obtain bank loans or credit, or their access is severely restricted by discriminatory practices.

**** 2011 data.
KEY RESOURCES

1 World Bank. GDP growth (annual %). Available at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG


3 CEPALSTAT. Data. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) statistics database. Available at: estadisticas.cepal.org/


6 CEPALSTAT. 2010. Data. ECLAC statistics database. Available at: estadisticas.cepal.org/


25 Information notes developed by project staff.