



Mainstream the gender approach: a key tool to promote equal opportunities in the full enjoyment of the right to health

Line of action: :
MAINSTREAMING

Area:
**GENDER EQUALITY
POLICIES AREA**

Scope:
COLOMBIA

The incorporation of the gender approach in health is based on the knowledge and production of evidence on the health situation and inequalities between women and men, associated with biological differences, sexual division of labour, power relations between the sexes, different exposure to risks, access to resources and health approaches.

instruments on Human Rights and Human Rights for Women that the Colombian state has ratified and that call for the mainstreaming of the gender approach. The MSPS proposes a triple goal that translates into reducing the health equity gap, strengthening the quality of the health services and making them more humane as well as improving the efficiency of the health services throughout the entire care process (promotion, prevention, care, rehabilitation, palliation and dignified death).

BACKGROUND TO MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER APPROACH IN THE MSPS

Since 2010, different areas in the Ministry, such as the Office for Social Promotion and the Promotion and Prevention Directorate, have promoted actions aimed at making the need to include the gender approach in public health policies more visible. In 2016, the Technical Roundtable on Gender and Health was formed, where professionals and officials from various ministerial units meet voluntarily. In 2017, a survey was carried out on knowledge, beliefs and perceptions relating to gender roles and stereotypes in the MSPS, this was the initial support for the preparation of educational materials aimed at raising awareness and it also contributed to the first version of the guidelines for mainstreaming the gender approach.



THE TRIPLE GOAL OF MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER APPROACH IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN COLOMBIA

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MSPS), has set as a goal the institutionalisation of the gender approach in the General

Social Security in Health System and the incorporation of the gender approach in all health and social protection policies, plans and programmes. It is based on the national obligations set forth in the 2013 document CONPES Social 161, the National Development Plan 2018-2022 "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equality", and the international

FINDINGS ON INTEGRATING THE GENDER APPROACH INTO THE GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY IN HEALTH SYSTEM

With support provided by the EUROsocial+ gender area, the action began with a participatory diagnosis from the ministry official who studied how the approach has been integrated into the health system from the time the Colombian Political Constitution was adopted in 1991 until the current Ten-Year Public Health Plan 2012-2021. In this it was found that the gender approach is included in a general way and meshes with the approaches on the right to health, life cycle, the differential approach and social determinants model. However, it does not allow the focus of attention to be identified nor the scope at the time the actions are put into action. At a more operational level in comprehensive care, gender considerations are

focused especially on addressing issues of Sexuality and Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Sexual Violence and to a lesser extent on other processes where women's rights are also affected. These improvement points were the basis for defining guidelines that were reviewed within the technical assistance framework, and where a series of recommendations were made including: the definition of a theoretical-conceptual framework agreed with representatives from the different areas, a strategic plan positioning it in policies, plans and programmes, the definition of lines of action in awareness-raising and training of personnel, development of lines of participation and consultation with external players, strengthening existing statistical information systems, and above all a political commitment expressed in the institutional structure through the creation of a mechanism that leads processes in this regard. In this case, this would be to institutionalise the Technical Roundtable on Gender and Health.

EUROSOCIAL SUPPORT ITINERARY

Technical Assistance for:

- ▶ Drafting a situational diagnosis report
- ▶ Adjustment to the Technical Guidelines document.
- ▶ Drafting a report on recommendations for integrating the gender approach into the Comprehensive Health Care Policy (PAIS)
- ▶ Organisation of two meetings with a steering-policy and technical character in the Ministry to present the guide and the recommendations report and to plan the next steps.

Testimony



“With the support of the EUROsocial+ gender area, a reflection was obtained on the keys and challenges for incorporating the gender approach into the health sector. Specifically, the MSPS was urged to form a gender group; which led to the creation of a draft resolution on the formation of the MSPS gender group”.

MARIA LUCÍA MESA. Adviser to the office of the Minister of the MSPS

Reasons for success and next steps

Mainstreaming implies inducing a change, a process of transformation into a complex, multidimensional system; therefore, it involves analysing the viability conditions at a number of levels: political (political will and legitimisation of initiatives), financial (having the necessary resources), administrative (processes, practices, personnel, procedures), legal (regulatory support) and sociocultural (negotiated acceptance against possible resistance). In the case of the MSPS, there is a political will promoted by the ministers, translating into the resolution that will allow the formalisation of the gender group, giving it an official status with all that this implies at the financial and hierarchy level within the Ministerial structure. This resolution is the result of the efforts of the members of this roundtable and also the boost and recommendations given in the technical assistance with EUROsocial+.

The formalisation of this gender roundtable is key to promoting, guiding, monitoring and evaluating the integration of the gender equality approach in all policies and programmes. The following stages are now being formulated by the MSPS through an action plan at the national level: awareness-raising and training human talent according to roles and responsibilities. At the territorial level, the aim is to extend the strategy to the Departmental and District Health Directorates, the EAPB Benefit Plan Management Bodies, the IPS Health Service Provider Institutions and the other Health Sector institutions. These new needs for the formulation of a detailed action plan and its implementation, open the doors so that the EUROsocial+ gender area can give this action continuity and allow a concrete long-term impact by mainstreaming the gender approach which will be evident to the final beneficiaries.