

Gender and women's rights in Galapagos¹

Rocío Rosero & Cecilia Valdivieso¹

The Special Law for Galapagos of 1998 states that "the quality of life of residents of the province should be consistent with the exceptional characteristics of the Galapagos World Heritage site." However, the inequality, poverty, and exclusion that constitute cultural problems in other parts of Ecuador are part of the daily life of those who live in Galapagos.

Environmental problems are very closely related to economic and social problems, making it difficult to distinguish between the human and environmental dimensions of development. In this sense, a focus on gender makes it possible to look at the different impacts of resource management on the lives of women and men. This article presents information related to gender issues in Galapagos for decision-making and the formulation of public policy.

This study presents quantitative information from the Census of the Population and Housing of Galapagos of 2006 (INEC, 2006) and qualitative information collected through interviews, focus groups, and testimonies in San Cristóbal, Isabela, Santa Cruz, and Floreana. A total of 81 individuals were consulted (48 women and 35 men), including authorities, decision-makers, public servants, civic leaders, and women's organizations.

The Galapagos population

According to the population census of 2006, there are 19 184 inhabitants in Galapagos, of which 9234 are women and 9950 are men (INEC, 2006). Overall, there are 92.8 women for every 100 men, although this ratio varies among the cantons: 87.4 in Isabela, 89.2 in San Cristóbal (which includes Floreana), and 95.8 in Santa Cruz. Galapagos is the only province in Ecuador where men outnumber women.

In Galapagos, women are head of household in 19.8% of homes. Gender of the head of household does not appear to impact access to basic services.

Employment and the right to work

According to census data, 47.6% of the population of Galapagos is economically active; women represent 35.5% of this group (Figure 1). In nearly all age groups, there are twice as many economically active men as there are

¹ This article is part of the "Diagnóstico de Género y Derechos de las Mujeres de Galápagos" developed by the authors for the Project ARAUCARIA XXI and the Galapagos National Park. May to August 2008.

women. In the segment of 65 years and older, the difference is even greater. It is unfortunate that two children younger

than 11 years old are currently working and were recorded as part of the economically active population.

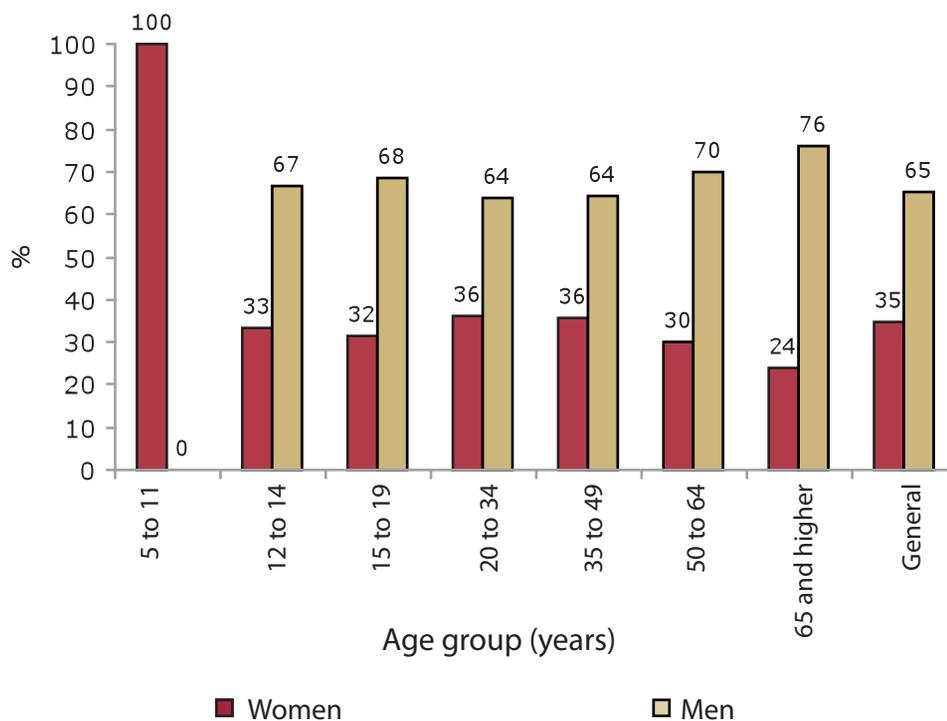


Figure 1. The currently economically active population by gender and age group (INEC, 2006).

The study reveals that a larger percentage of women are concentrated at lower income levels. For example, 42.7% of women compared to 39% of men earn between US\$101-400 per month (Table 1). The greatest difference occurs in the US\$401-700 range, which includes 24.6% of men and 15.2% of women.

Galapagos has experienced an accelerated economic growth related to the increase in tourism. This growth has created more sources of employment, primarily for men (Figure 2). However, young people—both men and women—

express difficulty in finding work outside of tourism because they lack skills demanded by the labor market and cannot access the training and education needed to build those skills.

Although women occupy some decision-making positions in both the public sector and tourism, most are employed in lower-level, lower-paying positions. Approximately 12% of women earn less than US\$100 per month in the informal sector as street vendors or employees or owners of micro-enterprises. This figure is similar on the mainland.

Table 1. Number and percentage of women and men at different income (US\$) levels (INEC, 2006).

Income Level (US\$)	Men		Women		Total	% Women
	Number	%	Number	%		
Less than 100	436	7.5	390	12.3	826	47.2
101 to 400	2 254	39.0	1 357	42.7	3 611	37.6
401 to 700	1 425	24.6	482	15.2	1 907	25.3
701 to 900	437	7.6	218	6.9	655	33.3
901 to 2000	682	11.8	387	12.2	1 069	36.2
2001 and higher	128	2.2	47	1.5	175	26.9
No income	108	1.9	136	4.3	244	55.7
Unknown	315	5.4	158	5.0	473	33.4
Total	5 785	100.0	3 175	100.0	8 960	35.4

The right to education

In Galapagos, 5.2% of men and 5.9% of women are illiterate. This difference is greater in rural areas. On Isabela, for example, 4.4% of women in the rural areas are illiterate, compared to 2.2% of men.

In terms of education, only 29.6% of women and 31.6% of men have completed

primary education; 36.5% of women and 39.1% of men have completed secondary education; and 18.5% of women and 15.6% of men have completed higher education (Figure 2). The economic situation of families directly affects whether young adults are able to continue with advanced education and increase their professional opportunities.

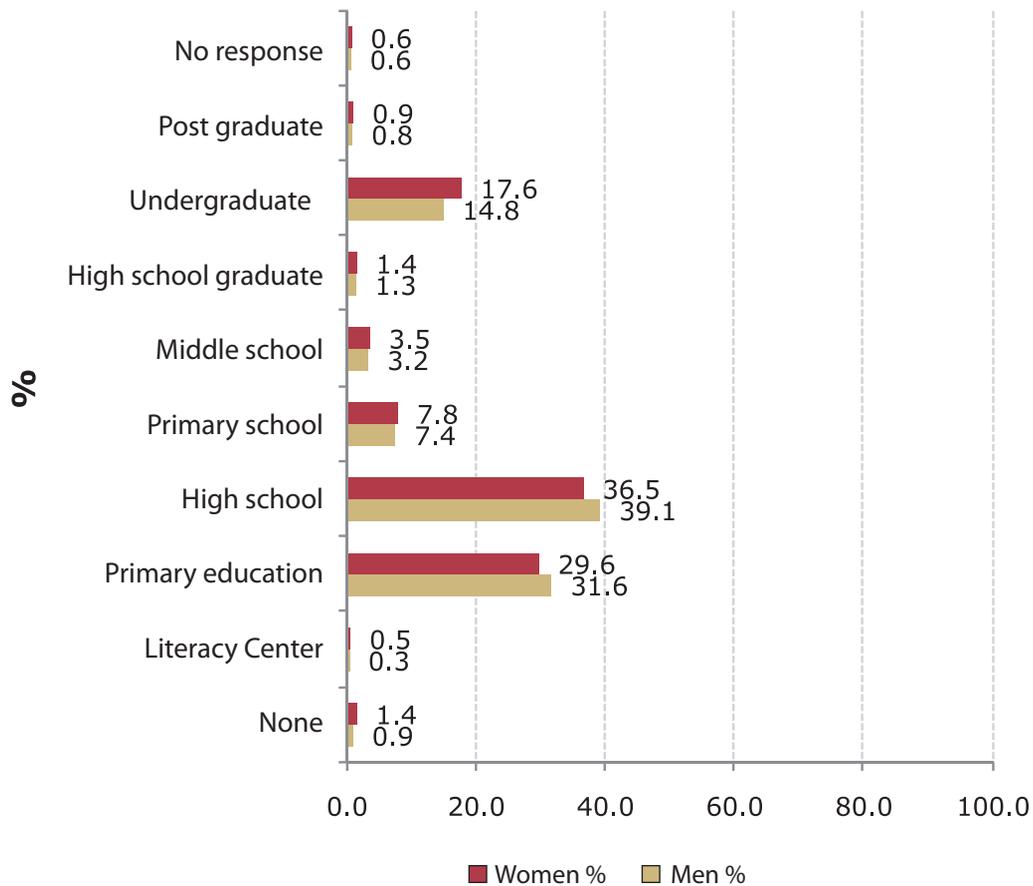


Figure 2. Level of education completed by gender (INEC, 2006).

All of the individuals interviewed believe that education in Galapagos does not respond to local needs and that there is a high level of discrimination in the schools based on the socioeconomic background of the child. It is also believed that the educational system reinforces traditional roles for young girls and adolescents (Lara, 2006: 42). Sex education is considered to be inadequate both at school and in the home.

The right to a life free of abuse

Sexual abuse is an extreme form of discrimination against women, violating a

series of rights: the right to life; physical, psychological, and sexual well-being; healthy growth and development; freedom of thought and opinion, and freedom of choice related to reproductive health. Violence against women limits their independence, the development of self-esteem, and possibilities to enjoy the rights of education, health, employment, and control and access to resources. Violence limits their potential to improve their quality of life and that of their family and to contribute to the development of the country.

According to the information obtained in this study, violence in Galapagos families is caused by: high levels of alcoholism

among men; a culture of disrespect towards women; the lack of dialogue between parents and children; and unstable homes due to the high level of migration between Galapagos and the mainland.

The lack of support mechanisms to provide attention to victims of sexual abuse in Galapagos means that women must approach the police who are not sufficiently trained to deal with these crimes and who do not always adequately apply the Law of Violence against Women and the Family. Reliable statistical records of abuse are not kept.

Among Galapagos women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years old), 23.2%

report that they received either physical or psychological abuse prior to reaching 15 years of age (ENDEMAIN, 2004).

Records from various institutions in Galapagos provide evidence of an increase in violence against women, girls, and adolescents (Table 2). Detailed information on cases involving children and adolescents can be found in Maldonado (in this Galapagos Report).

Violence and abuse is a public health problem and the publication of the Ministry of Health, "Indicadores Básicos de Salud en Ecuador," requires that all cases be documented. The Ministry recorded 10 cases of violence and abuse in 2007.

Table 2. Reports of various types of abuse

Period	Island	Institution	Data
January 2004 to June 2007	San Cristóbal	National Sheriffs Office	161 reports of intra-family abuse
2006	San Cristóbal	National Police	161 calls for assistance due to intra-family abuse
2006	San Cristóbal	Office of the Rights of Women of the Police - ODMU	Types of abuse recorded: 104 physical and 28 psychological 131 of the 132 records correspond to women
2006	San Cristóbal	Galapagos Police Headquarters	19 offences of intra-family abuse
January to May 2007	San Cristóbal	National Police	140 calls for help
January to May 2007	San Cristóbal	Galapagos Police Headquarters	71 reports: 59 of physical abuse and 12 of psychological abuse
January 2007 to April 2008	San Cristóbal	National Police Headquarters Specialized in Children and Adolescents - DINAPEN	51% report abuse of the rights of girls or female adolescents 5 of the 28 reports were for sexual abuse
January to June 2008	San Cristóbal	Galapagos Police Headquarters	9 reports of intra-family abuse
January to December 2007	Santa Cruz	National Sheriffs Office	181 reports of intra-family abuse
January to June 2008	Santa Cruz	National Sheriffs Office	76 reports of intra-family abuse

Health and sexual and reproductive rights

In the area of sexual and reproductive health, those interviewed expressed concern over the high incidence of early sexual relations and marriage, and adolescent pregnancies, all of which make it more difficult for women to take advan-

tage of educational opportunities and to join the labor force.

According to the 1990 census, 13.3% of Galapagos women between 12 and 19 years of age have at least one child (INEC, 1990). Adolescent pregnancies declined to 8.9% in 1998 (INEC, 1998) and then even lower to 7.2% in 2006 (INEC, 2006).

The decline could be related to the level of formal education, sex education programs, and access to and use of birth control methods.

This information conflicts with the results of the Ecuador Demographic and Maternal-Child Health Survey (ENDEMAIN) published in 2004. Based on interviews with 10 814 women of reproductive age, the ENDEMAIN survey indicated that in Galapagos women have an average of

2.7 children, while in the Amazon women have an average of 4.2 children. According to this same source, the average age at which a woman has her first child in Galapagos is 22 years, which is significantly higher than in any of the other three regions of the country. ENDEMAIN also notes that women in Galapagos have their first sexual relation at an average age of 18.7 years, which corresponds to the national average (Figure 3).

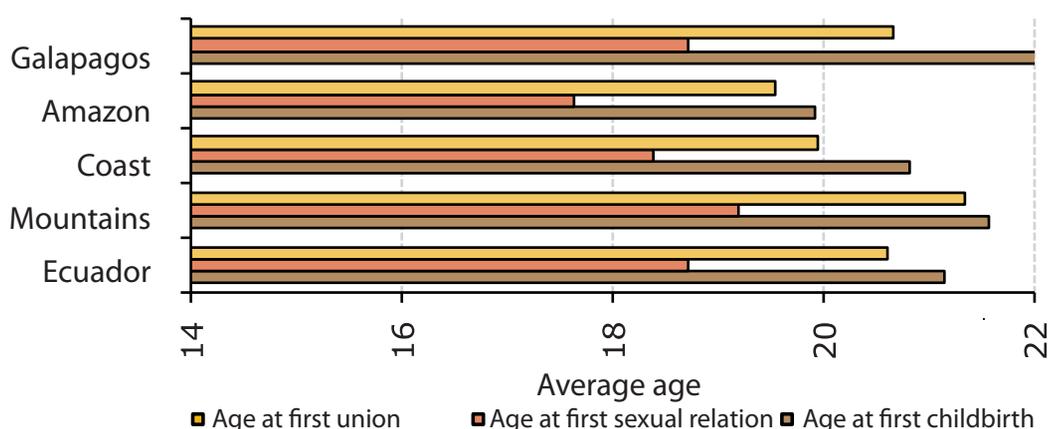


Figure 3. Age at first union, age at first sexual relation, and age at first childbirth of women of reproductive age, in the different regions of Ecuador. Source: ENDEMAIN, 2004

According to the records of the República del Ecuador Hospital in Santa Cruz, 12 cases of HIV and 6 cases of AIDS were diagnosed between 1995 and January 2008. Four of these cases involved women who do unpaid domestic work. In 2006, the National AIDS Program of the Ministry of Public Health recorded only two cases of HIV/AIDS in Ecuador, which confirms the under-reporting of this pandemic. Some officials of the Ministry of Public Health in Galapagos indicated that there is a high incidence of HIV/AIDS cases that are treated through private consultations, and in their opinion HIV/AIDS represents the most serious health problem in the province.

The system for recording information related to sexual and reproductive rights must be improved. In addition, resources must be invested in studies to analyze the provision of services for sexual and reproductive health, the availability of medical specialists, the resources needed to ensure

the implementation of the Free Maternity and Child Care Law, and the quality and impact of education programs that promote healthy and responsible sexuality.

Political participation

The presence of women in both elected and appointed positions has increased in recent years due to the Quota Law, in force since 2000. Currently the Prefect in Galapagos is a woman as is one town council member in San Cristóbal (for the period 2007-10) and one in Isabela (2004-08), but none in Santa Cruz.

In the 2006 local elections in Galapagos, the Quota Law, which requires 45% women on ballots, was not observed. Only 32.3% of the candidates for town councils were women and in the case of the provincial council, only 25% of the candidates were women. The elections produced only 14.3% women among the town councils and 50% in the provincial council (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of women candidates and those elected to office at the local level. Source: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, 2006. Note: the national value includes Galapagos.

	Municipal Council women		Provincial Council women	
	Candidates	Elected	Candidates	Elected
Galapagos	32.3	14.3	25.0	50.0
NATIONAL	41.4	23.0	39.0	14.9

In the national elections for congress in 2006, two men were elected to represent the province. The last time a woman represented Galapagos in the national congress was in 1998-2002. No woman was elected to represent Galapagos in the Constitutional Assembly, even though the slates of candidates conformed to the requirements of the Quota Law; only one of the eight slates had a woman as the principal candidate.

Conclusions

Many of the social indicators in Galapagos are superior to those in mainland Ecuador, suggesting that the quality of life in the archipelago is better than on the continent. Recent economic growth tied to tourism is without doubt one of the factors that explains this situation. Ospina (2000) describes Galapagos as prosperous compared with the difficult conditions of Ecuadorian society on the whole.

The same can be said about women's rights and gender equality. However, although much of the data reveal only small differences in the rights of men and women in Galapagos, this does not ensure that the quality of life is what it should be.

One of the big challenges for the authorities in Galapagos is to define and implement public policies regarding gender and the promotion of equality and inclusion through stronger local public institutions. To achieve this, it will be important to review the current level of observance of rights, create an Equal Opportunity Plan for women and men in Galapagos and develop quantitative and qualitative indicators that will go beyond "cold numbers" to provide a solid foundation for decision-making.

Increasing social and political partici-

pation of women is also a priority. This will involve: 1) training to build and consolidate leadership; 2) establishing mechanisms to encourage the participation of women at all levels of decision-making and in political parties; and 3) designating the necessary resources to develop and promote these actions.

Some aspects of life in Galapagos that require a more careful review include: 1) differences in access, use, and control of natural resources among the population; 2) abuse of women in Galapagos (dimensions of the problem as well as possible public policy); 3) the current level of adolescent pregnancy; 4) gender, migration, and family; 5) workplace conditions of paid women workers; 6) political participation and leadership by women; 7) sexual exploitation in Galapagos; and 8) access of women to education and technology.

The lack of remuneration for domestic work and caretaking, the limited participation of men in childcare, hiring and wage discrimination against women, and the low levels of education of women and their lack of participation in the formal labor market are all phenomena that result from unequal power relationships both within the family and in the public arena. They also contribute, as they do on the mainland, to poverty among women.

Those interviewed in this study warn that the principal problems related to gender and the rights of women are intra-family abuse, low quality education, and lack of employment opportunities and sources of income. They also point to a problem of governance that can be seen in the abundance of strategic and institutional plans that do not consider the differential impacts on men and women. The result is a general lack of public policies to ensure sustainable human development.