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# Vital Voices

Promoting Women's Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean



## Recognizing Priority Tasks

*"Equal rights and opportunities between men and women and the objective of ensuring active participation of women in all areas of national endeavor are priority tasks."*

—Declaration of Santiago,  
Santiago Summit of the Americas, April 1998

Government, business, education, and community leaders throughout the Western Hemisphere are acting on the knowledge that countries thrive best with the active involvement of all their people. Experience has proved that improved economic security, health status, and access to legal rights for both men and women result from women's increased leadership in civil society and government.

Yet, as the heads of state at the Santiago Summit recognized in their Declaration, the countries of the hemisphere must still work to support women's full integration into national economic and political systems and to raise the standard of living for all. Women's participation in the formal labor force has risen in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region during the past three decades. But even taking into account differences in education and skill levels, women earn on average only 72 percent of men's wages. Similarly,

although women are graduating from colleges and universities and achieving leadership positions in increasing numbers, they are still vastly under-represented at the highest levels of business, government, and other institutions. And for the millions of women in the region who live in poverty, the multiple responsibilities of generating income and caring for their families are often made more difficult by gender and economic constraints.

Efforts to tackle these ongoing issues have become priority tasks within each country. Working with dedicated people in both the public and private sectors, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking solutions that are cost-effective and that benefit society's marginalized groups. In its work in the region, USAID serves as a catalyst to local initiatives; conducts and supports research on and disseminates innovative solutions to development-related problems; and provides a forum for concerned, creative people to share experiences and ideas.





"We have seen microfinance institutions become the trusted links between microenterprise and the formal banking system," said Mark Schneider, USAID Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, citing institutions in Bolivia and Guatemala that are now self-sufficient competitors in the commercial banking sector.

foundation, to create BancoSol, the world's first commercial self-sustaining bank solely dedicated to microlending. BancoSol reaches 76,000 clients, over two-thirds of whom are women. The average BancoSol client has US\$120 in deposits, the equivalent of one-eighth of the country's per capita gross domestic product. Other USAID-supported financial services programs for microentrepreneurs in the country have reached close to 130,000 Bolivians.

In Ecuador, approximately US\$6 million in USAID funds are supporting microenterprise programs, reaching 138,000 clients between 1996 and 1999. Banco Solidario, the first privately owned bank created to serve the microenterprise sector, was established in 1996 through a joint USAID/Ecuador-LAC Bureau equity investment of US\$1.2 million. Three U.S. PVOs, Catholic Relief Services, Project Hope, and FINCA International, initiated new starts in village banking, a methodology designed to reach rural women and promote their empowerment through income-producing ventures. More than 10 village banks have been established since October of last year, directly benefitting approximately 399 businesswomen. An estimated 100 banks will be established over the 15-month life of these grants, directly benefitting approximately 2,500 women.

Later this year, the LAC Bureau will host a regional conference on microenterprise development in Washington, D.C. We look forward to sharing these and other success stories, recent innovations, and future challenges to microenterprise endeavors with the IDB and other development partners throughout the region.

The Latin America and Caribbean Bureau of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has committed US\$40 million this year for the development of microenterprise activities in the hemisphere. These programs are part of a global effort by the agency to devote more resources to microenterprise. USAID is investing US\$120 million annually worldwide to support the following performance-based programs:

- Technical assistance to established microfinance organizations
- Technical assistance to build institutional capacity of microfinance institutions and exchange visits
- Matching grants for U.S. private voluntary organizations
- A program to manage loan and guarantee facilities supporting efforts of commercial banks to provide microenterprise credit
- Technical assistance from USAID overseas missions to support microenterprise credit

In addition, USAID supports training and extensive research into microenterprise best practices, including business development services, village banking, savings mobilization, management information services, and commercial banks. Activities to assess the effects of microenterprise services include detailed study as well as development and testing of assessment tools that can be used in the field.



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## Latin America and Caribbean Bureau

### Microenterprise Activities



U.S. Agency for  
International Development

Inter-American Forum  
on Microenterprise

Mexico City, Mexico

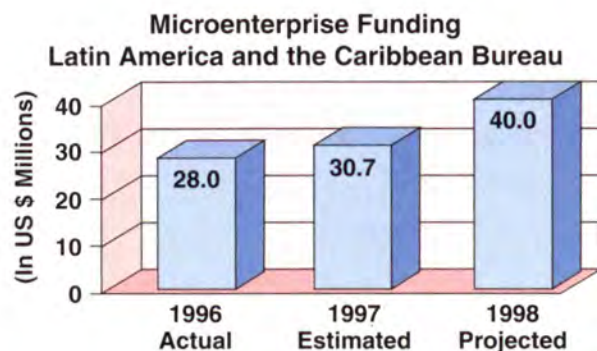
March 26-28, 1998



The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Bureau of USAID is pleased to be a cosponsor of the Inter-American Forum on Microenterprise with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It is a pleasure to join the IDB and other development partners in promoting a broader role for microenterprises in the economic integration of the Americas.

With 16 Missions throughout the Americas, the LAC Bureau is deeply committed to microentrepreneurs, especially to women and young people, who are the fastest growing segment of the economies in our region. We are committed to support the Summit of the Americas process, and its efforts to eradicate poverty and discrimination. Over the next three years, the LAC Bureau has pledged US\$120 million in credit facilities and technical assistance funds to advance microenterprise development in the Americas.

Indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and U.S. private voluntary organizations (U.S. PVOs) are our customers, partners and stakeholders in this development process. Each LAC Bureau Mission has developed its network of microenterprise intermediaries. Our LAC Regional Sustainable Development office has a close working relationship with the Microenterprise Coalition, co-chaired by ACCION International and FINCA International on behalf of many U.S. PVOs assisting microenterprises throughout the region. USAID has supported successful models for working with microentrepreneurs in rural and urban areas.



President Clinton's three trips to the region within the last twelve months highlights the administration's commitment to microenterprise development. With the Bridgetown Declaration, the President pledged US\$3 million through a special microenterprise initiative for the Eastern Caribbean. Targeting smaller economies of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, this assistance is managed by our partners in the Caribbean. Technical assistance, development bank loans, and guarantees assist microenterprises through the Caribbean Development Bank and its linkages with National Development Foundations on each of the Windward Islands. A contribution to the Caribbean Development Bank's Basic Needs Fund will meet the special requirements of the very poor. A US\$2 million loan portfolio guarantee program with the Royal Bank of Trinidad will make loans to first-time micro and small borrowers, to enable entrepreneurs to expand their businesses into regional and international markets. Through the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, five Free Market Development Advisors are providing technical assistance to micro and small enterprises in the Windward Islands.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is the LAC Bureau's strongest supporter of microenterprise activities. Beginning in 1996, with her address to the Microcredit Summit in Washington, D.C. and her participation in the "Renewal" of USAID's Microenterprise Initiative on the steps of the Capitol, she has proclaimed microenterprise development as a "tool that not only transforms lives but lifts communities and societies as well." She carried her message to the IDB's Regional Consultative Forum on Microenterprise in San Jose, Costa Rica. More than 450 representatives from all Central American countries attended the forum.

In Central America, FINCA International's local affiliates extended approximately 78,000 new loans in 1997. Ninety-three percent of these recipients were women. By providing informal financial services, microenterprise support organizations have generated economic opportunities for a conflict-torn population. Although the region suffers from high unemployment, poverty,

**Microenterprise Funding  
Latin America and the Caribbean Bureau  
1997 (in US\$ Millions)**



and illiteracy, microenterprise programs have given new hope and viable employment opportunities to thousands.

Programs in three countries of the sub-region have generated sizable amounts of working capital, loans, and savings for participants. In El Salvador, the Center for Microenterprise Support (CAM) functions in the four most populous cities of the most densely populated country in the region. Last year, the center circulated nearly US\$5 million in working capital among 17,000 members, with an average loan amount of US\$146 per person—the equivalent of 6 weeks of an average salary. In Honduras, US\$4.5 million in loans, with an average loan amount of US\$191 per person, was disbursed to 15,014 village bank members. Loans totaling US\$3 million were provided to 9,130 members in Nicaragua, averaging a loan size of US\$154 per member. As a result of self-employment efforts assisted by USAID, the 41,000 village bank members in these three countries have been able to save US\$1.8 million, averaging US\$44 per member.

With the US\$1.4 million regional grant from the LAC Bureau, ACCION International is assisting non-profit institutions in transforming themselves from informal banks into fully regulated commercial banks. In 1992, USAID invested US\$5.9 million in the remarkable startup of Bolivia's BancoSol. ACCION International provided technical expertise to PRODEM, a local nonprofit



**Draft Conference Program**  
**IXth Conference of First Spouses of the Americas**

(As of January 14, 1999)

| Wednesday, September 29 |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3:00 - 6:00 pm          | Registration                   | Westin Hotel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6:00 - 7:30 pm          | Opening Ceremony and Reception | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommended venue -- Museum of Civilization.</li><li>• Guests to include FS, delegates, other conference participants, ambassadors, corporate sponsors, members of Cabinet, women members of parliament and senate, friends of Madame Chrétien.</li><li>• Professional MC calls participants to their seats.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Entrance and presentation of FS</li><li>- Presentation of women Cabinet Ministers</li><li>- Greetings from the Prime Minister</li><li>- Opening Address by Madame Chrétien</li><li>- Short cultural program (20 min, possibly children)</li><li>- Brief reception</li></ul></li></ul> |

| Thursday, September 30                               |                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session 1: Healthy Start - Investing in Children 0-6 |                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 7:30 am - 8:30 am                                    | Registration                                   | Westin Hotel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 8:30 am - 9:00 am                                    | Follow-up Report to VIIIth Conference          | <p>NB: All sessions to have two podiums. One for MC<sup>®</sup>, the other for speakers. Madame will preside over sessions and open and close, but someone else will actively chair all discussions (Huguette Labelle ?).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief presentation summarizing actions take by FS in follow-up to the last conference. Based on summary document compiled prior to the conference and circulated to FS at the conference.</li> <li>Usually delivered by someone on host country FS staff -- Chaviva? Louise Leger?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:00 - 10:00 am                                      | Dr. Paul Steinhauer: "Why Zero to Six Matters" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 minute presentation by Dr. Steinhauer on child brain development and why the years 0 to 6 are critical determinants of a child's long term life chances. (Include impact of substance abuse on foetus/infant.)</li> <li>We will encourage use of visual aids to make presentation more interesting and compelling. Will be translated and made available in a format FS can take back and use in their country.</li> <li>If the session begins on time, this will be followed by a period for comments and questions.</li> <li>If the session begins late, the question/discussion period can be shortened accordingly or eliminated altogether if necessary.</li> </ul> |

|                  |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:00 - 10:30 am | <b>Remarks from FS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 FS deliver their remarks on the theme of children 0-6</li> <li>• NB: FS will be advised remarks are optional and can be delivered orally or simply submitted in writing for those who may not wish to speak. This may free up time on the agenda for other content, although most FS will likely want to speak.</li> </ul> |
| 10:30 - 10:45 am | <b>Coffee break</b>    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 10:45 - 11:30 am | <b>Remarks from FS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 FS deliver their remarks on the theme of children 0-6</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



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|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11:30 am - 12:30 pm | FS and delegations tour NGO exhibits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 20 Canadian NGOs whose missions are relevant to the project on children 0-6, and who are active internationally or wish to be, will be invited to participate in a half-day NGO fair where they can exhibit information on their programs.</li> <li>• Each FS will be invited to sponsor the participation of one NGO from their country.</li> <li>• NGOs will be invited to forward a limited amount of information on their program to us prior to the conference so that it can be translated and made available on site at the conference.</li> <li>• Exhibitors may also include some relevant government programs i.e. Community Action Program for Children or Aboriginal Head Start.</li> <li>• FS, their delegations, and cooperation agency staff will tour the exhibits to learn about innovative programs for children 0-6.</li> <li>• NGOs will have a chance to liaise with one another and with the international cooperation agencies at the morning fair. More structured meetings will be planned in the afternoon to brief them on the activities of the relevant cooperation agencies, the proposed children's project, and to identify opportunities for interested organizations to participate.</li> <li>• An inventory of participating organizations, with a description of what they do and how to reach them will be prepared in English, French and Spanish for distribution to all conference participants. This will encourage linkages between the different groups and enable FS to follow-up on programs that interest them.</li> </ul> |
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|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:45 - 2:15 pm                                             | Lunch                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FS to lunch separately at <sup>Sally's</sup> Bailey's restaurant in the Westin. Buffet luncheon to be served to other conference participants in another room.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Session 2: Healthy Start - Investing in Children 0-6</b> |                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2:30 - 3:00 pm                                              | <b>Follow-up report on Integra project</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite representatives from the Fundacion Integra and the lead cooperation agency to report on the results of the information sharing project FS endorsed at last year's conference.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3:00 - 3:45 pm                                              | <b>Presentation on proposed Project Children 0-6</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead international cooperation agency (TBA) to present project on children 0-6 for FS endorsement.</li> <li>Presentation should include information on the status of children 0-6 in the hemisphere and the key risks to their well-being. Reference would be made to the status of children from indigenous groups and children with disabilities.</li> </ul> |
| 3:45 - 4:00 pm                                              | <b>Coffee Break</b>                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4:00 - 5:30 pm                                              | <b>Remarks by FS</b>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 FS deliver their remarks on the theme of children 0-6</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5:30 - 7:15 pm                                              | <b>Break</b>                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 7:15 - 7:30 pm                                              | <b>FS travel to cocktail reception/dinner</b>        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 7:30 - 8:15 pm                                              | <b>Cocktail Reception</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Gallery is preferred venue.</li> <li>We may wish to do group photo during reception.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| 8:15 - 10:30 pm | <b>Dinner and Cultural event</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Gallery is preferred venue. Guests to include FS with 1-2 members of their delegation, Ambassadors and spouses, selected Cabinet ministers and spouses. PM to attend. Cultural event TBC.</li><li>• Madame Chrétien suggests: Marie-Jo Thériault (sing Evangéline), Susan Agulak (performed at Mandela event), male Aboriginal singer who performed at last Canada Day celebration in Ottawa; Oliver Jones (jazz pianist); performers from Cirque du Soleil.</li></ul> |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



Friday, October 1

**Session 3: Women's Health**

|                    |                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00 - 10:00 am    | <b>PAHO Presentation - Project for endorsement.</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PAHO to outline project they are suggesting for endorsement by FS. Likely focus will be telehealth and applications for improving maternal health, providing health training/services to remote (and particularly Aboriginal) communities.</li><li>• Presentation would include an overview report on women's health status in the Americas and key challenges. Reference would be made to serving Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and women living in rural and remote areas.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 10:00 - 10:15 am   | <b>Coffee Break</b>                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 10:15 - 11:00 am   | <b>FS remarks</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 FS deliver remarks on the theme of women's health</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 11:00 - 12:00 noon | <b>FS and delegations tour NGO exhibits</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FS would tour exhibits by NGOs. Would also include some government programs -- i.e. centres of excellence.</li><li>• Same approach as previous day, but different groups will be represented -- i.e. community-based women's health centres; centres of excellence (women's health and family violence); community organizations working on health promotion for girls; young women, pregnant women, elderly women; programs serving women with breast cancer Aboriginal health organizations, health organizations working with immigrant women etc.</li><li>• Health Canada would manage the selection process, tying it to the project being presented to FS for endorsement.</li></ul> |
| 12:15 - 1:15 pm    | <b>Lunch</b>                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FS dine separately at Bailey's. Buffet lunch for other conference participants.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Session 4: Women's Health**

|                |                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:30 - 2:30    | <b>Telehealth Presentation</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstration of telehealth technology. Focus on telehealth as an efficient and effective means of providing health care services to rural and remote communities.</li> <li>Conference delegates would be provided with inventory of telehealth companies and telehealth programs in Canada, with contact names.</li> </ul>                  |
| 2:30 - 3:00 pm | <b>Remarks by FS</b>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 FS deliver their remarks on the theme of women's health</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3:00 - 3:15 pm | <b>Coffee Break</b>                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3:15 - 4:30 pm | <b>Remarks by FS</b>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 FS deliver their remarks on the theme of women's health.</li> <li>This is assuming 30 FS will be making remarks in total. If fewer, we will shorten the program to 4:00 pm to allow FS time to refresh themselves before the closing ceremony.</li> </ul>                                                                                  |
| 5:00 - 6:30 pm | <b>Closing Ceremony and signing of Ottawa Declaration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Room in the Centre Block is preferred venue. Adjacent salon suitable for a holding room or for a photo, and Railroad Room across the hall could be used for a reception after the ceremony.</li> <li>Louise to check flight options to ensure FS can comfortably make the last flight to Miami that evening if they wish.</li> </ul> |



From me to you  
w/ love.

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