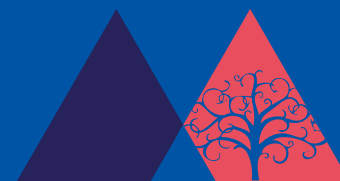


▶ Executive summary



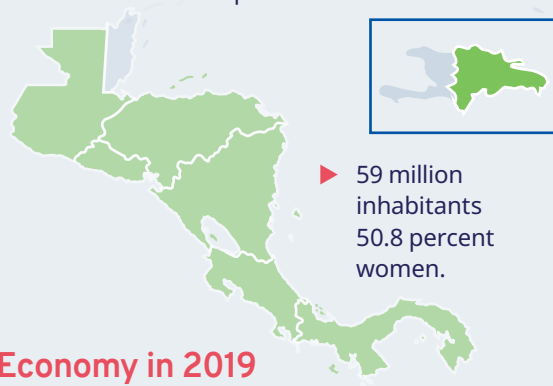
December, 2020

Study on gender equality in vocational training Central America and the Dominican Republic

I. Context of vocational training: Central America and the Dominican Republic

Region

- ▶ **Seven countries:** Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic.



- ▶ 59 million inhabitants
50.8 percent women.

Economy in 2019

Weak economic growth + adverse environment (slower growth in exports, lower domestic demand and a slight increase in the fiscal deficit).

This slowdown is affecting employment: modest growth in demand and an increase in unemployment.

Labour market in 2019

There are large gender gaps where vocational training could make a significant difference.

- ▶ **1** Women's participation is increasing but remains 35 percent below that of men. A determining factor is the lack of significant change in the distribution of unpaid work. The majority of unpaid work continues to be undertaken by women.

According to household surveys undertaken in 2019, the main reason for not seeking employment given by inactive Salvadoran and Panamanian women is existing **domestic work and care responsibilities** (68.3 per cent and 51.8 per cent, respectively). Meanwhile, the main reason given by men was studying (36.7 per cent and 45.4 per cent).

According to time-use surveys carried out in 2017, **men continue to focus on paid work outside the home, and women on reproductive work in the home and community.**

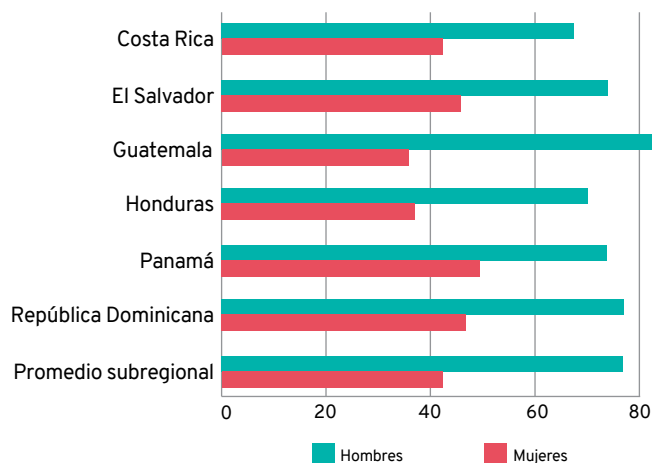
Costa Rica: women dedicate 35 hours per week to unpaid work, and men dedicate 13 hours.

El Salvador: women dedicate 26 hours per week, compared to men's 11 hours.

Dominican Republic: women dedicate 31.2 hours, and men 9.6 hours.

► **2** The employment rate among women is 35 percent lower than among men. Furthermore, women work mainly in service sector jobs (low productivity) and in elementary occupations. Few women are employers or hold managerial positions. Women have less income of their own, and the pay gap persists, at approximately 20 percent.

Figure 1. Central America and the Dominican Republic, employment rate by sex, 2019



Source: Prepared by the author based on household and ILO surveys, 2019.

Employment rate by sex, 2019

► Subregional Average

Women 41,5 and Men 76,2 %

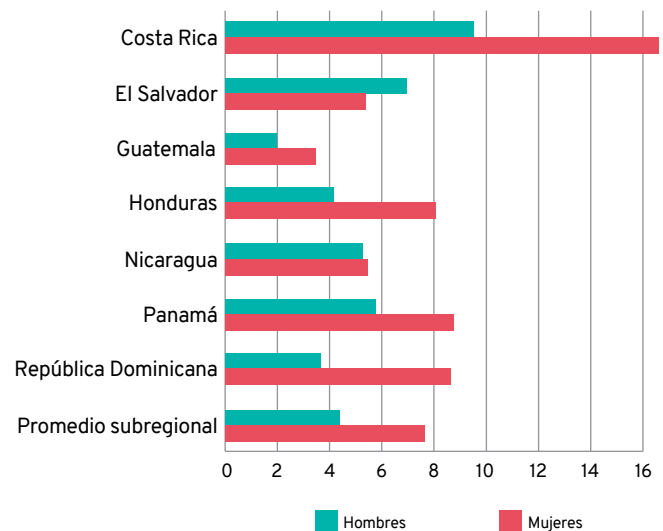
With regard to **pay gaps**, the ILO's Global Wage Report 2018/19 notes that:

- Education is not the problem: female employees around the world have the same, if not higher, levels of education as men.
- Key factors are job segregation and polarization along gender lines in industries and economic sectors.

► **3** Unemployment affects a higher proportion of women. In 2019 the difference at the subregional level was 3.3 percent points (7.7 percent for women, compared to 4.4 percent for men).

Those aged 15 to 24 experience the highest rates of all age groups, particularly young women (for example, unemployment among young women in Costa Rica reached 42.6 percent in 2019).

Figure 2. Central America and the Dominican Republic, unemployment rate by sex, 2019



Source: Prepared by the author based on household and/or employment surveys.

Unemployment rate by sex, 2019

► Subregional Average

Women 7,7% and Men 4,4%

In 2020, this outlook was worsened by the **economic and social crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic**, which has had a strongly negative impact on employment and efforts to fight poverty and reduce inequality. The crisis has a clear gender dimension that affects the labour market:

- 1. It has had a particular effect on service industries that employ high numbers of women, such as the restaurant and hotel sectors, and occupations where remote working is more difficult, such as work in households.
- 2. Most countries closed education institutions and childcare facilities, drastically increasing the need for childcare and education in the home. Mothers are more likely to carry out this work, and single mothers are most affected.



II. Vocational training institutes: Central America and the Dominican Republic

In 2003 the sub region's vocational training institutions decide to create the "**Network of Vocational Training Institutes of Central America and the Dominican Republic**" based on the wish and interest of the parties, who work with the commitment of reciprocal cooperation to advance in strategic areas and for the development of various instruments that allow the improvement of its services.



- The subregion's **seven** vocational training institutes are national public bodies with administrative and financial independence. They design training policies and strategies and deliver services, making them the most significant actors in the system in terms of range of services.
 - **Costa Rica:** National Institute for Learning (INA)
 - **El Salvador:** Salvadoran Vocational Training Institute (INSAFORP)
 - **Guatemala:** Technical Training and Productivity Institute (INTECAP)
 - **Honduras:** National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP)
 - **Nicaragua:** National Technological Institute (INATEC)
 - **Panama:** National Vocational Training Institute for Human Development (INADEH)

► **Dominican Republic:** National Institute for Technical Vocational Training (INFOTEP)

- They are managed by tripartite governing boards or bodies with government, employer and worker representatives.
- Their main source of funding is employers' contributions and deductions from employees' salaries, supplemented by funding from national governments, some specific taxes and only minimal enrolment fees for some programmes.

They deliver their services in **four** ways:

- **1- Technical programmes:** medium and long courses providing comprehensive training that allows participants to take up an occupation.
- **2- Training and courses:** short courses to develop a specific skill that qualifies participants to enter the labour market.
- **3- Continuous training:** short courses aimed at workers that complement or update their skills or allow them to specialize.
- **4- Work skills certification:** recognition of knowledge and technical skills, regardless of how they were acquired.

Most training services in the subregion are short courses, as reflected in the institutes' record and information systems; there are more records of enrolment and training activities than of persons and technical programmes or courses.

► **Record of enrolment:** a person's registration in a specific vocational education or training service. A person may have separate enrolment records for every service in which they participate.

► **Person:** a participant who fulfils an institute's requirements for registering and participating in an education or training activity or process. Given that a person may access several services during their training, they are counted only once.

III. Gender equality in vocational training: main findings

► Central America and the Dominican Republic boast a broad normative framework to bring about equality between men and women; the seven countries have ratified a considerable number of international conventions that, in turn, have been translated into gender equality regulations, policies and plans.

• International conventions

• National equality laws

• National policies and plans

► National legislation and plans recognize that training institutes bear a degree of responsibility in the matter. They therefore include a series of actions and targets, the responsibility of which falls directly on the institutes or is shared with other bodies:

► 1. Seeking to increase the number of women in training programmes and technical courses in non-traditional areas, as well as in technological and scientific fields;

- 2. Improving vocational and professional guidance;
- 3. Designing mechanisms to prevent and address discrimination against women;
- 4. Adjusting curriculum outlines and content to promote equality at that level;
- 5. Developing teaching materials to help promote equality;
- 6. Promoting women as instructors in non-traditional areas;
- 7. Improving teacher training from a human rights perspective;
- 8. Strengthening statistical information.

► Vocational training institutes in Central America and the Dominican Republic have made significant progress in promoting equality between men and women. The most significant changes have occurred in the four institutes that have established formal institutional offices or bodies to design and manage gender equality activities.

National Institute for Learning (INA) – Costa Rica

- Advisory Board on Gender Equality and Equity (APIEG)
- Created in 1983

Salvadoran Vocational Training Institute (INSAFORP) – El Salvador

- Gender Commission (part of the Executive Sub-Directorate) and Gender Technicians within the Planning Unit
- Created in 2014

National Vocational Training Institute for Human Development (INADEH) – Panama

- Institutional Office for Gender
- First phase 1999-2002, relaunched in 2010

National Institute for Technical Vocational Training (INFOTEP) – Dominican Republic

- Gender Coordinator
- Created in 2016

► It is in these institutes where policies and / or institutional plans for equality and gender equity in vocational training have been implemented.

Image 1. INA and INSAFORP gender equality policies



Source: INA, INSAFORP, 2020

► In response to the objectives of the offices and bodies responsible for mainstreaming the gender approach, and to the targets set out in the equality policies and plans, a series of procedures, studies, tools and guides have been developed to increase the inclusivity of education and training services.

Image 2. Examples of gender equality tools in vocational training institutes in Central America and the Dominican Republic.



Source: INSAFORP, INA, 2020

► Furthermore, the vocational training institutes of Central America and the Dominican Republic have adopted three clear approaches to bringing about gender equality:

- 1. Reviewing and adjusting training services using a gender approach (1.1 by using inclusive, non-discriminatory language, and, 1.2 by creating teaching material that includes social-emotional skills or specific content aimed at eradicating discrimination);

- ▶ 2. Training staff across the institutes' different levels and departments;
 - ▶ 3. Implementing communication campaigns to combat gender stereotypes that affect how women access, remain in and complete vocational training.
- ▶ In terms of planning and evaluation, results-based management for development must be strengthened. While all the institutes focus on equal enrolment, they do not examine equal access to certain training services or types that may affect women's labour market integration, thereby influencing existing gaps in the labour market. Only two institutes (the INA and INSAFORP) set specific targets in their planning tools and include results on gender equality in their annual reports.
- ▶ Most of the training offered by the institutes takes the form of short courses and often lacks coordination. This could influence employability and the training's impact. It is expected that progress towards the approval and implementation of national qualifications frameworks will improve coordination both among technical courses and between them and formal education.¹
- ▶ With regard to men and women's participation in vocational training, the majority of participants are young (aged under 35), and their education levels vary greatly. Although women's enrolment numbers are approaching those of men, there is a strong imbalance in terms of subject areas. One or the other sex predominates in almost 70 percent of courses.

Table 1. Vocational training institutes in Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic: subject areas by percentage share of men and women, 2019

Institute	Country /year	Total subject areas	Balanced	Unbalanced
INA	Costa Rica	36	28%	72%
INADEH	Panamá	29	31%	69%
INFOTEP	República Dominicana	58	28%	72%

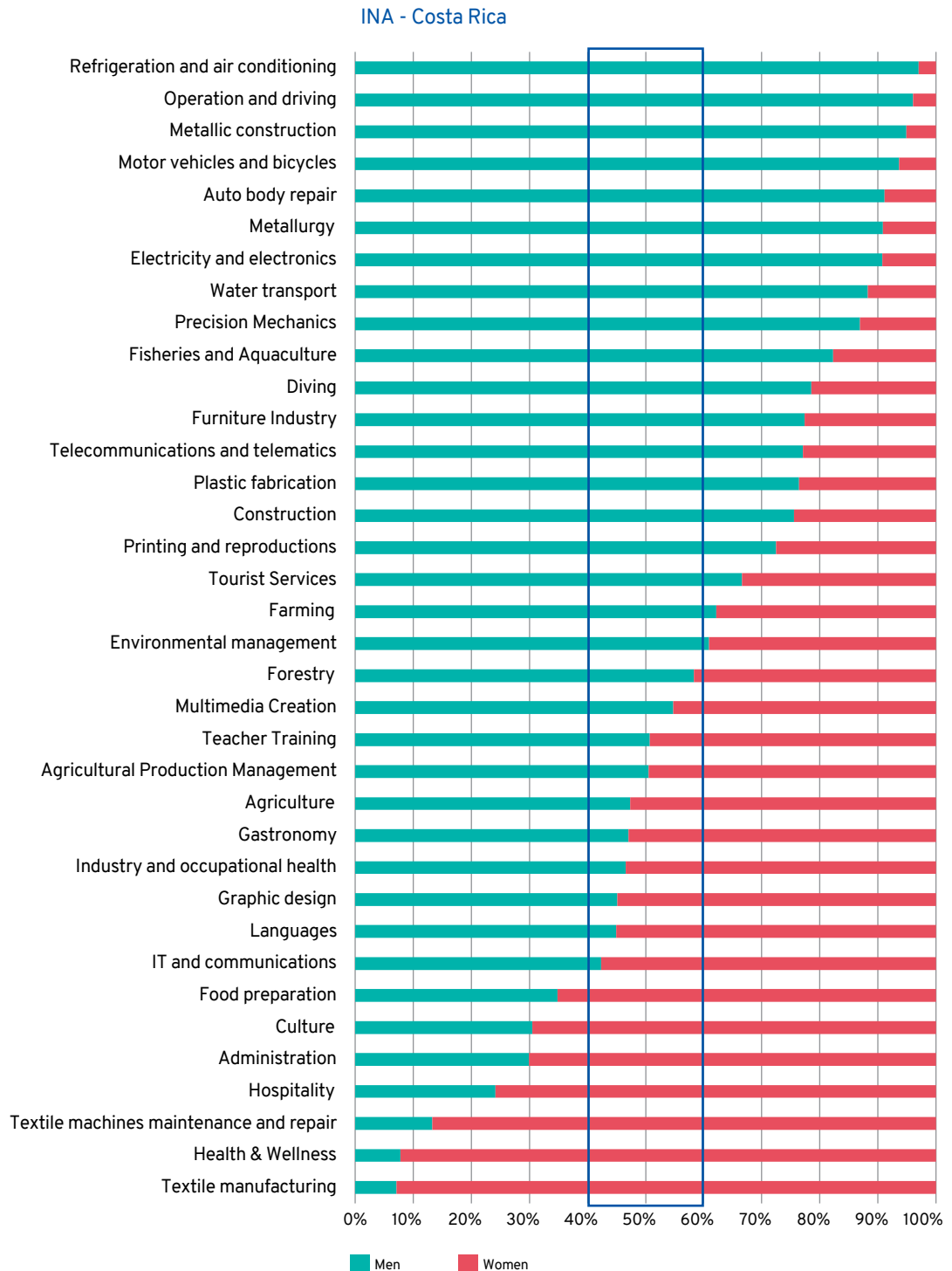
Participation in a subject area or technical area is deemed balanced when both sexes account for no less than 40 percent of participants.

Source: prepared by the author based on information from the vocational training institutes, 2020

- ▶ Women enrolled in vocational training institutes participate in traditionally female fields, where employability and wages are lower. They are concentrated in the domains of textiles, health, domestic service, accommodation, tourism, beauty, craftwork, flower growing, interior decoration and food production. Meanwhile, men are concentrated in the domains of metalworking, mechatronics, electricity, electronics, automation, refrigeration and air conditioning.

¹ In the last four years, frameworks have been approved in Costa Rica (2016) and the Dominican Republic (2015). Significant progress has been made in Honduras (2018) and Panama (2019).

Figure 3. Professional training institutions in Costa Rica and Panama: enrollment by specialty, by sex. 2019 (percentages). Part I.



Source: Prepared by the author based on information provided by training institutions.

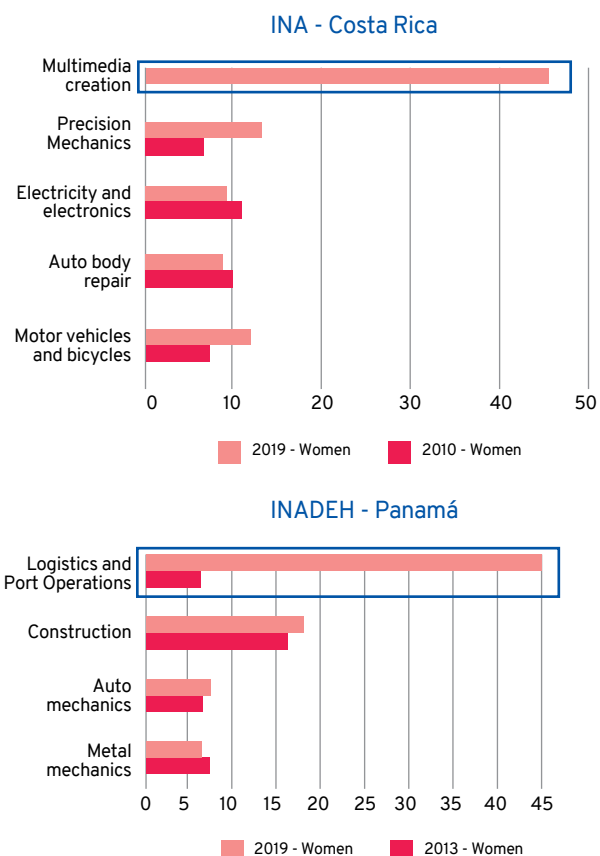
Figure 3. Professional training institutions in Costa Rica and Panama: enrollment by specialty, by sex. 2019 (percentages). II Part.



Source: Prepared by the author based on information provided by training institutions.

- This trend reflects the horizontal segregation present in the subregion that causes the majority of women to be employed in jobs with lower remuneration and social value. Those jobs are generally an extension of the activities socially and traditionally assigned to their sex. Women's vulnerability increases when we consider that the service sector is characterized by low productivity and has been affected greatly by the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.²
- This imbalance, or occupational segregation, is also present, and even increases, among instructors and teaching staff.
- However, it should be noted that most subject areas that were found by a 2014 ILO study to have the greatest imbalances in enrolment in favour of men saw an increase in the proportion of female participants by 2019. This is most notable in the areas of multimedia creation and logistics and ports in Costa Rica and Panama, respectively, where women's participation has risen to almost 50 percent. These areas also see high labour market demand. It should also be noted that women's participation in vehicle mechanics in the Dominican Republic has risen from 0.7 percent to 12.83 percent.

Figure 4. Change in enrolment rates in subject areas with the greatest imbalance in women's participation, 2010-2019 (percentages)



Source: prepared by the author based on information from the vocational training institutes, 2020

Change in enrolment rates in subject areas with the greatest imbalance in women's participation

INA - Costa Rica. 2010-2019. Multimedia creation.
Women 45,19 % and Men 54,81 %

INADEH - Panamá. 2010-2019. Logistics and Port Operations.
Women 44,7% and Men 55,3 %

² In 2019, 89.3 per cent of women in the Dominican Republic were employed in the sector; followed by Costa Rica, at 87.3 per cent; El Salvador, at 79 per cent; and Honduras, at 68.8 per cent.

- ▶ In absolute terms, dropout rates are higher among women participating in vocational training. Furthermore, when dropout rates are examined according to subject area, a link to occupational segregation emerges: a higher proportion of women withdraw from traditionally male subject areas such as electricity, metalworking and vehicle mechanics..
- ▶ Lastly, attention should be paid to the persistent and significant barriers faced by women wishing to access, remain in and complete vocational training. Noteworthy barriers include the concentration of training services in central regions, the lack of concrete

data on the progress made in increasing the flexibility of training schedules and workloads, the lack of subsidies or grants adapted to women's needs (for example, for care for dependents and transport) and the failure to adopt a gender approach in employment guidance and labour intermediation. There is also room for improvement in areas such as access to information, the simplification of procedures, and psychosocial support during training to ensure that women complete their courses and go on to join the labour market.



Original Photo: Insaforp, El Salvador. Edited photo.

Recommendations

The study identified four actions, detailed below, that could have a significant impact on progress towards gender equality in vocational training in the subregion.

Strategic action 1: Results-based management

Moving from procedures-based management to a model that aims to generate impact is vital. The implementation of this strategic action requires:

- 1. The improvement of institutional databases;
- 2. Planning based on targets and process and outcome indicators;
- 3. Monitoring and impact evaluation reports based on those indicators.

The Network of Vocational Training Institutes (RedIFP) could work to create an inventory of key indicators for gender equality in vocational training to guide improvements to record systems and the drafting of reports.

Furthermore, gender bias, which is unavoidable and often appears unwittingly, can be addressed most efficiently by the redesign of management processes and methods.

Hypotheses should be formulated as to which procedural changes would achieve the best results. For example, the hypothesis that evening or night classes or a higher number of female instructors would boost women's participation should be evaluated. The measurement of outcomes is vital.

It is important to set and monitor clear targets; such a step could promote behavioural change even before a change in attitudes is observed.

As proposed below, this work could be undertaken by means of sectoral plans that adopt this experimental approach to determine which changes are most effective and efficient.

Strategic action 2: Pilot sectoral plans to reduce occupational segregation

One-off pilot plans that progress gradually are recommended, given the difficulty posed by changing long-standing practices. A sectoral approach is preferred, working on one or two occupations with high labour demand and in which women's participation is low, where a difference could be made in terms of women's employability and, ideally, labour market integration.

The following actions should be implemented in relation to these occupations:

- 1. Defining targets and process and outcome indicators;
- 2. Aligning the conditions that allow women to access, remain in and complete training, for example grants, schedules, workloads, psychosocial guidance and support, infrastructure adjustments and supporting resources;
- 3. Training the trainers;
- 4. Managing links with the business sector (promoting workplace training).

The possibility of creating a guide featuring the lessons learned for use across the region could be explored at a later date.

At the same time as undertaking these pilot plans, it is important to promote the equal participation of men and women in new occupations where occupational segregation does not yet exist or is not yet entrenched. The study identified new education and training services relating to new specializations including cybersecurity, community management, digital marketing and biosecurity. Greater participation by men in these areas is already being recorded.

Strategic action 3: Improving the education levels of vulnerable women

Not all women who participate in vocational training are vulnerable.

It is important to work with those who have low levels of education and require additional support to break the cycle of poverty through access to technical programmes and courses that allow them to make real improvements to their employability and achieve meaningful labour

market integration. They should also be able to continue to study throughout their lives, if they so wish.

Options such as pre-apprenticeship programmes may be considered, complemented by the recognition of that knowledge through formal education.

The spaces created to coordinate the design and implementation of national qualification networks must be harnessed to identify possible actions in each national context.

Strategic action 4: Coordination of horizontal cooperation

The research process included seven meetings of the managers of the international cooperation departments and gender focal points of six of RedIFP's vocational training institutes. The meetings facilitated the sharing of challenges, progress and good practices, thus allowing for the identification of possible areas for cooperation between two or more institutes, including:

- ▶ 1. Staff training
- ▶ 2. Strengthening of gender offices
- ▶ 3. Developing processes to support women's participation
- ▶ 4. Improving curriculum tools using a gender approach
- ▶ 5. Improving databases

These spaces for horizontal cooperation must be created.

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Equality policies and plans of action

INA – Costa Rica

Transparency section on the Institute's website

<https://www.ina.ac.cr/transparencia/SitePages/Inicio.aspx>

- ▶ Planning (Institutional Operational Plan and Open Education Plan)
- ▶ Budget
- ▶ INA in figures

INFOP – Honduras

Institute portal

<https://www.infop.hn/>

Government one-stop information portal

<https://portalunico.iaip.gob.hn/portal/index.php?portal=357>

- ▶ Annual reports

INSAFORP – El Salvador

Transparency portal

<https://www.transparencia.gob.sv/institutions/insaforp/documents/memorias-de-labores>

- ▶ Budget
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Annual reports

Information on gender equality and equity on the Institute's portal

<https://www.insaforp.org.sv/index.php/121-avisos/792-igualdad-y-equidad-de-genero-en-el-quehacer-del-insaforp>

- ▶ Designed tools

INATEC – Nicaragua

<https://www.tecnacional.edu.ni/>

INADEH – Panamá

<https://www.inadeh.edu.pa/>

- ▶ Reports

INFOTEP - Dominican Republic

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