

# Women's Participation in Social Development

EXPERIENCES FROM ASIA, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Edited by KAREN MOKATE

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

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## Preface

This publication is the fourth in a series that documents experiences in different dimensions of social development and social policy issues in Latin America, the Caribbean and East and Southeast Asia. This series has been orchestrated by the Inter-American Institute for Social Development (INDES) and the Japan Program (JPN) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). INDES is both a training institute and a forum for knowledge exchange. Its main goal is to contribute to the development of a critical mass of decision-makers and managers knowledgeable about social development processes, skillful in their execution, and committed to democratic, equitable and sustainable social reform. The Japan Program is an initiative created in 1999 between the IDB and the Government of Japan to foster the exchange of knowledge and development experiences between Japan and the rest of East and Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

This volume documents valuable experiences related to the role of women and women's organizations in social development as presented at the workshop "Women's Participation in the Promotion of Social Development: Lessons from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean," held in Saitama, Japan from October 27-30, 2003. The workshop was organized by INDES and the Japan Program, with ample collaboration from the IDB office in Japan-Tokyo and financial support from the Government of Japan. During the workshop, 26 prominent researchers and practitioners from East and Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as some invited guests formed a cross-regional exchange to discuss women's role in the promotion of social development.

The participants in the workshop sought to analyze the diverse roles that women and women's organizations have played in the design and implementation of initiatives that seek to promote equitable and inclusive social development in East and Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean; to identify strategies and programs that effectively promote women's participation in social development; and to open opportunities for the exchange of experiences and for networking among researchers and practitioners from both regions. As such, the workshop attempted to add an inter-regional dimension to the analysis of diverse strategies, motivations and the roles of women in their efforts to contribute to the social development of their communities and nations.

Individual participants brought to the workshop concrete examples of how social development in their particular countries had been enhanced by women's participation; they documented the main prospects



and constraints faced by Asian, Latin American and Caribbean women to participate more effectively in social development processes and various strategies to be implemented to promote and facilitate such participation. These examples allowed for the analysis and evolution of a more effective female role in the social development of both regions.

The experiences discussed in this volume indicate that the participation of women in social development has taken many different forms and followed diverse strategies. Likewise, the obstacles and barriers that limit women's opportunities to participate in different aspects of community life and social development are markedly diverse from one experience to the next. Of course, historic, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and economic differences account for largely diverse experiences from the various countries. But still, we found that the establishment of cross-regional dialogue allows for the exploration of diverse strategies to empower women, to promote social development and to strive for the achievement of social equity in an environment of growth and development.

INDES and the Japan Program have united efforts to spark the exchange of experiences and lessons initiated by this workshop, in order to foment a healthy discussion between the women and women's organizations of East and Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. We trust that much can be learned from an analysis of the contexts in which women's participation in social development has evolved and from a reflection on how different public policies have facilitated opportunities for women to participate in economic, social and political dimensions of that development. We seek to facilitate that learning, in order to contribute valuable lessons that can be exploited as each region works toward its respective goals, both at the grassroots and national policy levels.

The valuable contributions of the IDB office in Tokyo made the 2003 workshop and this publication possible. I sincerely appreciate and recognize the efforts of Mr. Toshio Kobayashi, Mr. Fausto Medina and their team in Tokyo. Likewise, I would like to recognize the support provided by the Women in Development Unit of the Inter-American Development Bank, including Ms. Gabriela Vega, Ms. Ana María Brasileiro Ms. Vivian Roza and Ms. Mayra Buvinic and by the Gender and Development Unit of the Asian Development Bank, particularly through Ms. Yuriko Uehara. Additionally, a special note of appreciation for the efforts of the Japan program staff in Washington, D.C. and particularly those of Ms. Ikuko Shimizu and of the INDES team, especially of Karen Mokate, Axana Abreu, Patricia Larraburu and Ani Zamgochian.

*Nohra Rey de Marulanda*  
*Director, INDES*

## 序文

本書は中南米カリブ地域、および、東・東南アジアにおける社会開発や社会政策の問題の異なる側面での経験を記録したシリーズの第4集です。このシリーズは、米州社会開発研究所 (INDES) と米州開発銀行 (IDB) のジャパン・プログラムによって編纂されました。INDESは教育機関であるとともに、知識交流のためのフォーラムでもあります。INDESの主要目標は、社会開発プロセスについての優れた知識と実施能力を持ち、民主的で公平かつ持続可能な社会改革に専心する政策決定や管理担当の中心となる人材の開発に貢献することです。ジャパン・プログラムは、日本と、東・東南アジア、および中南米カリブ地域の国々の間で、開発における知識や経験の交流を促進する目的で、IDBと日本政府の協力のもと1999年に立ち上げられたイニシアチブです。

本書には、2003年10月27日から30日まで日本の埼玉県で行われたワークショップ「社会開発の促進における女性参加：アジア、中南米カリブ地域の教訓」で発表された社会開発における女性と女性組織の役割に関する貴重な経験が記録されています。このワークショップは、IDB駐日事務所の多大な協力と日本政府からの資金援助を得て、INDESとジャパン・プログラムが企画したものです。ワークショップでは、東・東南アジアおよび中南米カリブ地域の著名な研究者や専門家26人と、一部の招待客たちによって社会開発の促進における女性の役割を討論する地域間交流が行われました。

ワークショップの参加者は、東・東南アジアと中南米カリブ地域で女性や女性組織が、公平で包括的な社会開発の促進を目指すイニシアチブの計画および実施に果たした様々な役割の分析を行い、社会開発における女性参加を効果的に促進する戦略やプログラムを特定し、両地域の研究者と専門家の間で経験の交流やネットワーク作りの機会を提供することに努めました。従ってワークショップでは、相互コミュニティや自国の社会開発への貢献を行なう女性の幅広い戦略、動機付け、および役割の分析に、地域的な側面を加えることが試みられました。

各参加者はワークショップに、女性の参加で自国の社会開発がどのように促進されたかを示す具体例を持ち寄りました。そしてアジアと中南米カリブ地域において、女性がより効果的に社会開発プロセスに参加する際に直面する主な可能性と制約の実証と、そのような参加を促進するために実施される様々な戦略の実証を行いました。これらの実例は、両地域の社会開発における女性のより効果的な役割の分析と考察に役立ちました。

本書で議論されている数々の経験は、社会開発における女性の参加の形は多岐にあり、さまざまな戦略によるものであることを示しています。同様に、地域生活や社会開発の様々な側面における女性の参加機会を制限する障害や障壁は、

各経験で大きく異なることが示されました。もちろん、各国の経験が著しく多様なのは、歴史的、言語学的、宗教的、民族的、経済的な違いに起因するものです。それでも、地域間の対話の確立が、発展と開発の環境の中で女性をエンパワーし、社会開発を促進し、社会的公正の達成を目指す様々な戦略の探求に役立つと私たちは考えています。

東・東南アジア、および中南米カリブ地域の女性と女性組織の間での健全な議論を引き出すために、INDES とジャパン・プログラムは協力し、ワークショップで開始された経験と教訓の交流の火付け役を果たしました。私たちは、社会発展における女性参加が変化してきた背景の分析や、開発の経済的、社会的、政治的側面への女性の参加機会を促進した公共政策を検討することで多くを学べると信じています。そして、草の根レベルと国家政策レベルで各地域がそれぞれの目標に向かって取り組む際に利用できる貴重な教訓を提供するために私たちはその学習の促進に努めます。

2003年度のワークショップと本書の出版は JDB の駐日事務所の貴重な貢献によって実現しました。ご努力頂いた小林敏雄氏、メディアナ・ファウスト氏、およびその東京チームに対し心から感謝いたします。同様に、ガブリエラ・ヴェガ氏、アナ・マリア・ブラジレイロ氏、ヴィヴィアン・ロザ氏、およびマイラ・ブヴィニツ氏をはじめとする東州開発銀行の開発と女性ユニット (Women in Development Unit) のメンバーのご支援、また、特に上原百合子氏を通してのアジア開発銀行のジェンダーと開発ユニット (Gender and Development Unit) のご支援に感謝いたします。

さらに、ワシントン DC のジャパン・プログラムのスタッフ、なかでも清水育子氏と INDES チーム、特にカレン・マケイト氏、アクサナ・アブルー氏、パトリシア・ララブア氏、および、アニ・ザムゴチアン氏たちのご努力に感謝し、ここに記述したいと思います。



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Women's Participation in Social Development: An Introduction

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Women's participation in the development process has been recognized not only as an issue of human rights and social justice, but also as a crucial contribution to solving the pressing needs of important and often-excluded segments of society. Solutions to women's basic and strategic needs are part of the development process and effective, sustainable solutions require participation by the women likely to be affected by those solutions. Furthermore, evidence shows that women's participation in social development initiatives<sup>1</sup>, in policymaking and in development decisions generates benefits that affect not only women and their communities, but also society as a whole.

Today, more than ever, women are becoming active participants and full protagonists of the development process. However, many obstacles and barriers continue to complicate women's participation. In many parts of the world, large numbers of women remain isolated, unorganized, poor and constrained by sociocultural and legal structures that restrict their access to, and involvement in, the development process.

The obstacles and barriers that limit women's opportunity to participate in different aspects of community life and social development are markedly diverse. Public policy initiatives to overcome barriers to women participating equally in economic, social and political activity vary greatly among countries and over time.

Of course, the role of women in development must be analyzed and understood within the historical, cultural, social and political contexts of each nation and region. History, tradition, technology, demography and urbanization, among other factors, have influenced the role of women and their opportunities and experiences in the development process.

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<sup>1</sup> We will be referring to "social development" in the broad sense, which includes include economic growth, reduction of poverty and inequality and improvement in living conditions in a context of justice, equity and justice.

Accordingly, it is likely that much can be learned by analyzing the contexts in which women's participation in social development has evolved and by reflecting on how different initiatives have facilitated opportunities for women to participate in economic, social and political dimensions of that development.

In order to promote this comparative analysis of cases and experiences in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, the Inter-American Institute for Social Development (INDES), in collaboration with the Japan Program (JPN) and the IDB Office in Japan-Tokyo, organized a workshop in Saitama, Japan from October 27-30, 2003. This text presents the reflections shared in that workshop.

### **Social Development in Latin America, the Caribbean and East and Southeast Asia**

INDES' broad understanding of "social development" was applied to the workshop. As such, all statements related to "social development" refer to a multidimensional, dynamic process that leads to sustainable improvements in the well being of individuals, families, communities and society as whole, in a context of justice and equity. It is a process that seeks to reduce poverty and inequality, promote mature and full citizenship for all and strengthen democracy. As such, it depends on economic growth, improved competitiveness in the globalized economy, environmental sustainability, sustainable improvements in living conditions, and the development of human and social capital, in a strategy driven by economic objectives as well as ethical commitments to past, current and future generations.

Latin America and the Caribbean and East and Southeast Asia<sup>2</sup> have made important achievements in social development in the past twenty years. For example, infant mortality fell in LAC from 61 deaths per 1000 live births in 1980 to 29 in 2000; in East Asia and the Pacific<sup>3</sup>, it fell from

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, our references to East and Southeast Asia refer to the developing nations of these regions.

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank and the UNDP's classification of "East Asia and the Pacific" is an imperfect representation of this region, as it includes the small Pacific island nations of American Samoa, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federal States of Micronesia, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu and Vietnam. However, the population of the developing nations of East and Southeast Asia—Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Dem. Rep. of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam—constitute over 99 percent of the aggregate's total. If China is excluded from the calculations, the other East and Southeast Asian countries still constitute 98 percent of the modified aggregate population. As such, we consider that the weighted regional averages reflect the Asian nations that we are considering.

56 to 35 per 1000 live births in the same time period. Total adult literacy rates grew from 70 percent to 90 percent in East Asia and the Pacific and from 80 to 89 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. (World Bank, WDI, 2004) Democracy and protection of citizens' civil liberties has steadily improved in both regions since 1980, although more rapidly in Latin America and the Caribbean. (Freedom House, 2004)

Likewise, both East and Southeast Asia and the Latin American and Caribbean region have made significant achievements in gender equality. For example, the World Bank's World Development Indicators suggests that the developing economies of East Asia and the Pacific reduced their female illiteracy rates from 42 percent in 1980 to 19 percent in 2001 and those of Latin America and the Caribbean, from 23 percent in 1980 to 12 percent in 2001; both regions also have higher ratios of female to male enrolment rates in both primary and secondary schools than other developing regions of the world. Female labor force participation in East Asia and the Pacific has stood at between 43 and 45 percent since 1980; in the same time period, Latin America and Caribbean women have increased their participation in the labor force from 28 to 35 percent.

Of course, there are significant differences among nations within each of these regions. Myanmar (PPP, US\$1027 in 2003) and Haiti (PPP, US\$1860 in 2003) have the lowest per capita income levels in their respective regions; Argentina (PPP, US\$ 11,320), Barbados (US\$15,560) and Malaysia (US\$8750) have the highest income levels among the developing nations in their respective regions. (UNDP, 2003) In 2001, under-five mortality rates ranged from 9 deaths per 1000 live births in Cuba and 11 in Costa Rica to 77 in Bolivia and 123 in Haiti, and from 5 in the Republic of Korea and 8 in Malaysia to 138 in Cambodia. (UNDP Human Development Indicators, 2003) Life expectancy at birth varies from 52 years in Haiti and 54 years in Cambodia to 73 years in Malaysia, 76 years in Jamaica and 78 years in Costa Rica. (World Bank, WDI, 2004)

In general, and as Table 1 suggests, female participation in the labor force is higher in East and Southeast Asia than in Latin America<sup>4</sup>. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, women's average share in non-agricultural wage employment is higher than in East and Southeast Asia, which suggests intensive female participation in agricultural work in Asia.

Poverty is a societal ill that affects vast segments of the population in the regions we are considering. As Table 2 indicates, Latin American and Caribbean nations have higher average per capita income levels than

<sup>4</sup> The Caribbean has labor force participation rates more similar to those of Southeast Asia.

**Table 1. Indicators of Gender Equality in Selected Latin American, Caribbean and Asian countries**

	Female economic activity (% of women, age 15 and above)	Share of women in non-agricultural wage employment (% of total) 2001	Ratio of literate females to literate males, 15-24 years, 2001	Women's share of seats in lower house of parliament (% of total)	
				1990	2003
Argentina	36.2	43	1.00	6	31
Brazil	43.8	46	1.03	5	9
Colombia	48.5	49	1.01	5	12
Dominican Republic	40.4	34	1.02	8	17
Jamaica	67.2	46	1.07	5	12
Peru	34.9	35	0.97	6	18
Suriname	36.6	34	--	8	18
Trinidad & Tobago	44.5	40	1.00	17	19
China	72.6	39	0.98	21	22
Indonesia	55.6	30	0.99	12	8
Malaysia	48.7	36	1.00	5	10
Philippines	49.7	42	1.00	9	18
Thailand	73.1	47	0.99	3	9
Vietnam	73.7	-	1.01	18	27

Source: United Nations Human Development Indicators, 2003.

most of their East and South East Asian developing counterparts and on average, lower poverty rates. Yet, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have very high rates of inequality in the distribution of income and assets, which clearly affect that region's development options.<sup>5</sup>

The Republic of Korea and Japan are special cases in East Asia, as neither is classified as a developing nation. Their level of per capita income is higher than the other Asian countries included in this analysis. Likewise,

<sup>5</sup> Within LAC, inequality is much higher in Latin America than in the Caribbean.

**Table 2. Income, Poverty and Distribution Indicators from Selected Latin American, Caribbean and Asian countries**

	GDP per capital, PPP US\$, 2003	Gini Index, most recent estimate*	% of population living with less than US\$2 per day*	% of population living with less than US\$1 per day*	Share of national income concentrated in the richest 20%*
<b>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</b>					
Argentina	11,586	52	14	3	56
Brazil	7,767	61	22	8	64
Colombia	6,784	57	23	8	61
Dominican Republic	6,703	47	2	2	53
Jamaica	4,184	38	13	2	46
Peru	5,267	50	38	18	53
Trinidad & Tobago	9,975	40	39	12	46
<b>East Asia &amp; the Pacific<sup>6</sup></b>					
China	4,995	40	47	17	50
Indonesia	3,364	30	52	8	43
Malaysia	9,696	49	9	2	54
Philippines	4,321	46	46	15	52
Thailand	7,580	43	32	2	50
<b>Two special cases: East Asia</b>					
Korea, Rep.	17,908	32	2	2	37
Japan	28,162	25	--	--	36

\*Most recent estimate, 1997 through 2002.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators*.

<sup>6</sup> Refers to the developing countries of East Asia and the Pacific, detailed in footnote 3.

their achievements in reduction of poverty and inequality and human capital formation have reached levels beyond those of the other nations under study. However, the situation of women in these countries merits study. The UNDP's Gender Development Indicator (GDI) suggests that in both countries, women have shared in the benefits of development; women's health, education and income have improved along with those of society at large. Japan ranked ninth in the world in the Human Development Index in 2003 and thirteenth in the GDI for the same year. Korea ranked 30 in both indices. Nevertheless, for the Gender Empowerment Measure, which contemplates women's share in parliamentary seats, in positions as legislators, senior officials and managers and in professional and technical positions and in earned income, the two countries rank much lower: Japan holds 44<sup>th</sup> place and Korea, 63<sup>rd</sup>, the lowest among the OECD nations. Mari Osawa suggests that advances in gender equality are vital to the economic and social revitalization of Japanese society (Mokate and Osawa, in this volume). A look at women's participation in social development processes in Korea and Japan may, then, bring some interesting lessons to the analysis of women, democracy and development.

In general, advances in social development and gender equality place women in a better position than they have had in the past, to face the challenge of greater participation in economic and political activity. The ongoing process of strengthening democracy in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia provides opportunities to make important strides toward increased female roles in public spheres.

### **Women and Social Development**

Women's full participation is paramount if equal and successful development is to take place. Full participation constitutes part of what we might understand as "development" in a democratic and just society. Accordingly, we might develop our entire analysis on the understanding of participation as an end in itself. However, since women not only act as agents of social change but are a sustainable factor in this change, it stands to reason that when women are marginalized, national development goals are hampered. In other words, we might also consider women's participation to be a motor for development; obstacles to that participation limit the process of development.

Although women have a long history of organizing to confront economic and social crises, only in recent years has their participation in social development received special attention. Today, public policy is changing as women are mobilizing to enhance their community's devel-

opment, obtaining greater access to decision-making structures and actively formulating policy and legislation. Effective public policy analysis requires sensitivity to gender issues and recognition of women and women's organizations. Effective and democratic policy environments will encourage women's participation and women's organizations that promote women's voice and women's action in the development processes.

World leaders, gathered in 2000 at the United Nations' Millennium Summit prioritized a set of values to guide global development in the new century: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The call for equality evidently reinforces the promotion of women's participation in development processes. The call for solidarity and shared responsibility invites us (as citizens, advocates and policymakers) to facilitate opportunities for all citizens to act in the effort to promote equitable and sustainable development. Strategies to educate, inform and empower women are among the means used to facilitate these opportunities.

### **Women's Participation in the Promotion of Social Development: Latin American, Caribbean and Asian Experiences**

The Saitama workshop in October 2003 focused on participation of women and women's organizations in social development in three specific contexts: community development, including the satisfaction of basic human needs, the search for solutions to women's basic and strategic needs, and the search for income-generating opportunities; public policy dialogues and decision making; and formal political leadership roles.

The workshop addressed the following questions:

- How has social development been enhanced by women's participation? How have women or women's organizations participated in economic development, community development, social service delivery, and public policy dialogues and decision-making processes?
- How are women addressing not only their own basic and strategic needs, but the overall needs of society?
- What are the main constraints and opportunities faced by women to participate in these activities and to contribute more fully to social development?
- What type of strategies can be implemented to effectively promote and facilitate such participation?

Throughout the workshop, professionals from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia analyzed specific experiences of women's contributions to community development, as well as experiences that have sought to facilitate or enrich women's roles in the promotion of social development, in order to highlight lessons that can be learned by each region. These experiences may shed some light on possible alternative interventions to empower women and women's organizations to effectively participate in development initiatives, policy dialogues and decision-making.

This volume presents these experiences, organized according to the type of experience the authors were analyzing: in section one, regional overviews synthesize the achievements of women and women's organizations in the promotion of development; section two includes a series of concrete experiences of women working in the promotion of community development; section three presents experiences related to the promotion of women's political leadership; section four presents experiences involving women's organized participation in policy dialogues.

### *A Brief Synthesis*<sup>7</sup>

The workshop highlighted achievements and challenges to the promotion of women's participation in social development initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia. In both regions, the "rise of women" has been impressive, as economic growth has led to increases in consumption, life expectancy, literacy and educational attainment. Women are visible in Latin American, Caribbean and Asian societies and perform multiple roles in the private and public spheres. However, gender gaps persist, evidenced by little gender sensitivity in legal structures and public policies, low participation of women in development efforts, decision-making positions and politics in general, high levels of female unemployment and lower wages for women. While all the regions' countries have statutory provisions that should guarantee women the right to participate and eliminate obstacles to that participation, these provisions are often not enforced.

Cultural and religious acceptance of a subservient role of women exacerbates the impediments to women's participation. Women have become "inherently" different from men, as they assume all household responsi-

<sup>7</sup> This synthesis and the conclusions of this chapter draw heavily from the concluding session of the Saitama workshop and particularly from the final remarks of Gabriela Vega of the Inter-American Development Bank, Yuriko Uehara of the Asian Development Bank and the reflections of the participants' working groups.



bilities, work in a different (“more private”) economy and are “relegated to a different socio-cultural status” (Tantiwirmanond, in this volume). Accordingly, inequality persists in the gender distribution of roles and responsibilities in the promotion of development.

Diverse development strategies may have brought about particular characteristics of the way tasks are distributed within families, communities and nations, and this can help explain the differences in women's participation in the economic and political life of different countries. The workshop participants contemplated the notion that an economic growth strategy based on labor-intensive “light” industries, such as textiles or apparel, depended critically on female labor participation. In countries that pursued growth based on those industries, government policy may have proactively facilitated strategies to encourage a redistribution of roles such as child care, which had traditionally been the responsibility of women in the home. Further research on this point may shed light on a possible relationship between growth strategies based on industries dominated by female labor and public policy initiatives to facilitate redistribution of household tasks to facilitate women's participation in the labor force.

Women's organizations have emerged as basic social actors that promote more equitable participation in all spheres of society and provide effective links among women, and between women and governments and women and other social actors. They have emerged through women's own efforts: poor women who organize grassroots organizations to satisfy their own needs, as well as professional women who organize to facilitate the organization and empowerment of marginalized or low-income women. They have also emerged as the result of public policy, development NGOs, international development agencies and international feminist movements.

Recently, governments in both regions have supported or worked with women's organizations, providing them further sustainability. Governments frequently treat women in their role as mothers and focus a good part of their interventions with women's organizations on the promotion of children's development (Valdés, in this volume).

Crisis and societal concerns may provide key opportunities to create greater social awareness of women's issues different from those related to their children and to facilitate women's participation in public spheres. For example, the recognition of increases in poverty rates among households with a single female breadwinner has been used to advocate for restructuring of social services and social assistance to accommodate the needs of poor working women with pre-school-aged children. Another example has emerged with the growing concern with the decline in popu-

Focus	Recommended strategies		Expected results	
	Awareness	Capacity building	Commitments, attitudes, value	Action
Individuals, Communities (Micro Level)	<p>Training, education</p> <p>Mobilization</p>	<p>Create and/or strengthen grassroots or community organizations.</p> <p>Support community leaders. Mobilize women for community development.</p> <p>Provide or encourage financing for community organizations or community development initiatives.</p>	<p>Community identity</p> <p>Consensus on community concerns.</p> <p>Critical mass of individuals mobilized for change.</p>	<p>Solution of basic needs of the community.</p> <p>Advocacy by community-based organizations.</p>
Organizations (Meso Level)	<p>Training, Mobilization</p>	<p>Create and/or strengthen women's organizations.</p> <p>Financing.</p> <p>Production of gender data</p> <p>Promote women's political leadership.</p> <p>Promote women's participation in policy dialogues and policy advocacy.</p>	<p>Solidarity among women</p> <p>Solidarity of other organizations with women's issues and social development issues.</p> <p>Consensus on a policy agenda sensitive to human-centered equitable development.</p>	<p>Solution of women's strategic needs.</p> <p>Networks among women's organizations.</p> <p>Networks and interactions of women and women's organizations with key actors in policy dialogues.</p> <p>Advocacy and networking.</p>
Institutions (Macro Level)	<p>Communication strategy</p>	<p>Create and/or strengthen women's machinery in national and decentralized governments.</p> <p>Production of gender data.</p>	<p>Societal commitment to inclusive development.</p> <p>Social recognition of value of work in the home and the reproductive roles traditionally managed by women.</p> <p>Link of women's issues with development priorities.<sup>8</sup></p>	<p>Enhances in structures. Legislation and enforcement. Policy change.</p>

<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, and as suggested by Gabriela Vega, understand women's issues as societal issues.

lation growth in Korea and Japan. This concern is obliging those societies to define strategies that make marriage and child-rearing more compatible with the work-related activities and other goals of young people.

Teresa Valdés emphasizes a particular characteristic of Latin American societies, which provides specific challenges to the promotion of women's full and equitable participation in development: persistent inequality not only along gender lines, but also by socioeconomic status, geographical location, and ethnicity. The authors of the Latin American experiences in this volume make repeated reference to multiple inequalities and their implications for women's role in social development processes. Centralization and concentration of political power among the elite have only exacerbated the problem.

Efforts to empower women and promote women's participation in the promotion of social development might focus on a continuum of strategies suggested by the following framework: in Table 3 on the following page.

Strategies to promote women's participation could focus on the areas of actions specified in the first two columns, in order to create the commitments, attitudes and values and to lead to the actions described in the last two columns.

An additional focus on these efforts might be targeted to the private sector, particularly to facilitate greater and more equitable participation of women in economic activity. However, the scope of this issue is so large that we decided to exclude it from the workshop's activity.

The workshop focused on three specific areas of action or strategies for women's participation in social development, as described in the following sections.

### **Women's Mobilization for Community Development**

Women all over the world have organized to promote solutions to their communities' needs. Shared needs appear to motivate and mobilize women's organizations. The workshop examined five experiences in which women and women's organizations were making proactive and deliberate efforts to promote the development and progress of low-income communities. Experiences of this nature allow us to explore questions such as: Under what conditions do women come together to mobilize resources for the development of their community? What strategies do they choose and why? How has development been enhanced? Under what conditions do women and women's organizations mobilize based on their gender identity? What issues are addressed? Does women's involvement in community development empower and enable women to become active par-

participants in the policy-making process? How are women addressing the issue of compatibility of their multiple roles—as mothers, as wives, as community development leaders, as entrepreneurs, etc.? How is this affecting women's participation in community development initiatives?

Women often organize themselves in response to critical situations in their own communities (the Payatas case in the Philippines presented by Guiza and the Peruvian experience documented by Blondet, in this volume). This response may mean that women project into the public sphere their traditional caregiving roles. Indeed, these initiatives have effectively contributed to the quality of life in poor communities, with tangible improvements in nutrition, well-child care, registration and statistics on births, deaths, and marriage, and the delivery of services to the disabled, senior citizens and victims of violence. Additionally, their efforts create by-products that may be equally or even more valuable: social capital, community identity or cohesion, empowerment of women and their awareness of their rights.

Other experiences of women's organization to promote community development have emerged from proactive measures taken by professional women in solidarity with other women with specific needs (Regina Vargas and Katjasungkana, for example). In essence, initiatives of this nature feature women working to empower and educate other women, as well as to raise social awareness of the inequalities that disproportionately affect low-income and rural women and those belonging to ethnic or racial minorities. The results of these efforts build on changes experienced by empowered women (as individuals), who can then adopt community leadership roles and eventually influence public policies and social awareness.

Finally, women have also been mobilized to participate in community development by NGOs, feminist organizations, the church or religious organizations or governmental agencies. Effective mobilization should lead to a sustainable, autonomous process in which the women of a community continue to organize themselves for planning and action. However, Blondet (in this volume) warns us that women's organizations can come to depend on the assistentialist framework of actors such as government agencies, which inhibit the autonomy, entrepreneurship and self-sustainability of those organizations.

Women's participation in effective responses to community issues creates opportunities for empowerment of women and their integration into public activity. Experiences in women's participation in the promotion of community development suggest that women's organization facilitates improvements in the welfare of the community, as well as changes in women's

sense of worth and contribution, their motivation and empowerment. The value of these experiences must be judged by their contribution to better living conditions for women, men and children, to the emotional well-being of women, to the stock of social capital in our communities, to women's leadership and to the empowerment of grassroots women's organization. As well, they can be analyzed in terms of their effects on the attitudes, perceptions and traditions that perpetuate gender inequalities in society.

### **Promoting Women's Leadership**

An obvious strategy to promote greater participation in development efforts is to promote female leadership in diverse dimensions of public life: economic activity, professional organizations, labor or trade unions and politics at the community and national levels. The workshop participants analyzed several experiences at the grassroots and national levels, focusing on the strategies and building blocks used to advance and enhance women's participation and leadership.

Efforts to enhance women's leadership in electoral politics were highlighted in several cases, as women continue to be under-represented in national and local governments and decision-making positions. Beyond the intrinsic value of female political participation, Buvinic and Roza argue that it also increases the visibility of issues related to women, children and families on the policy agenda. Rodrigues suggests that it contributes to greater democratization of political processes and tends to promote social issues aligned with women's issues. Research from diverse parts of the world supports the conclusion that women's participation in politics is valuable because it is equitable and inclusive in nature and contributes to the social development content of public policy.

Female leadership may be considered inherently different from—not an imitation of—male leadership.<sup>9</sup> As such, conscientious preparation of women for leadership may require efforts to develop the self-confidence and political awareness of potential young leaders, to facilitate the creation of networks among women and to give women the skills they require to succeed in public spheres (See Pile and Pandey, for example). Additionally, efforts must focus on reducing the institutional and societal obstacles to greater participation of women in public spheres, such as scarce options for childcare, rigid labor regulations and cultural norms.

Of course, it is not enough simply to have female leaders. There is a need to forge a sense of identity among women leaders and a gender-sensi-

<sup>9</sup>This is a premise of UNIFEM's concept of transformational leadership, as discussed by Stephanie Pile in this volume.

tive policy agenda that facilitates effective representation and discussion of issues that are important to women. This may be promoted through dialogues between female politicians (candidates and elected officials) and the leaders of women's organizations (see Rodriguez and Ganga, for example).

Public awareness of women's issues and the importance of women's participation in diverse dimensions of public life may be critical to putting these issues on the public policy agenda. Efforts that encourage men and women alike to combat gender inequality that limits full participation in politics and social development may help change engrained societal stereotypes. (Chiarotti, in this text) Other efforts may attempt to highlight the importance of women in public decision-making and position female candidates to elected positions and to the public. (Ganga, in this volume)

In synthesis, the experiences examined by the workshop participants suggest that the promotion of women's leadership in general and women's leadership in politics (in particular) may be a crucial contribution to gender equality and overall social development. Efforts must be made to prepare women for this role, strengthening their capacities and commitment to exercise leadership roles. It also depends on greater societal awareness and commitment to changing cultural norms that limit a redistribution of power in the public spheres (most particularly, the economic and political spheres) and a redefinition of gender roles in the private (family) spheres. Finally, it is crucial to maintain links between elected women and the agenda of equitable, inclusive development, which includes the effective promotion of gender equality.

#### **Women's Roles in Policy Dialogues and Decision-Making Processes**

Of course, individual women's efforts to exercise effective political leadership are not the only strategy affecting public policymaking. Women are also making efforts to organize and to create awareness (among themselves and in society in general) regarding issues that concern them as women, mothers, workers, family members or members of their communities. They are organizing to consolidate ideas, articulate concerns and influence policy agendas and decisions.

Organized women may call attention to the apparent, but questionable, gender neutrality of governance structures and public policy decisions, in order to identify and call public attention to constraints to gender equality and greater participation of women in social development. They can challenge assumptions and concepts that influence public policy decision-making and encourage more inclusive, equitable public policy. Organized participation by women may influence the direction of public policy dialogue and, ultimately, of policy decisions. (See Bonilla, for example)

Women's networks may strengthen initiatives to consolidate a policy agenda that would be sensitive to women's concerns and would advocate effectively in favor of that agenda. Networks among women and women's organizations may be perceived as more forceful and legitimate actors in the policy process. Governmental women's agencies, political parties, and/or national or international women's organizations can play important roles in promoting and consolidating these networks. (See Kim and Truong).

In turn, networks might act to:

- Integrate women's issues into public policy dialogues, including the debates related to development plans, public sector budgets, and sectorial policies;
- Act to create broad-based awareness of women's concerns and social development issues;
- Promote learning from experience;
- Take advantage of the opportunity created by governmental commitments to the Millennium Development Goals in order to pressure for structural policy change to promote equitable growth and development;
- Pressure governments to translate its formal commitments to social justice and gender equality into the associated budgetary allocations;
- Create mechanisms for social control or public monitoring of governmental policy related to social development and gender equality;
- Lobby for legislation that will institutionalize achievements and avoid reversals when government administration changes.

## **Conclusions**

The experiences documented in this volume suggest that the organization of women raises awareness, facilitates empowerment and strengthens capacities and commitments to change. As such, it enhances the practice of inclusive and responsible democracy. Additionally, it may affect the nature and quality of public policy and development efforts. Consequently, women's participation in social development efforts may be promoted and facilitated as a fundamental right of women and also as a benefit to society at large.

Women are becoming increasingly proactive in organizing themselves. However, women who have traditionally been marginalized or discriminated may need to be encouraged to participate, through efforts by government or non-governmental organizations. However, care must be

taken to avoid over-intervention that would make the women's organization dependent on that agency.

Efforts to facilitate women's organization and participation might include:

- Training of women and women's organizations, in order to strengthen their commitments, awareness and skills to act in public spheres and to challenge structures, norms and traditions.
- Training of young women, to strengthen their identity with other women, their awareness of social development issues and of their rights and responsibilities, their commitment to action and their skills.
- Interventions to facilitate the compatibility of women's public and private roles, including diverse alternatives for child care, labor regulation which respects women and men's family roles and family-friendly calendars and schedules for activities in the public sphere.
- Legislation and regulation and effective enforcement of existing legislation to eliminate discrimination.
- Specific efforts to address multiple inequalities faced by women from lower-income groups, rural areas and/or racial and ethnic minorities.
- Preparation of society for change, through communication strategies to strengthen general awareness of the value of gender equality and women's participation in public spheres. These should include efforts to create recognition of the value of unpaid work in family productive and reproductive roles traditionally carried out by women and to redefine what has historically been perceived as "male domains" and "female domains".
- Promotion of solidarity and networks among women and women's organization. Promotion of networks with other organizations committed to the promotion of social development.
- Awareness-building in male-dominated organizations and institutions, in order to move beyond "ghettos of women working for women".
- Creation and maintenance of databases that support the analysis of women's concerns and of equity in social development.
- Strengthening of women's machinery in local, regional and national governments.
- Alignment of gender concerns with development priorities and other policies.



## エグゼクティブ・サマリー

### 社会開発における女性の参加：中南米カリブとアジアの経験から 序章

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開発のプロセスにおける女性の参加は、人権や社会正義の問題としてだけでなく、重要だが除外されがちな社会領域の差し迫ったニーズの解決への重要な貢献としても認識されている。女性の基本的で戦略的なニーズの解決は、開発プロセスの一部であり、有効で持続可能な解決には、それらの解決で影響を受けるとと思われる女性の参加を要する。さらに社会開発イニシアチブ<sup>1</sup>、政策決定、および開発決定への女性の参加が、女性とそのコミュニティだけでなく、社会全体にも影響する利益を生み出すことが証明されている。

今日、ますます女性は開発プロセスに積極的に関与し、その本格的な主役となりつつある。しかし、相変わらず多くの障害や障壁が女性の参加を複雑にしている。世界各地で、女性の開発プロセスへの関与やアクセスを制限する社会文化的および法的な構造によって、多くの女性が依然として孤立し、組織化されず、貧しく、制約を受けたままでいる。

コミュニティ生活や社会開発の異なる面での女性の参加機会を制限する障害や障壁は著しく多様である。経済的、社会的、政治的活動への女性の平等な参加に対する障壁を打破するための公共政策イニシアチブは、国によっても、時の流れによっても大きく異なる。

言うまでもなく、開発における女性の役割は、各国や地域の歴史、文化、社会、および政治との関わりの中で分析され理解されなければならない。中でも歴史、伝統、技術、人口動態、および都市化などの要素が、開発プロセスにおける女性の役割と彼らの機会や経験に影響を与えてきた。

従って、社会開発における女性の参加が進んできた背景を分析し、異なるイニシアチブについて、それらがどのように社会開発の経済、社会、政治の面での女性の参加機会を助けてきたかを検討することにより、おそらく多くのことが学べるであろう。

アジアおよび中南米カリブ地域における事例や経験について、この比較分析を進めるために、東洋社会開発研究所 (INDES) は、ジャパン・プログラム (JPN) および東京にある IIB 駐日事務所と協力し、ワークショップを日本の埼玉県に

<sup>1</sup> 広義の「社会開発」を指し、経済成長、貧困・不平等の緩和、および正義や公平との関連における生活条件の向上などを含む。



において 2003 年 10 月 27 日から 30 日の日程で開催した。本書はそのワークショップで共有された論討内容を示すものである。

### 中南米カリブ地域、および東・東南アジアにおける社会開発

このワークショップでは、INDES の「社会開発」についての幅広い理解が適用された。従って「社会開発」に関連するすべての記述は、正義と公平さとの関連の中で、個人、家庭、コミュニティ、社会全体の福祉に持続可能な改善をもたらす多面的でダイナミックなプロセスを指している。それは貧困と不平等の緩和、あらゆる人のための全面的かつ完全な市民権の促進、そして民主主義の強化を目指すプロセスである。従ってそれは、過去、現在、未来の社会と倫理的コミットメントと経済的目標によって推進される戦略における、経済成長、グローバル化経済における改善された競争力、環境の持続性、生活条件の持続的改善、人間と社会資本の開発などによって異なる。

中南米カリブ地域 (LAC) と東・東南アジア<sup>1)</sup>は、過去 20 年間に社会開発の面で重要な成果を上げてきている。例えば、幼児死亡率は LAC で出生 1000 につき 1980 年に 61 だったのが 2000 年には 29 へと減少し、同期間に東アジア・太平洋地域では生児出生 1000 につき 56 から 35 へと減少した。また総成人識字率は東アジア・太平洋地域<sup>2)</sup>では 70 パーセントから 90 パーセントに、中南米カリブ地域では 80 パーセントから 89 パーセントに増加した (世界銀行 WDI, 2004 年)。民主主義と国民の市民的自由の保護の改善は、1980 年以後両地域において著実に進められているが、その速度では中南米カリブ諸国の方が優る (フリーダム・ハウス 2004 年)。

同様に、東・東南アジアと中南米カリブ地域の両地域は、ジェンダー平等の国において顕著な成果を上げてきた。例えば、世界銀行の「世界開発指標 (WDI)」によると、女性の文盲率が、東アジア・太平洋地域の経済的發展途上国では 1980 年の 42 パーセントから 2001 年の 19 パーセントに減少し、中南米カリブ地域では 1980 年の 23 パーセントから 2001 年の 12 パーセントに減少した。また両地域は世界の他の發展途上地域に比べ、小学校および中学校に入学する女性の男性に対する割合が高い。東アジア・太平洋地域の女性の労働参加率は、1980 年以來

<sup>1)</sup> 物に明記のない限り、本書で示す「東・東南アジア諸国」はこれらの地域の發展途上国を指す。「世界銀行と国際連合の「東アジア・太平洋地域」の分類は、アメリカ領サモア、フィジー、インドネシア、キリバス、マーシャル諸島、ミクロネシア連邦、北マリアナ諸島、パラオ、パプアニューギニア、サモア、ソロモン諸島、トンガ、およびバヌアツを含む太平洋諸島の小さな国々とベトナムを含むためこの地域を指すには完全ではない。しかし、東・東南アジアの發展途上国はカンボジア、中国、インドネシア、韓国、ラオス、マレーシア、モンゴル、ミャンマー、フィリピン、タイ、東チモール、およびベトナムを含むが、人口総計の 99% を占める。中国を計算から除いた場合、その他の東・東南アジア諸国は、修正人口総計の 98% を占める。従って、地域の加重平均が本書で検討対象とするアジア諸国を反映するものと考えられる。



43 パーセントから 45 パーセントの増を示している。同期間の中南米カリブ諸国の女性の労働力参加率は 28 パーセントから 35 パーセントへと増加した。

当然ながら、これらの各地域の諸国間でも大きな差がある。ミヤンマー（2003 年度 PPP US\$1,027）とハイチ（2003 年度 PPP \$ 1,860）はそれぞれの地域において一人当たりの所得水準が最も低い。一方アルゼンチン（PPP US\$ 11,320）、バルバドス（US\$ 15,560）、マレーシア（US\$ 6,750）はそれぞれの地域における発展途上国の中で所得水準が最も高い。2001 年の生児出生 1000 あたりの 5 歳未満死亡率は、キューバの 9、コスタリカの 11 から、ボリビアの 77、ハイチの 123 まで、そして韓国の 5、マレーシアの 8 からカンボジアの 138 までと幅が広い（UNDP の人的開発指標 2003 年）。出稼時平均寿命は、ハイチの 52 歳、カンボジアの 54 歳からマレーシアの 73 歳、ジャマイカの 76 歳、コスタリカの 78 歳までと様々である（世界銀行「WDI」2004 年）。

一般的に、また表 1 が示すように、女性の労働力参加は東・東南アジアの方がラテンアメリカよりも高い。しかし女性の非農業の雇用は中南米カリブ地域のほうが東・東南アジアよりも高い。このことは、アジアにおける女性の労働力参加が農業に集中していることを示している。

表 1  
中南米カリブ地域、およびアジアの主要国のジェンダー平等指標

	女性の熟練 労働 (15歳以上 の女性の %割合)	非農業雇用 の女性 占有率 (合計の% 割合) 2001	15歳から24 歳の識字力 のある者の うち女性の 男性に比す る比率 2001	国合下四議席の 女性占有率 (合計の%)	
				1996	2003
アルゼンチン	36.2	45	1.00	6	31
ブラジル	43.8	46	1.01	5	9
コロンビア	46.5	49	1.01	5	12
ドミニカ共和 国	40.4	34	1.02	8	17
ジャマイカ	67.2	46	1.07	3	12
ペルー	34.9	35	0.97	6	18
トリニダード トバゴ	30.0	34	-	8	18
トリニダード トバゴ	44.5	40	1.00	17	19
中国	72.6	39	0.96	21	22
インドネシア	35.6	30	0.99	12	8
マレーシア	46.7	36	1.00	3	10
フィリピン	49.7	42	1.00	9	18
タイ	55.1	47	0.99	3	9
ベトナム	55.7	-	1.01	58	27

資料：国連人口開発指標 2003 年。

<sup>1</sup>カリブ諸国の労働力参加率は東南アジアのそれに近い。

貧困は、本書で検討の対象とされる地域の住民の大部分に影響する社会の病気である。表2が示すように、中南米カリブ諸国は一人当たり平均所得水準が、東・東南アジアのほとんどの発展途上国よりも高く、貧困率が平均して低い。にもかかわらず、中南米カリブ地域(LAC)は所得と資産の分配において不平等率が非常に高く、それがこの地域の開発の進捗状況に明らかに影響している<sup>1)</sup>。

表2  
中南米カリブ、およびアジアの主要国の所得、貧困、および分配の指標

	一人当たり GDP、PPP 1995 2003	ジニ係数 農業の集約*	1日の生活費 1884以下の人 日%割合*	1日の生活費 1884以下の 人口%割合*	最も窮乏な20% に集中する国民 所得の割合
<b>中南米カリブ諸国</b>					
アルゼンチン	11,386	52	14	3	38
ブラジル	7,367	61	22	5	64
コロンビア	6,784	57	23	5	61
ドミニカ共和国	6,703	47	2	2	33
ジャマイカ	4,184	38	13	2	46
ペルー	3,267	56	38	18	33
トリニダード トバゴ	6,975	48	18	12	46
<b>東アジアおよび太平洋地域*</b>					
中国	4,993	48	47	13	50
インドネシア	3,364	38	32	8	43
マレーシア	6,806	48	9	2	54
フィリピン	4,321	46	46	13	52
タイ	3,300	43	32	2	50
<b>韓国・台湾の2国と東アジア</b>					
韓国	17,098	32	2	2	37
日本	26,162	29	--	--	36

\* 最新の推定。1997年から2002年まで。  
資料)世界銀行「世界開発指標」

韓国と日本はいずれも開発途上国に分類されないため、東アジアの特殊なケースである。両国とも一人当たりの所得水準が本分析で対象としているアジアの他の国々に比べて高い。同様に、この二つの国における貧困と不平等性の緩和、および人的資本の形成の達成度は、調査したその他の国々のレベルを越えている。しかし、この二つの国における女性の状況は調査する価値がある。UNDPのジェンダー開発指標(GDI)は、どちらの国においても、開発の恩恵を女性が共有したことを示している。女性の健康、教育、および所得は、社会全体でそれらが向上すると共に向上した。日本は、2003年の人間開発指標で世界第9位、同年のGDIで世界第13位であった。韓国は、どちらの指標も第30位である。それにも

<sup>1)</sup> 中南米カリブ地域のうち、不平等性はラテンアメリカ諸国の方がカリブ諸国よりもはるかに高い。

\* 東アジアと太平洋諸国の発展途上国を指す。詳細は改訂要約。

かかわらず、国会議員、議員職、高級官吏職、管理職、技術職・専門職、稼得所得に占める女性の割合を測定するジェンダーエンパワーメント測定では、韓国はずっと低くランクされている。日本は第 44 位であり、韓国は第 63 位で OECD 加盟国の中で最下位である。大沢真理は、ジェンダー平等の推進は日本の経済と社会の活性化に不可欠と発言している（本書：モカアと大沢）。従って、韓国と日本の社会開発プロセスにおける女性の参加を考察することで、女性、民主主義、および開発の分析に何か興味深い教訓がもたらされると考えられる。

一般的に、社会開発とジェンダー平等の進展は、経済・政治活動へのより大きな参加という課題に対応するために、女性の立場を今までよりも高める。現在中南米カリブ地域、およびアジアで実施されている民主主義を強化するプロセスは、公的領域における女性の役割の増加に向けて重要な前進を遂げるための機会を提供する。

### 女性と社会開発

平等で成果ある開発を行うためには、女性の全面的な参加が最も重要となる。全面的参加は、民主的で公正な社会において私たちが「開発」として理解するもの的一部分を成す。従って私たちの分析はすべて、参加への理解を目的に展開されるであろう。しかし、女性は社会変化の仲介役を務めるだけでなくこの変化の持続を可能にする要素でもあるので、女性が社会的に取り残された場合、国家的発展目標の達成が阻まれるのは当然のことである。つまり、女性の参加は開発のための推進力であり、その参加を阻む物は開発のプロセスを制限すると考えることができる。

女性は昔から経済的・社会的危機に立ち向かうために団結してきたが、彼らの社会開発への参加が特に注目されるようになったのは近年のことである。女性がコミュニティの開発を促すために結束し、意思決定システムへのより広いアクセスを入手し、積極的に政策や法律の策定を行なう今日、公共政策は変化す。有効な公共政策分析は、ジェンダー問題への細やかな配慮と、女性と女性組織に対する認識を必要とする。有効で民主的な政策環境は、女性の参加と開発プロセスに女性の意見や活動を反映するよう働きかける女性組織を奨励するであろう。

2000 年に国連のミレニアムサミットに集まった世界の首脳たちは、新しい世紀のグローバルな開発の指針として一定の価値を最優先事項とした。それらは、自由、平等、尊重、寛容、自然の尊重、責任の分担である。平等の必要性は、明らかに開発プロセスへの女性参加の促進に拍車をかけるものであり、連帯と責任分担の必要性は、公平で持続可能な開発を促進する活動に誰もが参加できる機会を私たちが（市民、支持者、政策立案者として）促進することを奨励するものである。これらの機会を促進するための手段に、女性教育、情報提供、地位向上のための戦略が含まれる。

## 社会開発の促進における女性の参加：中南米カリブ地域およびアジアの経験

2005年10月の埼玉のワークショップは、3つの特定の領域での社会開発における女性と女性組織の参加に焦点を合わせた。それらは、人間の基本的要求の充足、女性の基本的・戦略的ニーズの解決策の探求、所得創出機会の探求を含むコミュニティ開発、公共政策対話と意思決定、そして正式な政治主導的役割である。

ワークショップは以下の疑問に取り組んだ。

- 女性の参加によって社会開発はどのように強化されたか。
- 女性または女性組織はどのように経済成長、コミュニティ開発、社会福祉の提供、公共政策対話と政策決定プロセスに参加してきたか。
- 女性は自らの基本的ニーズと戦略的ニーズだけでなく社会全体のニーズとどのように取り組んでいるか。
- 女性がこれらの活動に参加し、社会開発にもっと全面的に貢献しようとした場合に直面する主な制限と機会とは。
- そのような参加を有効に促進し容易にするために、どのような戦略を取り入れることができるか。

ワークショップを通じて、中南米カリブ地域、およびアジアの専門家たちは、各地域が学び得る教訓を明らかにするために、コミュニティ開発における女性の貢献の具体的な経験や、社会開発の促進における女性の役割を高めようとしたり、支援しようとした経験の分析を行なった。これらの経験は、開発イニシアチブ、政策対話、および意思決定に、女性と女性組織が効果的に参加できるようエンパワーするのに利用可能な手段を見つけるのに役立つと考えられる。

本書ではこれらの経験が、著者が分析した経験の種類によってまとめられている。第一章は地域の概観で、開発の促進における女性と女性組織の成果が総合的にまとめられている。第二章は、コミュニティ開発の促進に努める女性の一連の具体的な経験が掲載されている。第三章は、女性の政治的リーダーシップの促進に関連する経験が提示され、第四章には、政策対話における女性の組織的な参加に関する経験が示されている。

### シンセシス要約

ワークショップは、中南米カリブ地域とアジアの社会開発イニシアチブにおける女性参加の促進の成果と課題を深き彫りにした。経済成長によって消費、平均寿命、識字率、および教育的達成が高められたために、両地域における「女性の地位向上」は目覚ましいものがある。中南米カリブ地域、およびアジアの社会で女性

<sup>1</sup>本章のシンセシス（総合）と結論は、その大部分を埼玉のワークショップにおける経験セッション、特に参加開発銀行のガブリエラ・ヴェガとアジア開発銀行の上原百合子の最終発表、および参加者のワーキンググループの見解から得たものである。

は無視できない存在であり、公的領域においても私的領域においても複数の役割を担っている。しかし、ジェンダー格差は依然と多く、それは、法律系や公共政策の中でのジェンダーに対する乏しい配慮、開発活動、意思決定権のある地位、および政治一般における女性参加の低さ、女性の非雇用レベルの高さ、女性の賃金の低さなどによって説明されている。これらの地域内のどの国にも、女性に参加の権利と参加への障害を排除する権利を保障するはずの法律の規定があるが、これらの規定は多くの場合行使されることがない。

女性の補助的役割の文化的・宗教的承認は、女性への参加への障害を悪化させる。女性はすべての家事を引き受け、異なる（「より私的な」）経済のもとで働き、「異なる社会文化的立場へと追いやられる」（本書：タンティグワマンナド）ために「本質的に」男性と異なるようになる。従って、開発促進における役割と責任の男女配分において不平等が持続する。

多様な開発戦略は、家族やコミュニティや国における仕事の配分方法に特定の特性をもたらしたと思われる。それは異なる国々の経済・政治生活における女性の参加の違いを説明するにのに役立つ。ワークショップの参加者は、繊維または衣料などの労働集約型「軽」工業を基礎とする経済発展の戦略は、女性の労働参加に大きく依存するという概念の検討を行った。それらの産業をもとに成長を進める国の政府の方針は、伝統的に在宅女性の責任とされてきた子育てなどの役割の再配分を推奨する戦略を積極的に支援してきたと考えられる。この点についてさらに研究を進めることにより、女性労働力を中心とした産業を基礎とする開発戦略と、女性の労働力参加を容易にする家事の再配分を支援する公共政策イニシアチブの関連の可能性が明らかになるかもしれない。

女性組織は、社会のあらゆる領域においてより公平な参加を促進し、有効なリンクを女性同士、女性と政府、女性とその他の社会的行為者などの間に提供する基本的社会的行為者として出現した。それらは女性たち自らの努力によって生まれたものであり、例えば自らのニーズを満たすために草の根草の根組織を立ち上げた貧しい女性たちや、そのような組織や、社会的に取り残された、あるいは既婚者の女性たちのエンパワーメントを助けるために団結した専門家の女性たちなどによるものである。女性組織の中には、公共政策、開発、NGO、国際開発機関、および国際女性運動などの結果として現れたものもある。

近年、両地域の政府は女性組織に協力や支援を行っており、女性組織の持続性はさらに高められている。政府は母親の立場にある女性への対応を行なうことが多く、女性組織との介入の大部分の焦点を子供の開発の促進に向けている（本書：ヴァルデス）。

危機的状況や社会的問題は、子供に関わる問題とは異なる女性の問題に対する社会意識を高め、公的領域における女性参加を容易にするための重要な機会を提供

すると考えられる。例えば、自身の女性を探ぎ手とする世界の貧困率が増加しているという認識は、学齢前の子供を抱えて働く若い女性のニーズを満たすための社会福祉と社会援助の再構築を主張するために用いられている。また、別のケースが人口増加率の減少に対する懸念が高まる日本と韓国に出現した。この懸念により日本と韓国の社会では、結婚と子育てが、仕事に関連する活動や若者たちのその他の目的と両立できるような戦略を明確に定めることを強いられている。

テレサ・ヴァルデスは、開発に女性の全面的かつ公平な参加を促進する努力に対し特有の報酬をもたらす。ラテンアメリカ社会のある特徴的な特性を強調する。それは伝統的な不平等であり、ジェンダー違いによるものだけでなく社会経済的地位、地理的位置、および民族の違いによる不平等である。本書に収録のラテンアメリカの経験の執筆者は、複数の不平等とそれらの社会開発プロセスにおける女性の役割との関係について繰り返し言及している。政治力のエリートたちへの中央集権と集中はこの問題を悪化しただけであった。

女性をエンパワーし、社会開発の促進に女性参加を奨励する活動は、以下の枠組みで示される一連の戦略に重点を置くものと思われる。

焦点	推奨される戦略		期待される結果	
	認識			行動
個人、コミュニティ（ミクロレベル）	研修・教育	<p>草の根またはコミュニティの組織の設立や強化</p> <p>コミュニティ・リーダーの支援</p> <p>コミュニティ開発に女性を動員</p> <p>コミュニティ組織またはコミュニティ開発イニシアチブへの資金援助の提供または奨励</p>	<p>コミットメント、意欲、協働</p> <p>コミュニティのアイデンティティ</p> <p>コミュニティの懸案事項に対するコンセンサス</p> <p>変化を起こすために動員される中心人物</p>	<p>コミュニティの基本的ニーズの解決</p> <p>コミュニティ若者型組織によるアドボカシー</p>
組織（メソレベル）	研修・動員	<p>女性組織の設立や強化</p> <p>資金調達</p> <p>ジェンダーに関するデータの作成</p> <p>女性の政治的リーダーシップの促進</p> <p>政治的対話および政治</p>	<p>女性の連帯感</p> <p>女性組織と社会開発機関を取り扱うその他の組織との連帯感</p> <p>人間中心の公平な開発に配慮した政策議論についてのコンセンサス</p>	<p>女性の戦略的ニーズへの解決</p> <p>女性組織間のネットワーク</p> <p>女性と政策対話の重要な行為者若者女性組織との間のネットワークと交流</p>



		約アドボカシーへの女性参加の促進		アドボカシーとネットワーク作り
治外機関 (マクロレベル)	コミュニケーション戦略	中央政府または地方政府における女性の権威（マシーナリー）の設立または強化  ジェンダーに関するデータの作成	包括的な（インクルーシブな）開発への社会的コミットメント  伝統的に女性に委ねられている家事や再生産的役割における仕事の価値に対する社会的認識  女性の役割を男性の優先順位とリンクさせる <sup>2</sup>	構造の強化  法律と執行  政策変更

女性の参加を促進する戦略は、コミットメント、姿勢、および価値を設定し、最後の2つの欄に記された活動へと進むために、最初の2つの欄に示された活動分野に重点を置いてよい。

また、特に経済活動における女性のより多くの公平な参加を容易にするために、活動の焦点を民間セクターに向けることも考えられるが、この問題の領域は余りにも広いため、今回のワークショップの活動からは除外することとした。

このワークショップは、以下の項に示す社会開発における女性の参加のための3つの特定の活動または戦略に重点を当てた。

#### コミュニティ開発への女性の動員

世界各地の女性が地元コミュニティのニーズを解決するために組織化しているが、これは共有するニーズが女性組織に動機を与え結集させたと考えられる。ワークショップでは、低所得コミュニティの開発と向上を目指す女性と女性組織による経験のうち、積極的かつ計画的な取り組みを行なった3つの例を検討した。この種の経験は次のような疑問の探求を可能にする。いかなる条件の下で女性は地元コミュニティ開発のリソースの動員のために協力するのか？ 彼らはどのような戦略を選ぶのか？ そしてそれを選ぶ理由は？ どのように開発が強化されてきたか？ いかなる条件の下で女性と女性組織は、ジェンダーのアイデンティティに基づいて結集するのか？ どのような問題に取り組んだか？ コミュニティ開発への関与が女性をエンパワーし、政策決定プロセスへの積極的な参加者となることを可能にしたか？ 母親、妻、コミュニティ開発リーダー、起業家等の複数の

<sup>2</sup>あるいは、ガブリアー・ヴェガが示すように、女性の役割を社会的役割として理解する。

役割を担う問題に女性はどう取り組んでいるか？これがコミュニティ開発イニシアチブへの女性の参加にどう影響しているのか？

女性は地元コミュニティの危機的状況に対応するため、「自己」組織化する場合が多い（本書：ギザによって示されたフィリピンのパヤタスの事例とブロンデットによって実践されたペルーの経験）。この対応は、つまり、女性はその伝統的な介護者の役割を公的領域へと発展させたものと考えられる。実際に、これらのイニシアチブは、栄養、子供の定期健診、誕生、死亡、結婚の登録と統計、および、身体障害者、高齢者、暴力の被害者に対する福祉の提供といった目に見える改善をもたらし、新しいコミュニティの生活の質に有効に貢献している。また、組織化された女性たちの活動は、おそらく同等あるいはそれ以上の価値があると思われる副産物を生み出す。それは、社会資本、コミュニティアイデンティティやコミュニティ間の団結、女性のエンパワーメント、女性の権利に対する自覚などである。

他にも、コミュニティ開発を促進する女性組織の経験のなかには、特定のニーズを持つ女性と団結した専門家による積極的な対策から生み出されたものがある（例：レジナ・ヴァーガスとカジャスカナ）。基本的に、この種のイニシアチブは、自分以外の女性をエンパワーし教育する女性の存在を特徴としている。彼らはまた、低所得層の農村の女性や人種・民族のマイノリティの女性により大きく影響する不平等に対する社会の意識を高める努力もしている。これらの活動の結果は、エンパワーされた女性の（個人的な）変化をもとに構築される。その結果、彼女たちはコミュニティのリーダー的役割を担えるようになり、最終的には、公共政策と社会意識に影響を与えられるようになる。

最後に、女性は NGO や、女性運動組織、協会や宗教組織、あるいは政府機関などが行なうコミュニティ開発に参加するために動員される場合もある。効果的な動員は、コミュニティの女性たちが計画し活動するために自己組織化を続けるための持続可能で自治性のあるプロセスにつながるはずである。しかし、ブロンデットは（本書で）政府機関やその他の行為者が支援するプログラムで、組織の自治、起業家精神、および自立を禁じてしまう悪影響がましいば撒き型のプログラムに女性組織が依存してしまう可能性があることを警告している。

コミュニティ問題への有効な対応における女性の参加は、女性のエンパワーメントと公共活動への女性の統合の機会を生み出す。コミュニティ開発の促進への女性の参加からの経験は、女性組織がコミュニティの福祉の向上を助けると共に、女性の価値観と貢献の変化や、動機づけ、およびエンパワーメントなどを助けることを示している。これらの経験の価値は、それらが、女性、男性、子供にとってより良い生活条件、女性の情緒面での健康、コミュニティの社会資本ストック、女性リーダーシップ、および革の根レベルの女性組織のエンパワーメントなどにもたらす貢献によって判断されなければならない。同様に、社会における男女の

不平等を永続させる人々の姿勢、考え方、および伝統への影響についてこれらの経験を分析することができる。

### 女性リーダーシップの促進

開発活動への参加の増大を促進するための明らかな戦略は、市民生活の様々な方面で女性リーダーシップを促進することである。それは、経済活動、専門家組織、労働組合、および地方・国家レベルの政治などである。ワークショップの参加者は、女性の参加とリーダーシップを推進し増やすために用いられた戦略と構成要素（ビルディングブロック）を中心に、草の根レベルおよび国レベルでの経験をいくつか分析した。

中央および地方政府や意思決定権のある職位への女性の参加が相変わらず少ないために、幾つもの事例で、選挙政治における女性のリーダーシップを高めるための活動にスポットを当てたものがあった。ピュグニニックとローザは、女性の政治的参加の本質的価値を超え、それは女性、子ども、および家族に関連する問題を政治議題の中でさらに目立たせることになるものと主張する。またロドリガスは、それは政治的プロセスの民主化を推進に貢献し、社会問題と女性の問題とを結び付けて一般の認識を高める傾向があると示唆する。世界各地の研究は、女性の政治への参加は、本質的に公平で包括的であり、公共政策における社会開発の内容に貢献するため貴重であるという結論を支持している。

女性リーダーシップは本質的に男性リーダーシップとは異なり、その積極ではないと考えられる。従って、リーダーの立場に立つ女性の誠実な心構えとして、将来的に素質のある若者リーダーたちの自信と政治意識を高め、女性の間のネットワーク作りを助け、女性に公的領域で成功するのに必要な技能を育てるための努力などが要求されるであろう（例：パイルとバンディを参照）。さらに、公的領域へのより大きな女性の参加に対する制度的・社会的障壁を減らすことに重点を置かなければならない。それらは例えば保育の選択性の欠如、融通性のない労働規則、文化的規範といったものである。

もちろん、単に女性のリーダーがいるだけでは十分でない。女性リーダー同士の間の一体感と、女性にとって重要な問題を有効に示し議論するのを助ける、ジェンダーに配慮した政策議題を作り出す必要がある。これは、女性政治家（候補者と選出議員）と女性組織のリーダーとの間の対話を通して促進できるであろう（例：ロドリガスとガンガを参照）。

女性の問題と並んで市民生活の様々な面で女性参加することの重要性を国民が認識することは、これらの問題を公共政策議題に上げるために非常に重要である。政治や社会開発への全体的参加を制限するジェンダー不平等と戦うために、男性

<sup>1</sup>本書でステファニー・パイルが議論する UNFEM の変革型リーダーシップの概念の起源。

と女性に同じように働きかける活動は、根強い社会的ステレオタイプを変えるのを助けると思われる（チアロッチェイ）。また、それ以外にも民意の形成における女性の重要性を強調し、女性候補者の当選や社会における立場の確立を図る活動もあると考えられる（ガンガ）。

総合すると、ワークショップの参加者たちによって検討された経験例は、女性のリーダーシップ全般と（特に）政治における女性のリーダーシップの促進が、ジェンダー平等と社会開発全体に重要な貢献をもたらす可能性があることを示している。リーダーシップの役割を果たすための女性の能力と関与への意欲を高め、この役割を担うための準備をさせる努力をしなければならぬ。それは公的領域（特に経済および政治領域）における力の再配分、および私的（家庭の）領域における男女の役割の再定義を制限する文化的規範を変えようという社会意識と意欲の高さにもよる。最後に、議員に選出された女性と、ジェンダー平等の効果的な促進等の公平で包括的な開発の議題との間のリンクを保つことは非常に重要なことである。

#### 政策対話と意思決定プロセスにおける女性の役割

言うまでもなく、有効な政治的リーダーシップを行使する個々の女性の努力だけが公共政策決定に影響を与える唯一の戦略ではない。女性は組織し（女性同士および社会一般において）、女性、母親、労働者、家族の一員、あるいはコミュニティの一員としての彼らに関わる問題への意識を形成する努力もしている。彼らは組織し、様々な考えを統合し、関心事を明確に表現し、政策の議題と決定に影響を与えている。

ジェンダー平等と社会開発における女性のより大きな参加を制約するものを特定し一般の関心を向けさせるため組織化された女性は、支配構造と政策決定の、見掛けはそう見えても実は疑わしい「ジェンダー中立性」に注意を促さねばならぬ。彼らは、公共政策の意思決定に影響する固定観念に異議を唱え、より包括的で公平な公共政策を奨励する能力を持つ。女性の組織的参加は、公共政策対話の方向に影響をなえ、最終的に政策決定に影響を与えるであろう（例：ボニヤを参照）。

女性のネットワークは、女性の関心事に配慮した政策議題を統合するようイニシアチブを強化し、その議題を支持し効果的に提唱するであろう。女性と女性組織の間のネットワークは、政策プロセスにおけるより力強い正当な行為者と見なされるであろう。女性の政府機関や政党、および国家的または国際的な女性組織は、これらのネットワークの促進と統合において重要な役割を果たすことが出来る（キムとトロンを参照）。

つまり、それらのネットワークは以下に示す活動を行なうと考えられる。

- 開発計画、公共部門予算、分野別政策などに関する討議を含む公共政策対話に女性の問題を組み入れる。
- 女性の関心事や社会開発問題に対する幅広い認識を促すよう活動する。
- 経験から教訓を学び取る。
- 公平な成長と開発をすすめる政策の構造変化への圧力をかけるため、「ミレニウム開発目標」に対する政府のコミットメントによって作られた機会を利用する。
- 社会正義とジェンダー平等への正式なコミットメントを関連予算配分に表すよう政府に働きかける。
- 社会開発とジェンダー平等に関連する政府の政策の社会的規制または公共監視のためのメカニズムを作り出す。
- 成果を制度化し政権変更による逆行を阻絶するための立法を働きかける。

## 結論

本書に収録された経験は、女性組織は意識を高め、エンパワーメントを助け、能力と変化への取り組み意識を高めることを示している。従って、女性組織は、包括的で責任ある民主主義の実践を促進する。さらに、公共政策の本質と内容の質は開発活動に影響すると考えられる。その結果、社会開発活動への女性の参加は、女性の基本的権利として、また社会全体の利益として促進されるだろう。

女性はますます積極的に自己組織化するようになってきた。しかし、伝統的に取り残され差別されてきた女性については、政府あるいは非政府機関の活動を通して参加を奨励する必要があるであろう。しかし、女性組織をそれらの機関に依存させてしまうような過度の干渉を避けるための注意が必要である。

女性組織と参加を促進する活動には以下が含まれると考えられる。

- 女性と女性組織が公的領域で活動したり、構造、規範、伝統に立ち向かうためのコミットメント、意識、技能を高めるための研修訓練。
- 他の女性たちとの一体化、社会開発の問題や権利と責任に対する認識、活動へのコミットメント、技能を強化するための若い女性を対象とした研修訓練。
- 保育のための多様な選択肢、家庭における女性と男性の役割を留意した労働規則、家庭を持つ人に配慮した公的領域の活動の日程・予定などを含む、女性の公的・私的役割の両立を容易にするための介入。
- 差別を排除する法律と規則、および既存の法律の有効な実施。
- 低所得層、農村地帯、人種・民族のマイノリティの女性が直面する複数の不平等に取り組むための特定の活動。
- ジェンダーの平等と公的領域への女性の参加の意識について一般の意識を高めるためのコミュニケーション戦略を通じ、変化に備えて社会を準備する。これらは、伝統的に女性が担ってきた家庭での生産・再生産的役割における無報酬労働の価値に対する認識を促すことと、歴史的に「男性の領域」と

「女性の領域」として考えられてきたものを再定義する活動を含むべきである。

- 女性と女性組織の間の連帯感とネットワーク構築の促進、社会開発の促進に意欲的に取り組むその他の組織とのネットワーク構築の促進。
- 「女性のために活動する女性たちの孤立集団」を相対して前進するための、男性中心の組織や団体における意識形成。
- 女性の関心事と社会開発における公平についての分析を裏付けるデータベースの作成と維持管理。
- 地方および中央政府における女性の職務の強化。
- ジェンダー問題と開発優先事項や他の政策との連携。

# PART 1

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*Women's Participation in the Promotion  
of Social Development: Overviews*

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## CHAPTER 1

# Women's Participation in the Promotion of Social Development in Asia: An Overview

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*I believe we will have better government in our countries when men and women discuss public issues together and make their decisions on the basis of their differing areas of experience and their common concern for the welfare of their families and their world ... Too often great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression...*

—Eleanor Roosevelt, U.N. General Assembly, December 1952

### Introduction

In Southeast Asia, while a few exceptional women (Cory Aquino, Gloria Arroyo, and Megawati Sukranoputri) have risen to head their governments, more have come together to tackle women's problems through women's organizations. The rise of women's organizations in Asia and their increasing participation in public advocacy and leadership is a powerful development of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that is continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Operating in both urban and rural areas of Asia, many women's groups are directing attention to the fact that the health of a nation depends on the contributions of its women.

In recent times, during and after the two UN Decades for Women (1975-1995), women-centered collective activities have increased in different regions of East and Southeast Asia. In such cities as Seoul, Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok, there are dozens of active women's organizations and many "traditional" women's organizations have shifted their focus from welfarism to activism. Seeking to raise women's awareness, these women's groups have brought together communities and less-advantaged women—rural and urban—to understand and change their situation and demand better public services and social policies.

"The rise of Asian women" has progressed along with the impressive gains in Asia's standards of living and other areas of social development. In most countries, economic growth has been associated with increases in



per capita consumption, life expectancy, literacy and educational attainment. Better health and education has helped enhance women's capabilities: there is a growing supply of women professionals, managers and decision-makers, while, in general, women are participating more in both formal and informal sectors.

However, this social and economic development process has been uneven among and within countries. Women face obstacles such as gender gaps and differentiation in social development. Women are affected negatively by market transitions, inadequate social policies to support working mothers and encourage shared family responsibilities, and the persistence of low representation of women in the decision-making process. All these put women at a disadvantage, impede their social development, and deny them the opportunity to participate actively in development processes. Women's social and legal positions remain lower than men's as the prevailing gender ideologies assign lower value and fewer rights to women in their various roles as workers, parents, or citizens. Unemployment rates for women are often far higher and wages are often lower. Labor laws and social policies are often gender-blind, neglecting working women's unique need to balance their productive and reproductive roles.

The goal of this overview is to identify lessons learned from Asian case studies that can be compared with cases from other regions to promote an exchange of experience and networking among researchers and practitioners.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides contexts and background on the diversity of East and Southeast Asia, on social development trends in Asia, and on the growth and varieties of Asian women's organizations. The second section focuses on the role and activities of women's organizations in three areas of social development: community development, policy advocacy and dialogue, and political participation. This section provides a conceptual background for these issues, while referring to and analyzing various case studies. Finally, the third section addresses the factors that constrain and facilitate the activities of women's organizations. It also appraises their impact on the majority of women and wider society and offers recommendations for policy makers and women's organizations. We argue that although changes in women's status and gender relations are occurring through structural change and through the activities of women's organizations, the principal challenge in the area of women and social development is to improve social policies to increase women's access to health, education and employment, and to enhance their participation in decision-making. Women's organizations and donor agencies can play a crucial role in promoting policies for female-friendly social development.

### *Context of East and Southeast Asia*

The word "East Asia" or "Far East" is sometimes used to refer to both East and Southeast Asia, but these are two distinct regions. Each region is made up of a number of countries<sup>1</sup> whose geographical proximity and potential to collaborate has been one main factor in their development processes. Each region has its own unique cultural and historical characteristics. East Asian countries such as the Republic of Korea, Japan and China are advanced industrial economies with strong states. But, historically, Chinese influence has permeated the whole region. Compared to Southeast Asia, East Asian societies are more homogeneous in language, race and culture, and are patriarchal, rooted in Confucianism. The son-preference of East Asian patriarchy is linked to a patrilineal marriage system and rigid gender roles. The central theme for East Asian women has been the impact of rapid economic growth on women's ability to choose their priorities in life. In recent years, more married women have assumed the double burden of holding a full- or part-time job while maintaining their house-keeping and care-provider roles. Yet few employers in East Asia provide flexible work arrangements or childcare facilities for married women. While wives increasingly share the breadwinner role, few husbands help with domestic chores. As a result, many young women in East Asia are waiting longer to marry, while some may never marry.

Most Southeast Asian countries (i.e., Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines) have middle-level economies and moderate states. They are influenced by the ancient cultures of both China and India, and have great diversity of language, religion, race, ethnicity and colonial history. Southeast Asian women are not as confined to the domestic sphere as those in East Asia. Bilateral kinship and the popularity of matrilocal residency provide women some degree of security in the domestic sphere. Inside the home, women often control the purse strings; outside the home, they work alongside men and contribute equally to the national economy. Nevertheless, their social status is still lower and they remain under-represented in public decision-making processes at both the local and national levels.<sup>2</sup>

During the last two decades, most countries in East and Southeast Asia have gone through enormous political changes. While the countries that had no tradition of democracy (such as China and Vietnam) are opening

<sup>1</sup> For this paper, East Asia includes the Republic of Korea, Japan and Taiwan, while Southeast Asia includes Thailand, Vietnam, Lao P.D.R., Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

<sup>2</sup> Singapore is an exception in Southeast Asia as it has East Asian features, being a strong state that upholds Confucianism. The socialist countries of Vietnam and Laos are also slightly different as they are making the transition from centrally-planned to market economies.

up to market systems, those previously under authoritarian rule (such as Indonesia, East Timor and Cambodia) have had their first national elections. The countries with older democracies (such as the Philippines and Thailand) are undergoing devolution of power to the local level. Myanmar, still under military rule, is struggling to move toward democracy.

Another manifestation of the diversity in Southeast Asia is the sharp contrast of population size, and levels of wealth and poverty. Malaysia has only 20 million people, while Thailand has 62 million, the Philippines 77 million, and Indonesia a phenomenal 214 million—the fifth-largest population in the world (Table 1). The majority of people live in rural areas: 57 percent in Malaysia and the Philippines, 69 percent in Indonesia and 77 percent in Thailand.

On average, Southeast Asian countries are in the middle-income category. (Table 1.1). The poverty level in the Philippines is especially high, with about half the population below the poverty line in 1990.

While the manufacturing and service sectors are expanding in Asia, the female labor force in the agricultural sector is decreasing proportionally, although it is still high in Thailand (Table 1.2). In the 1990s over one million Filipinos, mostly women, emigrated. Most found jobs as laborers in the Gulf countries or as domestic servants in Europe, the United States and Hong Kong. The rapid economic growth of Thailand until 1997 was largely due to its strategy of export-led industrialization, relying on a large pool of poorly-educated and low-skilled female labor. The shrinking agricultural base and economic crisis of 1997 dramatically affected this female labor pool.

**TABLE 1.1 Key Economic and Social Indicators, 2001**

Country	Area (sq km)	Population (million, 2001)	GDP/Capita PPP (US\$, 2001)	GDP/capita annual Growth Rate (% , 1990-01)
Japan	377,800	127.3	25,130	1.0
Korea, S.	98,480	47.1	15,090	4.7
Thailand	514,000	61.6	6,400	3.0
Philippines	300,176	77.2	3,840	1.0
Indonesia	1,904,569	214.4	2,940	2.3
Vietnam	329,560	79.2	2,070	6.0
East & SE Asia		1,899.7	4,233	5.5

Source: Human Development Report 2003, <http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index.indicators.html>

### *Level of Women's Social Development*

Asian women, in general, have shared the fruit of social development but the level of social development varies between the regions and among countries. (Table 1.3).

The situation of women's education in the region has significantly improved. Adult female illiteracy is low (Table 1.4), with a significant difference in male and female illiteracy only in Indonesia, which has remarkably improved its "school life expectancy" for girls. Secondary school gross enrollment rates for girls in the region not only have increased since 1980, but are equal to or higher than boys' rates in a few countries such as South Korea and the Philippines. The number of female students per 100,000 inhabitants exceeds that of male students in the Philippines and Thailand. The female share of the university student population has increased in most countries and women are now better represented in

**TABLE 1.2 Gender Inequality in Economic Activity by Sector, 2001**

Country	Female employment (as % of female labor force)		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Japan	6	22	73
Korea, S.	13	19	68
Thailand	47	17	36
Philippines	27	13	61
Indonesia	42	16	42

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

Source: Human Development Report 2003

**TABLE 1.3 Gender and Health, 2001**

Country	Female life expectancy, 2001	Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live birth, 1985-01)	# Children per Woman 2001
Japan	84.7	8	1.3
Korea S.	79.0	20	1.4
Thailand	73.2	44	1.9
Philippines	71.6	170	3.2
Indonesia	68.2	380	2.4
Vietnam	71.0	95	2.3
East & SE Asia		N.A	2.0

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

competitive and non-traditional fields of study. In 1992, 40-59 percent of university students in Japan, Hong Kong/China, Thailand and Malaysia were women. In the medical sciences, the percentage of women students is very high in Thailand and the Philippines (69-77 percent); and high in Laos, Malaysia, Hong Kong/China, Japan and South Korea (45-52 percent). While women generally remain under-represented in engineering, the female share is respectable in Malaysia (32 percent), the Philippines (27 percent) and Thailand (23 percent).

However, Asian women invariably earn less than men do. (Table 1.5) and economic hardship or crisis affect women disproportionately.

**Table 1.4 Gender Inequality in Education, 2001**

Country	Adult Female literacy		Net enrolment ratio (female as % of male)		
	% of female	Female as % of male	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary gross
Japan	—	—	1.00	1.01	0.85
Korea	96.6	97	1.01	1	0.59
Thailand	94.1	97	0.97	N.A.	0.82
Philippines	95.0	100	1.01	1.18	1.1
Indonesia	82.6	90	0.99	0.96	0.77
Vietnam	90.9	96	0.94	N.A.	0.74

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

**Table 1.5 Economic Activities, 2001**

Country	Female Economic Activity Rate		Ratio of female earned income to male earned income
	Rate	as % of Male Rate	
Japan	51	67	0.45
Korea, S.	54	70	0.46
Thailand	73	85	0.61
Philippines	50	61	0.59
Indonesia	56	68	0.51
Vietnam	74	91	0.69
E & SE Asia	69	82	

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

The level of human development in East and Southeast Asian countries differ considerably as shown in their HDI rank, GDI rank, and GEM rank<sup>3</sup> (Table 1.6). In East Asia (South Korea and Japan, for example) the HDI and GDI are ranked higher but the GEM is significantly lower than those in Southeast Asia. This indicates that economic prosperity does not necessarily empower women. In Southeast Asia (Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam), GDI is invariably higher than HDI, reflecting gender inequality. Southeast Asia also has more women in senior profes-

**Table 1.6 HDI, GDI, GEM**

Country	HDI Rank	GDI Rank	GEM
Japan	9	13	44
Korea S.	30	30	63
Thailand	74	61	55
Philippines	85	66	35
Indonesia	112	91	--
Vietnam	109	89	--

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

**TABLE 1.7 Gender Empowerment Measure**

Women in Decision-making Positions (as percent of total), 2001

Country	Legislators, senior officials, managers	Professional and technical workers
Japan	9	45
Korea	5	34
Thailand	27	55
Philippines	58	62

Source: Human Development Report 2003, [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

<sup>3</sup> In general, the higher the human development attained for a country, both men and women are better off. The GID (Gender-Related Development Index) illustrates the extent to which females share in the income, educational and health dimensions of development. The GDI indicator is calculated on the basis of female life expectancy, educational attainment and income measures. The GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) indicates how women take active part in economic and political life. The indicator is calculated on the basis of the ratio of women's to men's percentage shares of parliamentary seats; women's and men's percentage shares of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers and women's and men's percentage shares of professional and technical positions; and the ratio of women's and men's estimated earned income (PPP US\$).

**Table 1.8 Women's Political Participation, 2001**

Country	Year women received right to vote	Parliament	Ministerial Level	Seats held by women (as % of total)	
		Year 1 <sup>st</sup> women elected [E] or appointed [A]	Women in government (as % of total)	Lower House or Single House	Upper House or Senate
Japan	1947	1946E	5.7	7.3	15.4
Korea, S.	1948	1948E	6.5	5.9	
Thailand	1932	1948A	5.7	9.2	10.5
Philippines	1937	1941E		17.8	12.5
Indonesia	1945	1950A	5.9	8	
Vietnam	1946	1976E		27.3	

Source: Human Development Report 2003. [http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index\\_indicators.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/index_indicators.html)

sional positions than East Asia (Table 1.7) and a higher proportion of women parliamentarians (Table 1.8).

### *Growth and Varieties of Women's Organizations*

Women's organizations in Asia emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, prompted either by nationalism or the pursuit of modernization. They maintained a somewhat low profile until the start of the UN Women's Decade in 1975. The last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise and growth of a wide range of women's organizations supported by the UN agenda and various donors. Women's organizations have mobilized leadership and financial resources. They have also used opportunity structure in national bureaucracies and international agencies to their advantage (Tantiwiramanond, 1998).

Women's organizations play multiple roles. Their activities may complement or substitute government services. Wherever the governments fail to act, women's organizations fill the gaps. In many societies, women's organizations are the prime agent for social change, demanding responsive and accountable leadership with more open and transparent decision-making processes. Women's organizations are not uniform in structure. In terms of their relative autonomy and voluntarism, they may be classified into four categories:

- **Mass organizations:** State-linked organizations established to mobilize people's participation under carefully controlled condi-



tions. Although these organizations engage in the delivery of social services and depend on voluntary labor, their structure, revenue sources and top-down organization under state supervision undermine their advocacy position. Examples include All China Women's Federation and Vietnam and Lao Women's Unions, all established in the early 1900s.

- **Government initiated/organized women's organizations** such as Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) and Japan's National Women's Education Center (NVEC) (both established in 1983). The state plays a key role in establishing them and often assists in ensuring their financial viability. They are largely centers for information, research and life-long learning. They can play an advisory role in policy formulation and advocacy.
- **NGOs and people's (popular) organizations:** These groups, autonomous from the state, have been set up independently since the 1970s to work mostly with the local communities. While middle-class women choose to work as staff in NGOs for social change, village women work mostly unpaid in grassroots or popular organizations whose leaders are elected by members from among the local people. Most popular organizations operate without support from the state and the majority are locally registered. Examples include local women's groups, APIK in Indonesia, women's groups in Payatas in the Philippines, Women Link in South Korea, and Gender Development and Research Institute (GDRI) in Thailand.
- **Extra-legal, or unrecognized organizations:** Unregistered, these groups are established and operated autonomously outside the legally-sanctioned and sponsored framework of state control. Examples include advocacy groups that challenge government policy, alternative interest groups, or ad hoc training groups such as the Consortium in Thailand.

In Asian societies, women work everywhere and perform multiple activities, but they do not exercise authority at all levels or in most sectors. Most countries have a tradition of organizing and questioning authority, but that spirit and capacity has been dampened by authoritarian regimes such as those of Suharto, Marcos or Mahathir. With the opening of democratic spaces, women's organizations have emerged to provide support and services to disadvantaged women. The current challenge is how women's organizations can deepen and broaden their activities and become more socially and politically active.

## Women's Organizations and Social Development: Experiences from Asia

### *Community Development*

*When we make changes, they are small, incremental. But because we are talking about the majority of the human race, very small changes can mean vastly improved conditions—even survival—for great numbers of women. If we turn the lens of the kaleidoscope just a few degrees, the realignment of the shape and color can create a very different pattern.*

—Saron Capeling-Alakija (in Brasileiro 1996, p.2)

Community development is a process of social action in which local men and women of a community organize themselves for planning and action. In theory, community development is a bottom-up approach involving all members of the community. But in practice, community participation has often meant decisions made by male leaders. Such participation is likely to marginalize women, unless the specific constraints facing them are considered by NGOs or unless women take charge of their own issues. In recent times, participation patterns have been changing: women are taking charge, especially as more poor women become heads of households.<sup>4</sup>

A large percentage of the Asian population lived in rural areas where kinship networks or the clan system was the basis of mutual help and traditional living. Therefore, early development efforts focused not on individual or farmer-centered activities, but on the community. As a concept, community development was appealing, but the understanding and success of community development models were mixed, mainly because the processes were guided by outside experts or carried out by government officers who worked hierarchically and had little understanding of local culture and politics. In addition, initial efforts were designed and implemented largely by and for men, assuming that all heads of households were men. The pressing needs associated with accelerating economic productivity soon gained priority, and programs for agricultural development, rural development, integrated development, appropriate technology development and eco- or sustainable development replaced the emphasis on community. Most development programs that focused on industrialization also had an urban bias and eroded the social and economic foundation of rural communities. People from rural areas migrated to cities for jobs and created slums in

<sup>4</sup> Daranee Thawinphitakun (1996: 90, quoted by Parichat 1998) found over 30 percent of slum households in Bangkok and 24 percent of those in other cities are headed by women. Women are either divorced, widowed or single.

urban centers. Uprooted from their native communities, these urban slums saw the "re-emergence" of community development programs.

Unlike rural communities where social arrangements are based on kinship and subsistence agriculture, residents of congested urban communities are nuclear families from different parts of the country. Where the traditional gender division of labor between husband/breadwinner and wife/housekeeper persists, women are vulnerable. They either become totally dependent on their husbands or are unprepared to compete in the urban labor market. Not qualified to find jobs in factories, poor and older women tend to be home-based workers carrying out such enterprises as selling food, sewing, or hair-dressing. They tend to be subject to exploitation by intermediaries or loan sharks, as well as becoming victims of male frustration, as a low quality of life and insecure livelihood sometimes erupts into domestic violence (Parichat, 1998). These pressures compel many women to form groups or join men to defend their rights.

Community development is also re-emerging as governments apply neo-liberal economic policies and structural adjustments, reducing subsidies for the education and health sectors and transferring welfare responsibility to communities. To confront this new environment, organizations of both men and women have increasingly sought to deal with their own situations of poverty. Issues such as limited security, livelihood and housing have brought women together to form groups and networks. Essentially, the process involves formally organizing members of more or less extensive local neighborhoods for joint action to meet a wide range of neighborhood needs.

The efforts of women are sometimes independent and sometimes an integral part of government programs to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, and to enable women to participate more fully in development. Women's experiences in both Payatas and Bulacan earned them public recognition and increased their confidence (Guiza, 2003). Some became leaders of their local village or barangay committee and began to participate in or collaborate with government agencies as members and leaders.

In Thailand, urban communities began to organize in Bangkok as early as 1965, when the Thewa Center Credit Union emerged. In 1971, another community development group, the Center for Community Development, was formed in one of the largest slums, Khlong Toey, to struggle against forced eviction. Since then, both government agencies and NGOs have sought by various means to improve conditions in slum communities, focusing on housing and the environment. Welfare services to children and families, savings groups and organizations to counter the spread of AIDS and other health problems were established (Murray, 1996).

Slowly, community development groups realized that such a piecemeal approach was having little impact and that there was a need for an integrated solution covering tangible issues of housing and employment, and intangible issues such as culture, values and socialization. As community organizations became a public forum for people to participate in community decision-making, a gap between local awakening and global movement became apparent. To fill this gap, the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) was formed in 1992, to plan and collaborate with different local slum communities and global organizations. UCDO shifted the strategy of community action from violent struggle against eviction to capacity-building within their organizations (Gill, 2003). They are now able to form networks with other poor communities in other cities at the regional and national levels. Women participate equally in this process, although men still assume leadership roles. Nonetheless, after initially having to work harder to become part of the decision-making process, talented women from poor communities in Thailand have expanded their knowledge and skills and have begun to defend their rights through different forms of community action.

Community development efforts often meet the needs of the community as a whole, such as in the Philippines, where violent activities in Payatas were stopped and community health in Bulacan was improved (Guiza, in this volume). Sometimes, they meet the practical needs of women (reproductive health care in Bulacan, and mothers' need for affordable powdered milk in Indonesia) and their strategic needs (as in the case of Indonesia's "Voice for Concerned Mothers"—Suara Ibu Pedali, or SIP, that emerged during the economic and political crises of the end of the Suharto regime, and empowered many women, helping them to see the connection between the public and private spheres and the issues affecting ethnic and poor women throughout Indonesia).

Sometimes, community-based initiatives address women's strategic needs, as illustrated in the Indonesian case study of APIK (Katjasungkana, 2003). Being a community development-oriented group, APIK initially offered legal services to women in poor communities. Gradually, its community experience guided them toward policy and legal change. In Jakarta, APIK perceived that discrimination in the legal system rendered women psychologically powerless, leading to their economic impoverishment.

Several factors prevent poor women from participating in community development. Besides the heavy burden of their reproductive and productive roles, they lack funding, experience and literacy, as well as connections to unions and other civic organizations and to the outside world in general. Still, women's leadership naturally evolves through collective

action, which may take the form of clubs or savings groups. Community development is a joint effort by poor women and their community to tackle vicious cycles of isolation, misery, and ignorance with new hopes for better livelihood, roads, health and education, through the active participation of women in shaping their own future. It is a method for creating strong and healthy bonds between people, based on cooperation for mutual interest, instead of age-old indifference or hostility based on confrontation, friction and suspicion (Mayo, 1968).

### *Policy Advocacy and Dialogue*

*In fighting for what appear to be particular interests ... finding their voices, setting their own agendas, and creating their own social spaces. women's organizations are seeking the most universal objectives. But note that at such moments when the particular and the universal coincide, the subject may no longer be women. ... The strengths of women's movements lie in their insights into that which distinguishes them and that which joins them to others who have suffered. And from these encounters come the most exquisite knowledge, vitality and power.*

— Amrita Basu, 1995

Leaders of women's organizations in Asia have always understood that women are severely underserved by the government and state agencies (ESCAP, 1989b and 1994). While women's organizations continue to provide direct social and community services that address a broad range of women's needs, such as credit, health or housing, they realize that even the best services have limited impact at the policy level. In order to lay the groundwork for long-term empowerment of women, they need to stimulate change in the larger institutions that influence the conditions of women's lives. Attempts by women's organizations to link community advocacy to policy-making processes have focused on improving wages and benefits in sectors that heavily employ women, and addressing the issues of health, environment, legal rights and political participation.

Empowerment remains a critical issue for women in Cambodia, where women's organizations use creative strategies to question the traditional roles and media images of women (CLIPS, 1995).<sup>5</sup>

In the Republic of Korea, women's studies and women's movements have played a major role in bringing about changes in laws and related

<sup>5</sup> For example, in broadcasting on television or radio, the Cambodian Women's Media Center, WMC, has addressed such women's rights issues as alimony, divorce, domestic violence, and property ownership and inheritance rights.

policies. The Korea Gender Policy Management System (KGPMs) is a systematic and accountable framework for bringing gender perspectives into all governmental policies and programs. It aims to strengthen the Ministry's function of coordinating and monitoring gender policies to effectively mainstream gender in central/local governments and public institutions. (Kim, in this volume).

In the Philippines, women were part of the People Power that ousted Marcos in 1986 and brought Cory Aquino to the presidency. Filipino women's organizations thus opened the political arena to women and, in collaboration with the National Commission of Women, have since worked through four presidencies—Aquino, Ramos, Estrada, and Arroyo—to bring about changes in laws on rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and trafficking. They have continued to struggle for reproductive health rights but have been stonewalled by the well-organized Catholic Church. They have used public debates and discussion and media advocacy effectively to pave the way for these legal changes (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey, 2003).

In Malaysia, protests and marches are prohibited, making it difficult for women's organizations to organize. An increasing number of women's organizations have been working on issues of violence against women, offering counseling and shelter and successfully petitioning for an amendment to the rape law. The law against domestic violence has been implemented and a code on sexual harassment has been adopted.

In Vietnam, progressive changes have taken place in social policy at the government level, as well as at the women's union level. The Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) has more than 11 million members and operates at four levels: commune, district, provincial, and national. Its original mandate was to mobilize women politically in the struggle for independence. In 1988, Government Decree No 163 instructed all levels of government to consult VWU on issues concerning women. For many agencies, consultation has often meant using VWU for program implementation related to women. Since *doi moi* (economic transition) and the inflow of international donor contributions, the role of VWU has been diverted from one of political mobilization, advocacy and grassroots activism to implementation of a wide variety of projects, such as micro-credit and micro-enterprise development, mother and child health and family planning, literacy, agricultural extension, and domestic violence. In this volume, Truong describes changes in VWU's different roles and the social policies of the State.

In bringing about social change, women are using different kinds of actors in their advocacy work: people; public opinion; networks and alliances; and decision-makers. (VdndKlasen, 2002). **People** are key to

the process that includes women who are directly affected by an issue, those with whom an organization or movement is directly working, and those who identify with a particular cause or issue. Advocacy work in this arena involves educating people, especially poor women, on issues such as legal rights, mobilizing people around the issue, and organizing a particular group or community for long-term social transformation. **Public opinion** in Asia refers principally to the middle class, opinion makers, intellectuals and the media. Whether as perpetrators or challengers of the status quo, public opinion plays a substantial role in shaping the political agenda and amplifying the voice of the voiceless. To be effective, advocacy needs to tap into the critical mass of public opinion. **Networking and alliances** help share resources, coordinate multiple strategies and involve a large number of actors in advocacy. Networking broadens the outreach and multiplies impact and public discourse. Advocacy seeks to integrate the power of knowledge and networking and to bridge the gap between micro-level activism and macro-level policy initiatives, developing multiple voices and diverse efforts in favor of advocacy causes. **Decision-makers** are those who have authority to make decisions and influence power relationships. This includes not only state policies, but also those who have the power to make decisions in socio-cultural institutions.

APIK in Indonesia is a good example of how an organization can use people, public opinion, networks and decision-makers to draft and advocate women-friendly laws (Katjasungkana, in this volume).

### **Political Participation: Women as Elected Officials**

*"Old style leadership cannot adequately address our new world situation or new world problems. We need a style of leadership that does not exercise power over people, resources and territories but instead exercises power with them. This leadership should not dominate or coerce but rather facilitate and empower. It should lead by allowing people to grow ... Women now have a leading role to play, not only in building a new vision of development, but in the implementation of systems and processes that will create a sustainable future for all."*

—Noeleen Heyzer, 1995

In the last two decades, the role of women in leadership positions has been the focus of much debate in Asia (ESCAP, 1993a and Corner, 1997). At the international level, the UN-sponsored conferences on

women have advocated the need to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, not only to ensure that women's interests are represented but also because of growing evidence that women's involvement improves leadership and decision-making practices. Meanwhile, the Asia and Pacific regions have had more women elected as heads of governments than in any other region in the world. However, women continue to be in the minority in the area of power and decision-making in Asia. The proportion of women serving in politics and administration has improved steadily but slowly (ESCAP 1993b, and APWIP, 1996).

What are the hurdles against women's participation in Asia? The under-representation of women is caused by several structural, cultural and social factors. **Structurally**, political parties are male-dominated and therefore tend to socialize, groom and field male candidates. **Culturally**, women have been regarded as subservient to men, in general, and in leadership and public roles, in particular. "A woman's place is in the private sphere" or "behind the scenes." Lacking role models and grooming opportunities in decision-making and leadership, women tend to have little confidence to play a public role. **Socially**, women generally have more responsibilities in the domestic sphere, especially as care-providers to children and the elderly. In addition, women are also increasingly the breadwinners, a role that traditionally fell to men. But, even as women lend more of a hand in income generation, men do not always assist in relieving women's traditional duties in home care, which is one reason that women tend to participate in the public sphere only when their children are grown.

In East and Southeast Asia, initiatives to encourage political participation by women have focused mainly on women's leadership at the central government level. However, current statistics show that women are under-represented both in national and local governments in Southeast Asia. Drage (2001) reports that the percentage of women in local government seats ranges from a high of 27 percent to a low of 2 percent.

Research shows that women have had more success at gaining access to decision-making positions at the local government than at the central government level (ESCAP, 1989a and 1993a). This is mainly because local government roles are more compatible with women's daily routines of family responsibilities and economic activities. Local government is also more accessible as more positions are available, and elections are less competitive than at the national level. Sometimes women are more easily accepted in village and community government, this being seen as an extension of women's community role.



The rising tide of democratization in Asia has brought new opportunities for women to participate in different public roles at all levels. The 1990s saw women emerge as builders of democracy (TAF, 1997 and TAF, 1998). Women are not only registering to vote, but also are demanding that their votes count. In countries that do not have a democratic tradition, such as Vietnam and Lao PDR, women are coming to the forefront to promote democracy and their political participation has proven to be a key component of democracy.

Women's groups are finding that they can become a force for democratic change (Aherm et al 2000). Many times, because they are women's groups, they can begin operating below the radar of hostile authorities. As their numbers grow, their influence becomes visible.

In Thailand, in spite of high visibility and activity, women's participation in politics is quite low (less than 10 percent at the national and local levels). After the 1995-Beijing Women's Conference and the passage of the Decentralization Bill in Thailand, new opportunities emerged for Thai women to participate in sub-district elections. The Thailand experience documented in this text (Pandey, in this volume) highlights the experiences of two women's organizations in promoting women's participation in local politics. Both experiences show that for increased and sustained political participation by women, changes are necessary: at the personal level in terms of personal capacity, at the institutional level in terms of legal reforms, and at the societal level in terms of gender-friendly attitudes.

After long decades of violence that included the "Killing Fields" of Pol Pot, Cambodia held its first democratic election in 1993. Cambodian culture, however, does not encourage girls to seek higher education, so few women have the necessary training and self-confidence to run for election. A Cambodian woman, Nanda Pok, started a group called "Women For Prosperity" (WFP) in 1992 to teach women to be effective leaders. WFP has trained over 6,000 women to run for and hold political office, has organized "Peace for Prosperity" marches to promote non-violence and voter education, has urged political parties to institute a 30 percent quota for women and has broken new ground by calling for fresh models of cross-party cooperation to increase political participation by women (Pok, 2003).

## Analysis

### *Facilitating Factors for Women's Involvement in Social Development*

The Asian experiences cited above show that there are several common factors that facilitate efforts by women's organizations to promote social development.

### **Statutory Provisions**

In their constitutions, all countries have statutory provisions that guarantee women's right to participate. Most countries have also signed the Covenant for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which guarantees political and civil rights, although some countries still maintain some reservations. As signatories of these international covenants, governments are obliged to implement them as policies. One provision is to establish a National Commission or a Ministry on Women's Affairs to work for the advancement of women. Some governments have established specific women's departments or gender focal points, such as in the Philippines and South Korea, while most countries have women's development plans. Some government structures have been decentralized, such as in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. They encourage women's participation at the local level, although the decentralization process is not always gender sensitive.

### **Role of Women's Organizations**

Women's organizations have helped bring women together, thus decreasing the isolation and powerlessness of women. Some women's organizations encourage women to participate at the grassroots level and have established links with other associations to sustain their endeavors.

Regional and international conferences provide support, training and momentum for initiatives that increase the numbers of women involved and break the isolation of women. CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) have played a significant role in this regard.

Training by or through women's organizations provides information about the new opportunities and benefits of participation, as well as increasing understanding of gender concepts. Training in leadership and technical skills ensures that women's participation is effective. Empowerment training is provided throughout the region, mostly by women's organizations. Governments, political parties and training institutes also provide training in certain areas but this tend to be task-oriented, with empowerment of women often simply a by-product.

### **Data Collection, Publications and Awards**

The collection of sex-disaggregated data and publication of brochures helps spread information. Activities such as photo contests and awards for public participation add to the visibility of women.

### ***Barriers to Women's Participation***

There are both structural and cultural constraints on women's participation and on the activities of women's organizations. These include in-

equality, political, social and economic instability at various levels of society, and a lack of support in the public or private spheres. Official rules and regulations, as well as some laws, have deprived women of the right to participate in social development and public decision-making. The lack of public networks and the long-held perception that public roles are a male domain keep women out. Meanwhile, the heavy burden of domestic roles, added to other economic and community obligations, creates a vicious cycle that restricts women's opportunities for self-development or improving their own knowledge about broader issues.

### **Fundamental Inequality**

While women may have constitutional rights, they are still not seen as equal to men. Their roles are closely tied to their reproductive and household activities, and politics and public affairs are seen as unsuitable for women. Religious fundamentalism, political turmoil, violence, "money worship," a heavy workload and lack of opportunities lock women in low self-esteem and fear. Demographic statistics, particularly in the Indochina sub-region (Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar), show more women suffer from low literacy rates, poor health and poverty. All of this points to their lack of access to education, health care, safety and employment (Tantiwiramanond, 2004).

Women face discrimination when running for office and when elected or appointed to local government positions. Attitudes that consider politics and decision-making a male preserve see women as incapable of management and governance roles.

While there are few women in decision-making bodies, they adopt styles and working habits that are acceptable to men. This can limit the extent to which women can raise women's issues and issues of social justice. Some also find that they are judged harshly by their colleagues and society once they try to push the boundaries of their gender role and the hierarchy.

### **Political and Economic Transition or Instability**

Political and economic instability affects the development of a political culture with democratic norms. Socio-economic norms and religious interpretations are frequently used to challenge and reinterpret women's rights and create insecurity for women. And while women have equal an political right to participate, in reality they can be actively discouraged from doing so. Highly patriarchal societies enforce rules, responsibilities and behavior to subjugate women, enforcing these norms in ways that affect their self-confidence, limiting their access to information and skills and reinforcing their lower status.

### Scarce Resources

All three dimensions of women's efforts to promote social development that are being studied in this text—community development, policy advocacy and women's political participation and leadership—require resources that are sometimes unavailable for women, particularly while they continue to earn less than men in the labor market. Once elected to a local political body, or to a women's organization, the remuneration can be insufficient for what is, in some countries, almost a full time job. The resulting financial burden of women, who also are obligated to make this role compatible with their productive and reproductive roles, may be overwhelming.

Most women's organizations do not have the means to generate profit. They depend on external financial assistance. But gender-related funding by agencies is beginning to dwindle after the two decades of UN emphasis on women. Ironically, the momentum or investment of the Women Decades was beginning to be felt at the end of Beijing Conference. The achievement of the two UN Decades may be undermined if proper funding is not put in place to guide the emerging energy of grassroots women.

### *Efforts to Overcome Barriers to Women's Roles in the Promotion of Social Development*

Alternative efforts to boost women's opportunities to participate in the promotion of social development may be classified as: micro level efforts, targeted at individual women; meso level efforts, at the institutional level and macro level efforts, focused on changes of societal values and attitudes (Table 1.9).

#### *At the Individual Level: Knowledge and Courage*

Lack of skill and confidence, mainly related to generations of socialization and family obligation, discourage women from participating in public activities and, especially, from running for political office or aspiring to a high position. Once elected or promoted to an executive position in a male-dominated organization, if a woman is alone in the group, she faces de facto exclusion. The male members may not inform her about the time and the date of meetings or they may try to exclude her from the meeting by holding it at an inconvenient time or place. To overcome a lack of knowledge and courage at the individual level, training and exposure have been found most effective.

**TABLE 1.9 Three levels of Activities Aimed at Promoting a Gender-equitable Society**

Level	Goal	Target	Activity
<b>Micro:</b> Individual	Empowerment	Women	Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase women's confidence and leadership capacity</li> <li>• Prepare women to run for election [especially in local government, TAO]</li> <li>• Support elected women in politics</li> </ul>
<b>Meso:</b> Public institution	Advocacy	Decision-makers	Research and campaigns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution: Legal rights</li> <li>• State/Government system: Bureaucracy: civil servants Parliament: people's representatives</li> <li>• Private sector: Business/industrial enterprises Workers—trade union</li> <li>• Policy: Political parties</li> </ul>
<b>Macro:</b> Society, community	Transforming social attitude	General public The media	Raising awareness, public education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding women's awards</li> <li>• Directory of outstanding women</li> <li>• Photo contest on women's economic contribution</li> </ul>

***At the Institutional Level: Rules and Practices***

Women's participation in public affairs also depends on the level of democracy and legal provisions. New laws allow women to stand for local elections, but there may other provisions that prolong their exclusion. For example, in Thailand a legal amendment in 1982 opened ways for women to be elected as village or subdistrict heads, but some women had to wait years until the male incumbents reached retirement at age 60. In general, rules/regulations of public institutions and customs/traditions of religious and cultural institutions tend to work against women's aspiration to take a public leadership role outside the mother/wife framework. At the institutional level, the most effective strategy is advocacy and networking to form alliances to overcome hurdles.

### *At the Societal Level: Values and Attitude*

The greatest obstacle to women's participation is the social stereotype that men are natural leaders, and women should occupy themselves with housework and care for others. Women often feel inadequate as mothers and wives if they spend too much time on public work. Experience shows that successful female village or subdistrict heads had more than 10 years of community work experience. This useful contribution to their communities is the political base that most women do not have. Age is another important factor. The women who venture into local politics are at least 40 years old when their children are grown, and have won the support of their husbands and children.

Not all women, however, are able to cast off their domestic burdens. Even if the political space is opened, like in Thailand, most women are not interested in entering local politics, since many gender stereotypes act as mental blocks for both men and women, especially in rural areas. The best way to overcome social prejudice and barriers is through mass media campaigns and public education.

### **Impact of Women and Women's Organizations on Women and Society**

There is growing recognition of the impact of women on social institutions and agendas. Their different approaches to governance have been defined as a version of transformative leadership, a framework within which power is used to create change and develop people and communities (APWIP and GDRI, 1994). This type of leadership is often non-hierarchical and participatory, giving priority to disadvantaged sectors. In order to explore the impact of women on local government, our organization, WARI, conducted a small survey of elected women in Thailand (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey, 1996). We found that the style and agenda of many locally elected are different from men's. Their leadership tends to be issue-oriented.<sup>6</sup> Some women, however, reflect male biases, some express class interest and some are structurally unable to do anything. In general, we found more women than men attempted to promote social development. The following findings are from locally-elected women in Thailand or based on women's community activities in other parts of Southeast Asia (Drage, 2001):

<sup>6</sup> At the national level it is a different story. Elected women in the national government avoided being seen as representatives of women, and preferred to be faithful to the party line. Also, not all women at the local level are able to put forward different agendas that serve women's needs.

### *Issues that Female Officials Promote*

Compared to men, elected women have a greater sense of social responsibility for the welfare of their communities. Men tend to give priority to infrastructure rather than basic needs. Women's priorities are more likely to center on housing, safety, clean water, sanitation, education, the social implications of policies, health services, childcare, poverty alleviation and community development.

### *Leadership Style*

The leadership style of many elected women is more inclusive, collaborative and consultative. Women are often more tolerant of different viewpoints and more people-orientated, encouraging more people participation. They are often better communicators. Their approach is more democratic and facilitates forms of decision-making based on leadership by example, while focusing on the issues rather than personalities.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions**

### *Recommendations: Proposals for Change*

Social development is a multi-dimensional activity (economic, political, social and legal). It is a multi-layer activity (national, local and community) in which a wide range of actors (state institutions, women's organizations and individual women) act as participants. Social development creates an environment where everyone—men, women, children, the elderly and physically challenged persons—can develop and utilize their potential and enjoy a satisfying life. Women's organizations, meanwhile, deal mainly with specific aspects of this reality and with a particular group of people. Their projects can be either short-term, dealing with current trends, or long-term, dealing with policy recommendations and future vision. Both activities are important. The following are suggestions to improve the affectivity of social policy and women's organizations:

#### **For Social Policies**

- Initiate laws and programs (such as in education and work) to remove gender disparity. Strategies need to be adopted to change policies and structures that perpetuate women's subordinate status.
- Change governments' ways of operating (quotas and representation), implementing CEDAW and BPFA.

- Change the attitude of governments toward women. Start a consultative process with women's participation and allocation. The culture of local government needs to change to ensure that women are treated fairly and equally and to make sure that discrimination against women is not acceptable.
- Promote more representation, participation and accessibility of women in state systems—political, financial, legal and civil services (professional, effect).
- Promote capacity building in women and women's organizations.
- Governments should work closely with NGOs, civil society and women's groups to develop communities and services that take account of women's needs.
- Mobilize and allocate resources for social development and for gender and development work that emphasizes capacity building, networking and cooperation.
- Initiate programs to ensure more women are able to act in community service, policy advocacy and in local and national government and to enable more women to move into senior management positions.
- Develop gender awareness-raising programs for men and women.
- Collect gender-disaggregated statistics to increase the visibility of women's different roles and needs.

#### **For Women's Organizations**

- **Continue strengthening local foundations (individual and community abilities) for development work.** It is common for women to feel powerless to change their circumstances, relationships or the environment. Efforts such as advocacy training, consciousness raising, network building and political and gender analysis are ways for women to combat the fear and apathy that underlie powerlessness and to generate confidence in the possibility of change.
- **Continue skill building and support women in public office.** By participating in training sessions, and developing and implementing advocacy strategies, women realize the need to work vigorously to promote gender-equitable policies. However, women in local, regional and national social and political positions must continue to develop skills in building coalitions with the broad spectrum of civil society organizations.



- **Support policy analysis activities.** Becoming familiar with public policy and policy makers and learning how to access key audiences encourages women in the projects to become more engaged in political processes. Education and training on legal systems, electoral processes, and legislation can help women become better informed, able to demystify public policy and better advocates of their own needs.
- **Support institutional capacity building.** Many women's groups are relatively young, lacking both essential organizational skills and concrete experience. They need support to strengthen their abilities to design processes and build mechanisms that ensure sustainability.
- **Facilitate the development of diverse networks for women's groups.** Networks can provide strong support systems for women advocates and promote dialogue for collaborative analysis. Organizations should be brought together as partners to foster a sense of strength in numbers, capability and power. Create linkages to exchange information with other peers and leaders.
- **Create forums for women to exchange ideas and reflect on their experiences.** Women can make unique, valuable contributions and should be encouraged to engage in dialogue. So women should be provided with space and time to confront, discuss and take action on social issues.
- **Develop written records of organization activities and widely disseminate them as a credible body of information.** Much of the work done by women's organizations throughout the world is pioneering. By documenting project processes, one organization can serve as a resource for another women's group. Their messages should be sent to policy-makers and other important actors, such as the media. Lack of accurate information or reliable statistics have hindered efforts to promote desirable legislative responses to advocacy objectives. Research, objective fact sheets and other reports and documentation should be created to provide a credible body of information accessible to the public.
- **Collect gender-disaggregated information as a powerful tool for monitoring and assessing women's progress.** A lack of gender-disaggregated data significantly hinders project planning, the overall promotion of women's rights, and the ability to make accurate policy recommendations. Whenever possible, gender-disaggregated statistics should be gathered and surveys and databases developed.

## Concluding Remarks

In their personal lives and in the public sphere, women in Asia, as members of organizations and political parties, are organizing for change (TAF, 1997; TAF, 1998). Involving women at all levels of development processes—thinking, planning and implementation—makes a significant difference to the world. To bring women to the center stage, however, requires profound changes in the socialization process that reproduces gender relations, as well as dismantling centuries-old structures of thought and practice. Such changes will take time. However, over the past few decades it has become clear that women are a tremendous social resource that no society can afford to undervalue or under use. Women will no longer accept being treated as workhorses for development strategies planned by others; they are demanding to be treated as partners. Planners have a great responsibility, both to listen to women and to build their vision into gender-sensitive social policies and strategies.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Women and Social Development: Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean

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### Introduction

Although Latin America and the Caribbean may be considered a region with common roots and history, it includes countries of various sizes, ethnic and cultural compositions, languages, economic potential, political regimes and levels of human development. It is a racially mixed continent with great ethnic diversity and marked differences in the development of urban and rural areas, as well as severe social inequities and the marginalization of large groups of the population (Tables 2.1–2.5). Economic and political instability and crises, as well as poverty and inequality were permanent features throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dictatorships have been frequent in the region.

Throughout the region's history, women and women's organizations have significantly contributed to social development in different spheres. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through collective and individual action, women have been present in economic, political, social and cultural processes. They have helped improve their families' living conditions, democratize their countries and strengthen civil society, while seeking to reduce economic and gender inequities in the region.

The struggle for full citizenship for women throughout the continent lasted more than 50 years. It was first recognized in Ecuador in 1929 and finally in Paraguay in 1961. This was a landmark achievement in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean that opened the way to new struggles in the economic and social arena.<sup>1</sup> Notably, during the 80s and 90s, women, through their organizations, participated in the return to democracy in various countries, fought for basic needs and worked to penalize violence against women.

Women have made diverse contributions to development in different sectors, according to needs and the barriers presented by social and

<sup>1</sup> In the non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the first country to grant women the vote was Jamaica, and a large number of countries did not do so until the 1950s. In countries that were under colonial government, women obtained the vote at the same time as in the colonizing country.

cultural structures. We can identify three main forms of organization used by women to promote the development of their communities and countries: grassroots and neighborhood organizations, development NGOs and social movements (women's or feminist movements) focused on social change.<sup>2</sup>

Women's organizations have established relations among themselves and generated networks that have defined how to be a woman in Latin America and the Caribbean. They have also worked to satisfy basic and strategic gender needs, thus becoming a basic social actor for development in the region. They have put together thematic networks and campaigns and, through their presence from the local community to national and hemispheric levels, have pursued a political agenda of pressuring governments and international organizations to facilitate major improvements in their condition.

By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women and their organizations had achieved significant changes in laws and the political agenda and had entered spheres of power throughout the region. Although there have been changes in gender relations, these have not been significant in redistributing productive and reproductive roles, particularly in the private sphere. Inequality, discrimination, "invisibility" and undervaluation of the contribution made by women to society still exist in all countries.

This text attempts to present a modest overview of women's participation in social development in Latin America. The first section takes a brief glance at the history of women's empowerment and women's organizations in the region, up to the 1990s—a decade examined more specifically in the second section. The following three sections move on to synthesize women's contributions and women's efforts in three areas related to development: the economy, community development and politics. A final section then presents a series of concluding reflections.

## **Women's Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Glance at History**

The beginning of women's collective action in Latin America and the Caribbean goes back, in some countries, to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when groups of women became increasingly concerned with their subordinate and marginal condition. These women would meet in cultural, suffragist and feminist organizations to struggle for access to education, labor reforms,

<sup>2</sup> This does not exclude the early presence of women in labor, trade union and professional organizations, and their struggles throughout the region (Valdés 2000)

and civil and political rights. Their vitality expressed itself in a number of meetings and congresses, at the national and regional levels and also in the creation of political parties (Valdés and Gomáriz, 1995; Valdés and Palacios, 1999; Valdés, 2000). The purpose of their collective action has always been the construction, exercise and extension of their citizenship, conceived as a set of legal rights and obligations acquired by belonging to a political community (Jelin, 1996).

Their action has moved from the social to the political sphere, from the needs of the family towards collective action in favor of the community and society as a whole. Female organization is found at different degrees of development in many countries: feminism, welfare, charity and voluntary work, political movements, the fight for human rights, the struggle for subsistence and for equal access to power. Therefore, women's organizations have established relations with the State, political actors, social agents including churches, and different interest groups. These relations have established a framework for action and throughout history, they have empowered but also inhibited the development of collective action by women's organizations.

### *The Initial Relationship with the State*

Latin American and Caribbean history has been marked, from the beginning, by economic dependence and by economic and political crises that left large sectors of the population excluded and in poverty. By the 1950s, most of the countries had public agencies that responded to the welfare needs of the population in the fields of education, health, housing, etc. Since then, governments have seen women—particularly poor women—as “mothers.” In this light, they have sought to establish relations with them to provide them with assistance, and goods and services—an activity already being carried out by charitable institutions run by the Catholic Church and upper-class women.

Latin American governments expressed this view by fomenting the creation of poor women's organizations—*mothers' centers*, *mothers' clubs*, *housewives' associations*—aimed at carrying out programs for their families and adequately reproducing the male labor force. However, while the traditional roles of mother, wife, and housewife were maintained, the development of community links and progress at the local level was also promoted, leading to the generation of a public social sphere in which women from low-income sectors progressively participated (Valdés and Gomáriz 1995). Thus, an organizational culture of poorer women began focusing on survival and acquiring abilities to perform traditionally femi-

nine roles, while evolving towards the public sphere and becoming politicized in times of economic and political crisis.

### *Women's Organizations in the 1970s*

The process of urbanization and industrialization, concomitant with modernization, brought important changes in the lives of women, especially as educational levels rose and the global fertility rate declined with the massive use of modern contraceptives. During the past 50 years, one of the most important changes that has taken place in Latin America and the Caribbean is the progressive incorporation of women into the labor market, with high rates of economic participation (Tables 2.6 and 2.7).

However, the integration of women into a traditionally masculine context failed to diminish gender discrimination. In the labor market, women are concentrated in jobs in the public sphere which are an extension of their traditional gender roles. Moreover, within the same professions women have less valued specializations and receive lower wages (Table 2.8). Thus, a female labor market has been formed, with clear wage discrimination and occupational segmentation, reproducing the cultural mandates of the traditional gender order.

In the context of the First World Conference on Women (Mexico, 1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), the situation of millions of poor women in the region and in the world came to light, as did their role in the economic and social development of their countries. This was when concern arose for the "integration" of women in development, the allocation of resources, the implementation of projects, together with support for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), grassroots organizations and the women's movement. A number of organizations adopted the "Women in Development" (WID) strategy.<sup>3</sup> This gave rise to research and productive development projects for women, especially in the rural context, and also debate that led to new strategies (Moser 1995).

During the 1960s and 70s, the bulk of women's participation took place in neighborhood organizations, community organizations, and the Urban Popular Movement. The actions of women's grassroots organizations were linked to neighborhood movements struggling for housing or for neighborhood improvement (Colombia, Venezuela, Peru Chile, and Brazil). Women played an important role in squatters' movements (a

<sup>3</sup> Term created by anthropologists of the Society for International Development (Boserup, 1970)



common practice in many countries due to housing shortages for poor migrants) and sometimes led these movements.<sup>4</sup>

This participation led to growing participation of women in the public sphere. Although these movements originally sought urgent solutions to precarious living conditions, when the crisis worsened and repressive military governments were established, other more political demands were made, leading to the emergence of new organizations.

### **The Feminist Revival**

The feminist movement reemerged in the region in the late 1970s at national, regional and international congresses, and through the creation of networks and the commemoration of International Women's Day (March 8th). Of great importance is the dissemination of knowledge by NGOs<sup>5</sup> and academic centers, as well as the development of action programs with poor women, especially in urban areas. The Latin American feminist agenda emphasizes the visibility of women and their contribution to society, the discrimination against women and the need for democracy, which is highly valued after harsh experiences with dictatorships and repression.

The feminist revival took place earlier in some countries influenced by dictatorships and military conflicts, beginning in the early 1970s in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela, then in the late 70s in Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay and Costa Rica and, finally, in Panama, Paraguay, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras, starting in the 1980s.

### *The Crisis of the 80s*

After two decades of great social and political effervescence, a serious economic crisis developed in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1980s. National governments, driven by multilateral financial organizations, adopted macro-economic adjustment measures to deal with rising unemployment, high rates of inflation, low investment levels, a high external debt and the enormous competitive disadvantage of local products in international markets. These adjustment policies dictated the withdrawal, reduction and decentralization of the State, as well as restrictions

<sup>4</sup>In Brazil, these movements gave life to a movement against increases in the cost of living, which in 1972 collected thousands of signatures around the country for their "Letter to the Mothers of the Periphery."

<sup>5</sup>During that period, NGOs were well-supported by international cooperation. NGO professionals devoted themselves to training and raising awareness among women about their subordination in different social spheres.

on social expenditures, privatization of public enterprises, dismissal of public employees, and broad neo-liberal labor, health and social security reforms, which, in turn, brought a deterioration of living conditions for the poorest social sectors and the middle class.

During the crisis, poor women developed survival strategies, including the creation of small groups to improve living conditions for their families. Through collective action, born out of the need to survive economically and to defend basic civil, political and human rights violated by dictatorships, women made demands and shifted problems from their social origins (food for their children, search for missing family members, etc.) to the political arena.

For example, in Chile, the economic crisis coincided with the military dictatorship (repression and violation of human rights). During this time, women organized for food ("communal kitchens," "buying together," etc.), for work (labor workshops, handicrafts, etc.) and services (health groups). Later, they established independent associations committed to the struggle for survival and the return to democracy.

In Bolivia, the National Confederation of Mothers' Clubs was established in 1980 to improve the living conditions of low-income families. In Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil and other countries, associations of low-income housewives also emerged.

In Peru, starting in the late 1970s, "community kitchens" were organized with the support of Mothers' Clubs and food donated by CARITAS. During the 1980s, the Glass of Milk Committees, cottage industries and health committees were established.

In Mexico, the First Meeting of Women of the Urban Popular Movement took place in 1983. The 1985 earthquakes led to accelerated growth of neighborhood organizations, such as the Popular Kitchen programs, Child Development Centers and Community Health projects. Women were the driving forces in the organization and execution of these initiatives. The first International Meeting of Women from Popular Sectors (from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean) took place in 1986.

In the Caribbean, there is a rich tradition of civil society, which includes organizations such as labor unions, credit unions, women's organizations, church groups and other charitable organizations. The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), a regional organization with branches in fifteen English-, Spanish-, and Dutch-speaking territories was formed in 1985. It has been influential in producing leaders who are making contributions to the public sector at the national, regional and international levels (Pile, in this volume).

During the 1980s, women's organizations and movements became visible, acting in an international context that sought women's inclusion in economic development and the recognition of their rights. This was a particularly favorable setting, and allowed for negotiations with governments, parliaments and other political and social actors to satisfy basic needs and achieve full citizenship for women.

Women's organizations began to embrace a new strategy known as the Gender in Development (GID) strategy, or empowerment approach, which emerged in the mid 80s in women's grassroots organizations and in Third World feminist reflections (India, Africa, Asia and Latin America), as a response to the limitations of the previous strategy (the Women in Development, or WID strategy) and the progress made in understanding women's problems. This new approach recognizes inequalities between men and women and holds that they are the reason for the different impact of development programs on men and women. It states that female subordination begins in the family and points out that women suffer oppression in different ways according to their race, class, colonial history or position in the international economic order. Political will is required to overcome this.. The empowerment approach considers that women do not participate sufficiently in the definition of the type of society to be constructed and that women need to attain autonomy to decide about their lives and about the directions of social change (Rebolledo, 1996).

During the 1980s, the different segments of the women's movement became progressively interrelated, generating a broad social movement<sup>6</sup>, which was not a linear, homogeneous, or unique process under the leadership of any one group or tendency. However, solidarity was established and alliances were built.

The capacity of the broad women's movement to articulate itself at the national, regional and continental level developed significantly in the 1980s. The networks with the longest trajectories are the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (1984), the Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM—1987), the Women's Popular Education Network (REPEM—1988), and the Latin American and Caribbean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (1990). These networks emerged to coordinate international political action from the base of individual organizations and individual countries, facilitating the exchange information and resources, the implementation of a common agenda and the strengthening of each organization or institution (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Understood as a collective, plural, heterogeneous and dynamic social actor.

Connections among grassroots organizations, women's NGOs and human rights organizations generated a social movement that became one of the most relevant forces in the region's return to democracy. This movement demanded "democracy in the country and at home", articulated demands for the satisfaction of basic needs and for democracy, and clamored against the discrimination suffered by women.

### *Women in the Countryside*

In rural areas, women have had to overcome organizational difficulties not faced in urban areas. Some countries have long traditions of organizing, while in others the State has played an important role, with groups acquiring increasing independence through practice, for example in Colombia (National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women (ANMUCIC)) and Honduras (National Association of Rural Women (ANAMUC)).

Rural organizations have played a leading role in Central America, due to the economic importance of agriculture. In 1978, the Committee of Peasant Unity, CUC, was created to promote the worker-peasant struggle. The Committee brought together 150,000 members, the majority of them indigenous. It went underground after the assassination of some of its members. Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiché Indian and a Christian catechist, leader of the CUC and Nobel Peace Prize winner, is an outstanding exponent of women's participation in their country's struggles.

The Paraguayan Rural Movement (MCP), which includes the Coordination of Rural Women as an internal organization, has pursued land ownership and freedom of organization since 1985. In Bolivia, the peasant movement has played a critical role vis à vis government, with the emergence of female leadership that has its origins in mothers' clubs and political organizations.<sup>7</sup> In Brazil, rural workers emerged in the late 1970s as a social force and in the early 80s began to coalesce as a specific social sector within the trade union or Landless movement.

The rural population is primarily indigenous in many countries in the region and indigenous women's organizations have developed more slowly. In Bolivia, Aymara women and those who belong to ethnic groups from the eastern part of the country have focused their struggle on the defense of their culture and territories. Indigenous women in Ecuador have held several National Meetings and in El Salvador they have organized the Association of Indigenous Women (AMIS). In Colombia,

<sup>7</sup> In 1980 the National Federation of Rural Women of Bolivia "Bartolina Sisa" was created. The Federation has held different congresses, strengthening its autonomy and gender identity.

they have fought for their land through forums and chapter meetings. In Mexico, indigenous women actively participated in the Chiapas conflict. Indigenous organizations in Colombia and Ecuador also have well-known women leaders.

### ***Black Women***

Afro-descendant women have had to face explicit double discrimination, being female and of African origin. This specific type of oppression led Afro-descendant women to organize first in Uruguay and Brazil, participating in social and political movements, as well as in religious and cultural associations. However, it was only in the early 1980s that they started to develop an autonomous process of organization, motivated by the need to make their particular needs known, since some of these were not addressed by the black movement, which was controlled by men and white women.

This diverse movement strives to avoid hierarchies of oppression, since race, class and gender inseparably mark the lives of black women.

The feminist revival took place earlier in some countries influenced by dictatorships and military conflicts, beginning in the early 1970s in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela, then in the late 70s in Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay and Costa Rica and, finally, in Panama, Paraguay, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras, starting in the 1980s.

In Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, feminist and women's groups reacted to the military dictatorships in different ways. Early feminist groups in Brazil and Argentina were harshly repressed, along with other social demonstrators. In the 1980s, the feminist movement recovered and became stronger. Through the Study Group on the Condition of Women (GRECMU), Uruguayan women made important progress studying and bringing to light feminine subordination. The dictatorship's repressive policies led to street demonstrations headed by women. Groups of working-class women, trade unions and feminists show a natural tendency to coordinate and form networks.

### **The 1990s: A New Scenario for Women**

Latin America and the Caribbean took on a new social face in the 90s, as a result of noticeable changes in the political, economic and cultural spheres. The region became immersed in a paradox: on one hand, democratic institutionalization had been consolidated and was working to achieve equality and universal human rights; but on the other hand,

the region had to deal with modernization and neoliberal economic reforms that operated in the opposite direction, resulting in discrimination, exclusion, inequity, and marginalization. This was occurring in a context of increasing economic globalization and transnationalization in which trade agreements proliferated.

It was a decade marked by poverty and increasing inequality. The poverty rate was reduced, but the number of people in poverty increased. (CEPAL 2003). Public policies were targeted at the poorest sectors, the State reduced its social protection, labor standards were deregulated and, in some countries, health and education systems were increasingly privatized. The relationship between government policies and the working-class and middle-class sectors, dating from the 1950s, came to an end, and with it the existing wage order and social contract. The underpinnings of the nuclear patriarchal family, with the man as provider and the woman in charge of reproducing a stable labor force, were destroyed (Olavarría, 2000). Nowadays, a poor or low-income family can hardly achieve acceptable living conditions without a woman's paid work.

In this context, the State left the field open to private, managerial and non-profit agents, giving civil society a more relevant role in new proposals for social development in the region.

However, this process was accompanied by crisis among political parties and systems, which became more elitist and lost connection with the sectors they supposedly represent. A change in the meaning of democracy (as a political system) took place, making the connection between citizens and the political system more complex. Once democracy had been institutionalized, the need emerged for autonomous social actors to exercise their rights and duties through collective and responsible participation in the construction of social life (Sain, 1996).

Democracy has come to be understood as the development of more diverse and active citizenship, which is no longer expressed exclusively through participation in political parties, but has acquired diverse forms in different social scenarios. New spaces have developed in which independent forms of citizenship are emerging; the analysis of these forms is important to generate policies to strengthen civil society and to understand the dynamics they generate.

### *Institutionalization of Equal Opportunity in the Political Agenda*

The Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Social Summit (Copenhagen, 1995) were held after important regional conferences and culminated in the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women

(Beijing 1995), which synthesized the commitments acquired at these conferences, embodied in the Platform for Action. This Platform seeks to eliminate the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of social life and to promote equality between men and women in decision making. In order to advance and empower women and to attain the full exercise of their fundamental rights and liberties, the Platform establishes objectives and measures in twelve priority areas<sup>8</sup>. The documents prepared by governments at the regional and world conferences included many of the proposals the feminist movement in the region had been putting forward for more than two decades.

After Beijing (1995), national institutions for the advancement of women became fully legitimized and the improvement of women's conditions became a part of the political agenda in all countries. To achieve the greatest progress in the shortest time possible, formal organisms dedicated to the advancement of women flourished in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### *A New Strategy for the Women's Movement*

The so-called Beijing process—the preparation, implementation and follow-up to the 1995 Conference on Women—brought about a change in women's strategies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The elaboration of national non-government reports clarified the pending tasks in different areas and favored changes in relationships with government.

Latin American and Caribbean NGOs organized at the regional and sub-regional levels and discussed an agenda for women, first in each country<sup>9</sup> and then at the Non-Governmental Organization's Forum in Mar del Plata (Argentina, 1994), leading to the elaboration of the document that was ultimately approved in Beijing. In this process, the multiple interests of women entered the public-political domain at the international level, including the experiences and proposals of the feminist movement. The movement successfully incorporated some of its members in the preparation of international instruments, which led governments to begin including women from NGOs in their official delegations, mainly as experts

<sup>8</sup> They are: Women and poverty; Education and training of women; Women and health; Violence against women; Women and armed conflicts; Women and economy; Women in power and decision making; Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; Women's human rights; Women and media; Women and environment; Girls (United Nations 1995)

<sup>9</sup> This was run by Virginia Vargas, a feminist leader of long experience who is member of the Flora Tristán Centre based in Lima, Peru. The sub-regions were: the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, the Andean Region, Brazil and the Southern Cone.

on specific issues. In so doing, they politically accepted women as legitimate negotiators.

The approval of the Action Platform was a consequence of the complex set of relationships established between civil society—the women’s movement—and governments, nationally, regionally and globally. Gina Vargas calls it the “triangle of empowerment”: the articulation of feminists, femocrats<sup>10</sup> and politicians (Vargas, 1996a), an alliance which gave the Platform, in its final version, the progressive seal of women’s interests. This triangle generated new parameters in the relationship between civil society and the State and the alliances among women in different positions of power acquired specific and flexible content, while also marking their limits.

After the regional and world conferences, feminist movements shifted their attention to the national scenes to verify possible legal, institutional and political advances, but without completely abandoning the regional meetings. Women’s movements focused their actions on influencing the implementation of commitments made in the World Action Plan (PAM) for the advancement of women (Celiberti, 2002).

The World Action Platform approved in Beijing is not legally binding but implies commitment on the part of governments. Its implementation and control depends on the commitment and capacity of civil society—especially organized women—to exercise pressure. Government commitments are being monitored by women’s organizations from the “social watch” perspective.<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge faced by organized women in the 90s was to develop active citizenship capable of consolidating new rights and greater social participation in the context of an authoritarian and vertically-articulated political and institutional culture and neoliberal economic dynamics.

Women and their organizations are a fundamental pillar of a sound democracy, since they make the needs of important sectors of the population an issue of public debate and government priority, while also monitoring policy development. Women are now a great presence on the political scene, denouncing the violation of human rights in countries with authoritarian and dictatorial governments. Wives and mothers are organizing to publicize violations of the most basic rights of their family

<sup>10</sup> Femocrats is the name given to feminists working in State institutions.

<sup>11</sup> For example, the Index of Fulfilled Commitments, a social watch instrument to monitor gender equity developed in Chile, now being elaborated in other Latin American countries (Valdés and others 2000)



members. International human rights organizations have facilitated high visibility of these issues. The combination of these factors has given rise to one of the most important trends in women's organizations (Valdés and Gomáriz 1995):<sup>12</sup> leadership that appeals to the world's conscience and calls for respect for human dignity and justice.

Domestic and sexual violence against women were placed on the international and national public agenda by organized women and their networks. Through their action and dialogue with governments and parliament, a number of laws have been passed to penalize domestic violence. An outstanding contribution was made by the Latin American and Caribbean Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence in drafting the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (Belem do Pará, 1994). This was the culmination of continuous and effective action by thousands of women in the region.

### *Between Local and Global Action*

Public policies, which affect the everyday lives of women, are applied at the local level and this appears to be where active citizenship achieves greatest visibility. Local development guides an entire line of action, strengthening different social actors in the process of promoting the proposals of grassroots organizations, networks and local groups, which advocate and activate for solutions to their own needs and goals in the context of their local setting.

At the same time, the experience of the 90s highlights the importance of action at the national and global levels. The regional and world conferences and the changes in the social, political and economic world order demonstrate the importance of strengthening civil society and articulating it internationally as a political actor capable of helping define development scenarios that affect women. These include increased social exclusion and inequity, new macroeconomic policies, trade agreements and adjustment policies. In attempt to deal with these central issues, women's

<sup>12</sup> The following associations and groups were created: in Chile, the Association of Democratic Women (1973), the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared (1975) and the Association of Relatives of the Politically Executed (1978); in Argentina, the Mothers of May Square (1977) and later, the Grandmothers of May Square; in El Salvador, the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, the Arrested and the Assassinated (COMADRES1980); in Guatemala, the Group for Mutual Help (1984) and the National Coordination of Widows (CONAVIGUA1988); in Uruguay, the Group of Mothers and Relatives of People Accused by Military Justice (1982); in Paraguay, the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights (1983); in Panama the Committee of Relatives of Victims of the Panama Invasion (1989); and at the regional level, the Latin American Federation of Relatives of the Disappeared (FEDEFAM).

groups are seeking to increase their dialogue and interactions with other social movements in the context of global mobilizations.<sup>13</sup> The Cartagena Feminist Initiative, devoted to advocacy on macroeconomic, tax and fiscal policies is an outstanding example. These regional and global networks lobby for a new development and finance paradigm at the United Nations Conferences on Finance for Development and at World Trade Organization meetings.<sup>14</sup>

### Women in the Economy

The new economic order tends to exacerbate inequalities between men and women. Women have therefore developed organizations to respond to the needs of the family, while also improving their working conditions. Women's integration into the labor market is strongly conditioned by the need to make work and family responsibilities compatible (Olavarría and Céspedes 2001).

#### *Women's Successful Productive Experiences*

The initiatives of the Latin American Women's Popular Education Network over the past five years, stand out for their capacity to promote women's participation in development. Since 1998, this network has held a contest for *Successful Enterprises by Women*, which includes non-marginal rural and urban initiatives among women leaders with low educational levels and with little or no previous experience in paid work in eight Latin American countries. The organizations that won the 2002 competition are devoted mainly to raising the income level of their families and carrying out activities within the organizational framework of the community aimed at passing on their knowledge and demands to different levels. In particular the active presence of NGOs and of the municipality is essential for these enterprises to survive. Usually, these initiatives try to make family responsibilities compatible with paid work close to home. Aside from improving their material living conditions, women enhance their self-esteem and increase their

<sup>13</sup> This is the case of the Feminist Articulation MARCOSUR, which groups South American women who participated in the World Social Forum, putting forward global proposals against fundamentalism.

<sup>14</sup> The Cartagena Feminist Initiative is integrated by REPEM, DAWN, the International Gender and Trade Network, the Latin American Committee for the Defense of Women's Human Rights, the Women and Habitat Network, the Group of Feminist Economists, Women Transforming the Economy and the Articulation MARCOSUR.

presence in traditionally masculine spaces, consolidating their status as agents of social change.

### *Obstacles Women Face in the Promotion of Productive Development*

Generally, the obstacles to women's economic participation are directly related to the gender sensibility of institutions and of society as a whole. First, women and their organizations do not receive the necessary institutional support from regional or local governments to find solutions for their organizational and productive problems. Second, women are forced to look for opportunities that allow them to simultaneously participate in the family, social, political and economic spheres. Another obstacle is the bureaucratic red tape involved in establishing productive organizations—for example, women who want to form a cooperative often face complicated paper work to acquire legal status.

In urban areas, women need higher levels of educational attainment and thus longer periods of training to attain social integration. However, when absent from the public sphere, women face low self-esteem, problems with expressing their concerns and difficulties looking for jobs.

In rural areas, land tenure is one of the most difficult obstacles facing women in their integration into productive development. Women do not inherit land even when they become widows. Legal reforms have been introduced to palliate this problem but the rural attitude toward women as landowners has not changed significantly (Deere and León 2000). Women have poor access to credit for lack of land or assets to be used as a guarantee. Government financial agencies do not have a gender perspective to legitimize the creation of special credit and financing programs for rural women, making it next to impossible for women to improve their productive activities or start new ones.

Illiteracy makes the barriers against indigenous women even greater. Successful, non-threatening intervention requires agents who are sensitive to and familiar with the feelings of the inhabitants of indigenous communities. Successful experiences include the Bi-literacy Program promoted by ECLAC and UNFPA and the ProAndes (UNICEF) bilingual intercultural education program.

Local cultural traditions discourage women from developing income-generating activities, just as they discourage them from being land owners. Agents, including women, who go to these communities often face a rejection of their Western discourse, and consequently, of their actions and ideas.

### *Strategies to Promote Economic Participation by Women*

Given the labor market conditions in the region and the ways in which women are discriminated, as well as the difficulties to make family and work compatible, a promising area for the economic development of women is the development of microenterprises. However, support and advice is needed to implement them productively, with acceptable organization of labor. Training, access to credit and commercialization and marketing mechanisms are fundamental to the success of these initiatives.

Training can satisfy practical as well as strategic gender needs. When training includes activities traditionally carried out by men, it not only increases women's access to the labor market but can also eventually reduce occupational segregation. As well as providing the tools required for adequate job performance, training most offer women better skills in public speaking and expressions of their needs and all the dimensions involved in acting in the social sphere, which is usually seen as threatening and excluding. Child care centers located in the father or mother's workplace, or in their neighborhoods and communities, also facilitate women's entrance to the labor market.

In rural sectors, joint land titles for married couples, strong women's inheritance rights, effective land rights for women, and affirmative action to favor specific groups of women, such as housewives, are all measures which tend to reduce the gap between formal and real gender equity, by redistributing the ownership of assets in these sectors (Deere and León, 2000).

For indigenous women, who share the characteristics of rural women described above, a specific diagnosis is necessary to identify their specific needs and demands to establish development programs appropriate to their culture and lifestyle. A promising option could be to spread bilingual educational programs and develop texts which foster respect and love for their own culture, while guiding them toward the necessary changes in gender relations (Concha, 2001). An environment of social peace for indigenous women is essential for them to find ways to change customs that make it impossible for them to develop in the productive sphere.

### **Women in Community Development**

Women in the region have a strong tradition of participation in neighborhood organizations. Local movements have struggled for housing, sanitary conditions, health and educational programs. All over the region, they have improved poor families' daily lives and have become schools of citizenship. Women work basically for the benefit of their community or

organization. As time goes on they begin to take care of themselves, their needs and their concerns, although the needs and problems of the family and community are always among their objectives.

However, community organizations and poor neighborhood women's organizations today face many difficulties in the new economic and political conditions. A decentralization process has taken place in several countries, but local governments are weak and many of them have difficulties efficiently managing social programs for poor families. Municipalities lack proper bureaucratic development and budgetary procedures to guarantee that the funds provided will actually be invested in social projects, thus increasing the risk of corruption and political manipulation.

Women and their organizations often lack the skills to negotiate in this new scenario, have little knowledge of their legal rights and suffer from weak leadership. They are vulnerable to political and economic crisis and face serious challenges when economic adjustment programs are implemented by government. For example, the Community Kitchens in Peru, played a central role at critical moments, but no longer have the strength to mobilize women. Economic crisis and terrorist activity had significant impacts on women's organizations. However, as Blondet argues in this volume, community kitchens increase social capital in poor neighborhoods and, with little support, they could overcome these difficulties.

Women at the local level have very limited access to the justice system and their human rights are in no way guaranteed. Ignorance of legal rights, entitlements and the justice process is widespread in economically disadvantaged social segments. This hinders a sense of social belonging (citizenship), a primary condition for participating in social and political life and for demanding rights and social change. The judicial system is contaminated by the normative standards of masculinity that reduce women to inferior beings. In this volume, Vargas suggests that such a culture results in ineffective legal service.

### *Strategies to Strengthen Community Development*

Initiatives and experiences all over Latin America and the Caribbean seek to empower women in their communities and help them to develop leadership. An example is the project created in Argentina by the Institute for Gender, Law and Development, an NGO whose objectives are the improvement of the social and judicial conditions of girls and women, gender equity, citizenship, and respect for human rights. Through the presentation of eight different films, followed by a debate, this agency aims to generate a participatory culture and leadership commitment among women (Chiariotti, in this volume).

In Brazil, the NGO Themis Legal Assistance and Gender Studies (Porto Alegre) helps women access justice through innovative and alternative mechanisms for the defense and promotion of women's rights, as well as through the dissemination of legal information. The organization promotes women's access to justice on the assumption that this will enhance women's conditions and facilitate social development. It has developed the Popular Legal Promoters (PLP) project for the gradual empowerment and mobilization of women in poor neighborhoods. PLPs creatively and persistently confront many obstacles to women's access to justice through legal training on women's human rights, women's self-acknowledgement as rights-holders and women's knowledge of their community realities. The PLPs are holders of particular expertise in their communities: they know the law and the different public institutions responsible for guaranteeing women's rights. This acquired expertise gives the PLPs some power to act on cases of rights violations. This project has been replicated in other cities (Vargas, in this volume).

Another successful experience is that of CAFRA Trinidad and Tobago, PROLEAD—Young Women's Leadership Program. This is a paradigmatic example of a transformation in the cultural/political viewpoint of new generations of women. The main goal was to develop young leadership by raising and improving their social consciousness, self-confidence and political awareness, so that they would begin to demand a voice or space in decision-making in their countries. Participatory methodology was used, with small group discussions, popular theatre, group counseling and decisions made by participants on various aspects of the program. They all got the opportunity to work with other NGOs through work placements and community projects. Benefits of the Young Women's Leadership project were perceived by the community where the women were trained as well as in the empowerment of the women themselves. (Pile, in this volume).

One of the strategies with the greatest impact has been the formation of young women leaders at the local level and in specific contexts. This gives women a better knowledge of women's problems and of political systems, and helps them develop their abilities to speak and express themselves in public. This type of programs has been developed in many of the region's countries, and has also involved women candidates at the local and national levels.

### **Women in Politics**

In the region, women's political participation has been slow to develop and women continue to be under-represented in parliaments, national and local governments and at other levels of decision-making.



During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women reached positions of power in two main ways: either through experience acquired in community, social or trade union organizations, which allowed them to become leaders and legitimized them to hold power and start a political career; or else as members of families with a political tradition, enabling them to enter the public sphere with inherited contacts and resources.

Women now have various strategies for reaching positions of power, including involvement in political parties, the creation of their own parties or running independent candidacies. However, once in positions of power, women face new barriers due to their isolation and lack of experience, even in issues on the women's agenda.

Women's act politically at two levels: in representative politics (in the legislative and executive branches) and in participative politics (in social movements and NGOs). Women very often prefer the latter and neglect the former, although both levels allow women to contribute to social development. The challenge lies in democratizing representative politics so as to build mechanisms and opportunities for the effective inclusion and participation of excluded sectors (Rodrigues, CFEMEA in this volume).

Actions from the women's movement, such as the experience of CAFRA and the Latin American coordinations and networks, whose actions began with preparations for the Beijing Conference, have made it possible for women to have significant influence on government policies and in shaping laws. Similarly, recent follow-up actions to the Beijing commitments and citizen control have placed women's own agenda in the public sphere, enabling them to exert pressure.

### *New Leadership*

Different studies reveal a change in women's political leadership, historically associated with extending their roles as mothers to the public sphere (Chaney 1983). Today, women are leaders in a broad range of areas, both at the local and national levels. Women are now ministers of defense, foreign affairs, the economy and finance.

This change is related to the experience of women's organizations during the 1980s. Economic and political crises led them to take on leadership and political activism beyond their traditional roles as mothers. This new type of leadership has strengthened organizations at the community level and advanced the exercise of, and respect for, women's rights. An example of this is CAFRA T&T's program for training young women leaders.

### *Women in Legislative Power*

The increase of women in parliament has led to growing attention to women's rights and related issues. For example, in the 1990s most countries in the region passed laws to penalize domestic violence, while some legislated on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. They also introduced reforms to ensure gender equality, for example, in family law, which had given the husband or father greater authority than the woman in the household. Without the efforts of women parliamentarians, there would hardly have been any interest in issues involving discrimination against women. In recent years, many countries have established parliamentary commissions specialized in women's affairs.

Quota laws are meant to compensate for the unfavorable situation of women and ensure proportional representation in public institutions. In order to achieve this, quota laws establish both minimum and maximum percentages of representation by sex. These laws have been effective in increasing the number of women in the legislative branch throughout the region. Between 1991 and 2000, eleven countries passed laws creating quotas for the election of women to representative posts (varying from 20 to 40 percent).<sup>15</sup> Colombia passed a law under which women must occupy 30 percent of the posts appointed by the executive power.

Quota laws differ according to the electoral system of each country. In countries with a closed list system, the law—in addition to determining the percentage of women candidates—requires that political parties put some women candidates high on the lists. However, there are mechanisms to evade the law, for example in Brazil (the text of the law and statistical technicalities make it possible for parties to present lists without women candidates) and in Bolivia (where male candidates have run under women's names).

However, there are still considerable challenges. In some countries, quota laws have been weakly applied. Moreover, political feminist alliances are not always able to resist the pressure of their loyalty to political parties. Women are elected through political parties and most of them must hold on to their positions in the party structure and power base. At the same time, women may adjust to patterns of clientelism and corruption, which have a long tradition in Latin America (Htun 2002). Elected women say that loneliness is a major obstacle.

<sup>15</sup> The Cartagena Feminist Initiative is integrated by REPEM, DAWN, the International Gender and Trade Network, the Latin American Committee for the Defense of Women's Human Rights, the Women and Habitat Network, the Group of Feminist Economists, Women Transforming the Economy and the Articulation MARCOSUR.



### *Women in Executive Power and in Policy Formulation*

Panama and Nicaragua are the only countries where a woman has been elected as President of the Republic. In Guyana a woman took over the presidency. In Ecuador, Argentina, Haiti and Bolivia there also have been women presidents, but they were not elected directly. Other countries have had female vice-presidents and two have chosen women to govern the biggest cities in the region (Sao Paulo and Mexico City). In the nineties in Mexico, women also headed two of the three most important political parties in the country.

Women's participation in government teams depends on political will, on the willingness of political parties to back them and, frequently, on the capacity of women to exert pressure on government. Continuity is difficult to achieve, due to changes within governments, and from one government to another. However, as the number of women holding government posts increases, the idea has taken hold in the region that women are capable of holding this type of posts.

As all governments have established mechanisms for the advancement of women (ministries, secretariats, institutes, etc.), the women's agenda has increasingly been incorporated into government action and it is women who have defined politics, programs and legislative reforms. In many countries, the institutionalization of actions for the advancement of women has led to the creation of interministerial commissions with the participation of civil society, aimed at tackling relevant problems and formulating specific policies (poverty, domestic violence, family, etc.).

A case worth highlighting is the Dialogue on the Strategy for Poverty Reduction (PRSP), in the Dominican Republic, a governmental initiative open to civil society, spearheaded by the country's female VP. Women leaders participated actively and their contribution was central to the successful implementation of this initiative and to the formulation of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which included gender and social equity perspectives. During the consultation process, women made conceptually clear and empirically-based recommendations on key issues to reformulate the PRSP (Bonilla, in this volume).

### *Obstacles to Political Participation*

Women face multiple barriers to political participation in elected posts at the local, state and national levels. These include: a high risk of being criticized, becoming symbols and representatives of their sex, a lack of allies in their political organizations, a lack of knowledge of formal power structures, exclusion from informal networks, low respect and scarce at-

tention to women's activities and opinions in political parties, conflicts between their roles as women and as social or political leaders, and the prevalence of the "masculine model" of political life.

Furthermore, the abilities and skills acquired by women through socialization do not enable them to compete in the political and public context, which is structured on masculine parameters, styles and norms. Even when it is precisely women who know what is best for their families and communities, and who are more inclined to establish relationships of tolerance, negotiation and consent, their qualities are considered of little value in the public setting.

Other difficulties that limit women's political participation involve the functioning of the political system and the State. The centralization and concentration of the State and political power, along with the lack of effective spaces for the participation of civil society, affect women's opportunities for full citizenship and access to power. For example, political parties usually propose the names of high officials to the president of the republic and nominate candidates for representative posts. When doing so, they tend to favor men and exclude women.

Related to this is the unequal access of women to economic resources and their lack of economic power to run electoral campaigns. Parties often provide only limited financial support for women candidates and limited access to political networks.

On the whole, discrimination against women participating in social and political spheres leads to women feeling that their interests and demands are not considered by their so-called representatives, leading them to lose interest in participating.

### *Strategies to Promote Women's Political Participation and their Influence on Public Policy*

Over the past two decades, women's organizations have developed a variety of strategies to foster political participation, both in representative government and in communities. Quota laws have been successful, but it is essential that these laws clearly put women candidates in positions where they have the possibility of being elected. Public financing of electoral campaigns has also become a necessary strategy for getting more women to accept candidacies, as it ensures women from different socio-economic sectors something closer to equal opportunity in their campaigns.

Civil society action to promote female candidacies and women's votes has also had positive results, as in the case of the Women's Parliamentary Forum and the Advocacy, Education and Institutional Strengthening Program, developed in Suriname (Ganga, in this volume). In this case,

communications strategies are a central element. The program resulted in more media attention to women's issues and women's candidates during the election there. In addition, women represented at least 30 percent of candidates presented by half the parties in the largest electoral district.

CFEMEA (Feminist Center for Studies and Advisory Services), a Brazilian NGO that fights for full citizenship for women, for gender equality, and for justice and democracy, has successfully advised and supported elected women parliamentarians through the project *Mapping Women's Politics: federal and state parliamentarians* (Rodriguez, in this volume). CFEMEA provides parliamentarians with updated data for analysis and a monthly bulletin, and makes the *Bancada Feminina* (the women's caucus in the National Congress) a space for dialogue with women's organizations and for developing and spreading their agenda at the federal and state levels. CFEMEA works in the field of political communication to promote the exchange of information and ideas on women's rights and movements, and legislative issues and processes. It also produces a weekly TV program, has specific publications and a website, and promotes the publication of feminist platforms.

Another strategy with great impact in many countries has been to train young women leaders and community leaders at the local level and in specific contexts. This allows women a better knowledge of women's problems and of political systems, while developing abilities such as public speaking.

International conventions and documents, due to their legitimacy, have also proved useful, as has participation in United Nations and OAS conferences and summits. The coordinated action of networked women's organizations (CLADEM, Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Health Network, etc.) and their sub-regional expressions, such as CAFRA, the Coordination of Latin American and the Caribbean NGOs, and more recently, Feminist Articulation MARCOSUR, have opened a broader space for work at the national level and have led to strategies for citizen monitoring, such as the Index of Fulfilled Commitments.

The specialization of professional women and technicians in gender matters is also a strategy that brings together civil society actors and legislative and government bodies at the local, federal and national levels.

Finally, the relationship between women's social spaces and international cooperation organizations provides financing and support so that grassroots organizations, networks and regional NGOs can carry out their work without depending on the State.

### Final Reflections

Women and their organizations have always had a strong impact on the promotion of social economic, and political development in Latin

America and the Caribbean. The collective action of women in the face of social, political and economic changes, fosters the development of civil society, which is seen as a new political actor essential to the improvement of the living conditions of the population.

This action ranges from supporting women in their productive initiatives in rural communities to intervening in the decisions made by international organizations. In each country, women have developed agendas and struggled for their economic, social, cultural, sexual and reproductive rights, and for a life without violence.

However, there are still great obstacles that hinder women from exercising their rights. Overcoming these is essential to the empowerment of women and their organizations. Development from the base upward must be ensured and the different situations of communities must be taken into account.

The local space is where effective action can be taken on practical matters, allowing women to attain greater leadership responsibilities and capacities, both at the individual and collective levels. However, local action must be coordinated with national representative politics, to broaden the legislative agenda and framework, and also with the international realm.

The success of women's productive enterprises, women's contributions to participative spaces created by governments, the local benefits of training women in the community, and the presence of women in global movements, are all promising factors that ensure that their contribution to social development in Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to grow and will lead to more egalitarian and equitable countries.

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## ANNEX

TABLE 2.1: Latin America And The Caribbean

Human development index and gender related development index, 2001 (33 countries)

Country	HDI		GDI	
	Rank (1)	Value	Rank (2)	Value
Barbados	27	0.888	27	0.885
Argentina	34	0.849	34	0.839
Uruguay	40	0.834	39	0.839
Costa Rica	42	0.832	41	0.824
Chile	43	0.831	43	0.821
Bahamas	49	0.812	46	0.811
Saint Kitts and Nevis	51	0.808	—	—
Cuba	52	0.806	—	—
Trinidad and Tobago	54	0.802	50	0.796
Mexico	55	0.800	52	0.790
Antigua and Barbuda	56	0.798	—	—
Panama	59	0.788	54	0.790
Colombia	64	0.779	55	0.774
Brazil	65	0.777	58	0.770
Belize	67	0.776	64	0.756
Dominica	68	0.776	-	-
Venezuela	69	0.775	60	0.767
Saint Lucia	71	0.775	—	—
Suriname	77	0.762	—	—
Jamaica	78	0.757	65	0.750
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	80	0.755	-	-
Peru	82	0.752	72	0.734
Paraguay	84	0.751	69	0.739
Guyana	92	0.740	74	0.730
Grenada	93	0.738	—	—
Dominican Republic	94	0.737	77	0.727
Ecuador	97	0.731	84	0.716
El Salvador	105	0.719	85	0.707
Bolivia	114	0.672	94	0.663
Honduras	115	0.667	96	0.656
Guatemala	119	0.652	97	0.638
Nicaragua	121	0.643	98	0.636
Haiti	150	0.467	122	0.462

Notes: [1] Out of 175 countries. [2] Out of 144 countries that have complete information.

Source: UNDP (2003) *Human Development Report 2003. Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press. <http://www.undp.org/hdr>



**TABLE 2.2: Latin America**

Percentages of Poor and Indigent Households, 1990—1999 (17 Countries)

Country	Year	Poor households <sup>a</sup>			Indigent households		
		Total	Urban area	Rural area	Total	Urban area	Rural area
Argentina	1990	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1999	—	16.3	—	—	4.3	—
Bolivia	1989	—	49.4	—	—	22.1	—
	1999	54.7	42.3	75.6	32.6	16.4	59.6
Brazil	1990	41.4	35.6	63.9	18.3	13.3	37.9
	1999	29.9	26.4	45.2	9.6	7.1	20.5
Chile <sup>e</sup>	1990	33.3	33.3	33.5	10.6	10.2	12.1
	1998	178	170	22.7	4.7	4.3	6.9
Colombia <sup>d</sup>	1991	50.0	47.0	55.0	23.0	17.0	31.0
	1999	48.7	44.6	55.8	23.2	18.7	31.1
Costa Rica	1990	23.7	22.2	24.9	9.8	6.9	12.3
	1999	18.2	15.7	20.5	7.5	5.4	9.4
Ecuador	1990	—	55.8	—	—	22.6	—
	1999	—	58.0	—	—	27.2	—
El Salvador	1995	47.6	40.0	58.2	18.2	12.4	26.5
	1999	43.5	34.0	59.0	18.3	14.4	29.3
Guatemala	1998	53.5	38.8	64.7	28.0	12.9	39.6
Honduras	1990	75.2	64.5	83.5	54.0	38.0	66.4
	1999	74.3	65.6	82.3	50.6	37.1	63.2
Mexico	1989	39.3	34.2	48.7	14.1	9.4	22.6
	1998	38.0	31.1	49.3	13.2	6.9	23.5
Nicaragua	1993	65.1	60.3	78.7	43.2	32.2	58.3
	1998	65.1	59.3	72.7	40.1	30.7	52.6
Panama	1991	36.3	33.6	42.5	16.0	13.9	21.1
	1999	24.2	20.8	32.6	8.3	6.6	12.6
Paraguay	1990	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1999	51.7	41.4	65.2	26.0	13.9	42.0
Dominican Rep. <sup>c</sup>	1997	32.4	31.6	33.6	12.8	11.0	15.2
Uruguay	1990	—	11.8	—	—	2.0	—
	1999	—	5.6	—	—	0.9	—
Venezuela <sup>f</sup>	1990	34.2	33.4	38.4	11.8	10.9	16.5
	1999	44.0	—	—	19.4	—	—
Latin America <sup>g</sup>	1990	41.0	35.0	58.2	17.7	12.0	34.1
	1999	35.3	29.8	54.3	13.9	9.1	30.7

Sources: ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys in the countries concerned

<sup>a</sup> Poverty line includes indigent households.<sup>b</sup> Average figures for Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.<sup>c</sup> Based on National Socio-Economic Surveys (CASEN) 1990, 1994, 1996 and 1998.<sup>d</sup> In 1993, the geographical coverage of the survey was enlarged to include all urban population. Until 1992, the survey covered about half of the population, with the exception of 1991, when a national survey took place.<sup>e</sup> The sampling design of the survey does not provide estimates for the Federal District.<sup>f</sup> The sampling design of the survey since 1997 does not provide urban/rural desegregation. Figures refer to the national total.<sup>g</sup> Estimate for 19 countries.

**TABLE 2.3: The Caribbean**

Percentages of Population Below Poverty Line (4 Countries)

Country	Year	Population below poverty line %	
		Rural	National
Guyana	1993		43.2
Haiti	1987		65.0
Jamaica	1995	66.0	
	1995	37.0	27.5
	2000	25.1	18.7
Trinidad and Tobago	1992	20.0	21.0

Source: World Development Bank [2003] World Development Indicators 2003. Washington.  
<http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2003/pdfs/table%202-6.pdf>

**TABLE 2.4: Latin America**

Distribution of Household Heads, by Poverty Status, Urban Household, 1999 (17 Countries)

Country	Indigents		Poor not indigents		Not poor		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Argentina	5.5	3.8	11.6	12.3	82.9	84.0	100	100
Bolivia	19.2	15.7	23.4	26.5	57.4	57.8	100	100
Brazil	6.7	7.2	18.3	19.6	74.9	73.2	100	100
Chile <sup>a</sup>	4.9	4.1	12.3	12.8	82.7	83.1	100	100
Colombia	19.4	17.1	23.6	25.9	57.1	57.0	100	100
Costa Rica	10.9	3.3	14.1	8.7	75.0	87.9	100	100
Ecuador	30.9	26.3	31.4	30.6	37.6	43.1	100	100
El Salvador	12.6	10.5	25.9	21.5	61.5	68.0	100	100
Guatemala <sup>a</sup>	12.8	12.9	23.4	26.7	63.8	60.4	100	100
Honduras	39.4	36.0	28.7	28.5	31.9	35.5	100	100
Mexico <sup>a</sup>	6.3	6.9	20.0	25.1	73.6	68.0	100	100
Nicaragua <sup>a</sup>	34.9	28.5	30.2	27.8	34.9	43.7	100	100
Panama	10.8	5.0	14.5	14.1	74.7	80.9	100	100
Paraguay	15.1	13.4	24.3	28.8	60.6	57.8	100	100
Dominican Rep. <sup>b</sup>	17.5	8.0	20.5	20.6	62.0	71.4	100	100
Uruguay	0.8	0.9	4.0	5.1	95.2	94.1	100	100
Venezuela <sup>c</sup>	23.8	17.7	24.8	24.6	51.3	57.7	100	100

Source: ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys in the countries concerned.

<sup>a</sup>1998.

<sup>b</sup>1997.

<sup>c</sup>National total.

**TABLE 2.5: Latin America**

Distribution of Household Heads, by Poverty Status, Rural Household, 1999 (13 Countries)

Country	Indigents		Poor not indigents		Not poor		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Bolivia	57.9	59.9	15.2	16.2	26.8	23.9	100	100
Brazil	12.0	21.8	18.5	25.6	69.5	52.6	100	100
Chile <sup>a</sup>	6.2	7.0	14.2	16.1	79.6	76.9	100	100
Colombia	33.4	28.6	20.6	24.9	46.0	46.6	100	100
Costa Rica	16.6	7.8	15.7	10.0	67.6	82.2	100	100
El Salvador	24.7	31.7	31.6	28.2	43.7	40.1	100	100
Guatemala <sup>a</sup>	41.5	39.2	27.7	24.5	30.8	36.2	100	100
Honduras	60.5	63.8	20.6	18.8	18.9	17.4	100	100
Mexico <sup>a</sup>	16.5	24.4	27.8	25.2	55.7	50.4	100	100
Nicaragua <sup>a</sup>	55.3	51.9	19.3	20.4	25.4	27.7	100	100
Panama	18.9	11.0	20.0	19.9	61.1	69.1	100	100
Paraguay	36.5	43.4	27.5	22.1	36.0	34.5	100	100
Dominican Rep <sup>b</sup>	25.9	12.6	16.3	18.8	57.8	68.5	100	100

Source: ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys in the countries concerned.

<sup>a</sup>1998.<sup>b</sup>1997.

**TABLE 2.6: Latin America**Rates of Participation in Economic Activity by Area of Residence, Sex and Poverty Status,<sup>a</sup> 1999 [17 Countries](Percentages)

Country	Urban				Rural			
	Poor		Not Poor		Poor		Not Poor	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Argentina	34.1	69.7	46.2	74.4	—	—	—	—
Bolivia	49.3	76.2	58.4	74.0	78.1	94.4	74.9	93.6
Brazil	47.8	81.2	54.3	79.4	62.6	92.3	63.0	88.2
Chile <sup>b/</sup>	27.1	72.0	44.4	75.0	12.5	71.6	25.3	76.6
Colombia	50.2	79.7	57.9	77.9	35.2	83.8	45.8	87.8
Costa Rica	31.5	69.5	47.5	80.5	19.3	72.0	35.4	86.0
Ecuador	48.6	82.2	61.1	82.7	—	—	—	—
El Salvador	41.8	73.5	57.1	76.4	25.1	83.5	43.1	84.0
Guatemala <sup>b/</sup>	50.3	84.0	56.9	80.3	35.7	89.1	43.4	86.8
Honduras	49.8	81.5	61.2	83.0	36.8	93.0	41.5	92.0
Mexico <sup>b/</sup>	35.2	80.1	46.8	80.9	30.3	90.9	49.7	92.8
Nicaragua <sup>b/</sup>	46.2	79.3	57.6	82.7	25.2	88.4	46.7	94.1
Panama	33.7	76.7	52.2	78.6	19.4	82.1	33.3	84.2
Paraguay	42.7	81.6	61.3	84.0	35.6	88.9	52.3	87.6
Dominican Republic <sup>c/</sup>	36.5	74.1	54.6	86.1	28.0	79.8	38.4	87.6
Uruguay	47.5	80.5	49.8	72.8	—	—	—	—
Venezuela <sup>d/</sup>	38.5	80.6	55.8	85.7	—	—	—	—

Source: ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys in the countries concerned.

<sup>a/</sup> Population aged 15 and over.<sup>b/</sup> 1998.<sup>c/</sup> 1997.<sup>d/</sup> National Total.

**TABLE 2.7: The Caribbean**  
Main Labour Force Indicators (18 Countries) (Percentages)

Country	Year	Participation rate %		Women in the Labour force	Unemployment rate %	
		Women	Men	%	Women	Men
Anguilla	1992	60.7	82.0	42.6	9.0	6.3
Antigua and Barbuda	1991	62.9	81.6	46.1	5.6	6.4
Aruba	1994	53.0	76.0	42.3	7.9	5.4
	1997	54.3	71.5	43.9	8.4	6.7
Bahamas	1991	68.5	79.1	48.1	12.3	12.3
	1999	70.9	83.1	47.9	9.7	6.0
Barbados	1991	57.4	74.2	47.4	21.9	13.2
	2000	62.7	74.8	48.3	11.7	7.3
Belize	1993	36.6	79.3	32.7	13.8	7.9
	1999	39.6	79.7	33.9	20.3	9.0
Bermuda	1991	96.0	93.0	47.1	4.0	7.0
British Virgin Islands	1991	68.6	84.3	43.4	3.1	3.4
Cayman Islands	1997	77.4	86.9	50.2	5.1	3.2
Dominica	1991	59.6	74.9	45.8	27.2	19.6
Grenada	1991	38.2	67.8	37.6	12.7	14.6
	1998	55.0	75.6	43.5	21.2	10.5
Guyana	1992	39.3	81.2	34.1	18.1	8.4
	1997	s/d	s/d	35.2	14.3	6.2
Jamaica	1991	62.4	75.4	46.7	22.8	9.5
	2000	54.2	72.8	44.4	22.3	10.2
Netherlands Antilles (Curaçao)	1991	34.7	48.4	44.6	18.1	11.8
	1998	38.3	48.6	47.1	19.5	14.1
Saint Lucia	1993	61.2	78.9	47.0	22.0	12.2
	2000	62.0	75.0	47.2	20.7	12.6
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1991	35.8	80.8	35.9	22.1	18.4
Suriname	1993	40.0	72.0	36.5	18.9	11.3
	1998	37.0	71.0	34.8	17.0	7.2
Trinidad and Tobago	1991	42.0	75.8	36.0	23.4	15.7
	2000	47.0	75.3	38.3	15.2	10.2

Source: Databases on-line International Labour Organization (ILO) Caribbean Office and Multidisciplinary Advisory Team. [http://www.locarib.org.tt/system\\_links/link\\_databases.html](http://www.locarib.org.tt/system_links/link_databases.html)

**TABLE 2.8: Latin America**

Ratio of Female Income to Male Income in Urban Areas, by Level of Educational Achievement, 1999 (Percentages)

Country	Year	Levels of educational attainment <sup>a</sup>					
		Total	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10- 12	13 and over
Argentina <sup>c</sup> (Gran Buenos Aires)	1999	65	64	82	58	63	51
Bolivia	1999	63	63	64	66	71	66
Brazil	1999	64	58	51	55	55	56
Chile	1998	66	71	63	65	71	54
Colombia <sup>d</sup>	1999	75	66	71	75	73	70
Costa Rica	1999	70	49	62	57	65	68
Ecuador	1999	67	63	62	62	71	60
El Salvador	1999	75	73	75	78	80	71
Guatemala	1998	55	57	51	58	58	56
Honduras	1999	65	60	62	59	66	66
Mexico <sup>e</sup>	1998	57	72	56	65	63	47
Nicaragua	1998	65	68	80	67	52	53
Panama	1999	83	57	60	66	75	71
Paraguay	1999	71	62	76	62	74	63
Dominican Republic	1997	75	57	60	60	75	66
Uruguay	1999	67	61	58	61	62	56
Venezuela <sup>f</sup>	1999	74	71	65	66	63	66

Source: ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys in the countries concerned.

<sup>a</sup> Refers to the income gap in the total of employed population.<sup>b</sup> Refers to the income differences among the salaried workers.<sup>c</sup> The levels of study in Argentina are 0 to 6 years; 7 to 9 years; 10 years and over.<sup>d</sup> Since 1993 the geographic coverage of survey was enlarged until covering nearly all-urban population of the country. Until 1992, the survey covered about a half of that population; excluding 1991, year in which a national surveys took place.<sup>e</sup> Excluding 1990, the levels of years of education in Mexico are 0-5; 6-9; 10-12; 13 and over.<sup>f</sup> Since 1997 the sampling design of the survey does not allow the urban separation. Therefore, the figures correspond to the national total.



## CHAPTER 3

# Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Japan: A Synthesis

Mari Osawa, *Professor, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Tokyo*  
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### Introduction

Gender equality was legally dictated in Japan over fifty years ago. The occupation forces after World War II prioritized women's suffrage as one of the strategies to promote democracy. Japan's new constitution of 1947 stipulated that men and women are equal before the law. Consequently, all regulations related to the equality of the sexes, including the Civil Code, the Election Law and the Fundamental Law of Education were amended to reflect this. Under the new education system, girls were given the opportunity to receive education on an equal footing with boys.

However, *de facto* gender equality has been elusive in Japanese society. Women in Japan have not been able to fully exercise their abilities and their rate of participation in social and political decision-making is low. The UNDP's *Human Development Report*, 2002, indicates that Japan ranks ninth among 170 nations on the Human Development Index (HDI) and thirteenth on the Gender Development Indicator (GDI). These indicators suggest that Japan's high level of income has been accompanied by great strides in health and education, for women, men and society at large. However, in terms of the gender empowerment measure (GEM), Japan is 44th among 70 countries, which suggests that women do not share equally or proportionately in earned income or in political positions, senior public and private sector positions, or professional and technical positions. According to the "Opinion Poll Concerning a Gender-Equal Society" conducted by the Public Relations Office of the Prime Minister's Secretariat in February 2000, 76.7 percent of Japanese respondents felt men were given preferential treatment in terms of social status.

### Gender Roles in Japan: A Historical Glimpse

Gender relations in Japan have varied significantly according to historical circumstances and time periods. The historical influences of Confucianism, Buddhism and Samurai feudal culture combined to give



men preeminence over women. Prior to 1868, before the fall of feudal society, there was a modest civil liberties movement in Japan that advocated for women's rights to property, position and inheritance. However, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century brought the Meiji Empire's modernization policies that legally placed women in an explicitly inferior position and branded them as incompetent.

Ironically, however, women played a large role in Japan's economic modernization. In 1900, female laborers, concentrated largely in the textile industries, comprised 63 percent of the industrial labor force. Sievers (1983) suggests that "without the work of Japan's women, the apparent miracle of Japan's economic growth might not have been possible..." (p. 53) Yet they were paid low wages, often worked in unacceptable conditions and did not enjoy fundamental rights.

Women's active participation in the war economy during the 1940s made more evident Japanese women's abilities and capacities, and placed women in the public sphere in prominent positions. In 1947, in the first election for the national legislature, women won 39 seats in the Diet, more than they won in the next 20 elections.

The drastic reforms of Japanese economic systems after the end of World War II, including land reform and tax reform, established social foundations that sought to ensure a reduction in inequalities among diverse segments of the Japanese population. The agrarian reform led the government to buy up farmland from large landowners and sell it to tenant farmers at subsidized prices. The dissolution by auction of "zaibastu" business concerns diluted inequality in asset ownership. The drastic reform of the tax systems featured the introduction of income taxes with higher progressive rates and the imposition of heavier inheritance taxes. The highly progressive nature of the tax systems spread the benefits of affluence to diverse segments of Japanese society.

However, the egalitarian fervor did not encompass the notion of gender equality. In fact, the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Japan's economy and high rates of economic growth from the late 1950s through the 1970s established and entrenched the male breadwinner and female homemaker as the norm. Japan's high economic growth and emergence as a world power was produced in a scenario in which women were responsible for children, seniors and community life, while males participated in economic activity. Males assumed the role of producers, women, of reproducers. In fact, male loyalty was to the firm and female loyalty, to home and family. These loyalties combined in the search for sustainable affluence.

For some Japanese families, then, history and success have combined to generate an image that their society is based on a model in which wom-





en's life is concentrated in the "private spheres" of home and community. Some associate the essence of society and the pillars of social cohesion with this "traditional" gender division of labor. However, the history of change and the relative recent nature of the male breadwinner model could, indeed, lead us to question just how traditional these gender roles really are. (See Box 3.1)

Welfare state institutions, including the retirement pension system and medical insurance, were founded in late 1950s at the initiative of bureaucrats ascribing to the male breadwinner hypothesis. A steep age-wage profile and a "family wage" became a reality for a substantial number of male workers, thanks to rapid economic growth. Large corporations and government offices adopted a seniority system that provided male workers with stable, full-time ("lifetime") employment. This system offers periodic promotions and an ascending wage scale in accordance with the man's age and length of employment.

Female workers have been generally expected to resign at an early age to get married and have children. They have been positioned as supplementary workers employed full-time only while their wages are still low. The employment opportunities for women of middle age and older have been limited to low-paid and unstable part-time jobs.

Generally, then, the labor force participation of women in Japan has generally been interrupted during childbearing and child-rearing years. (See Box 3.2) This tendency not only has limited women's employment and income for the time that they opt not to work, but also makes reinsertion into the labor force difficult. The labor practices of lifetime employment, seniority wage increase and company-based unions only exacerbate those difficulties.

Throughout the 1980s, reforms of the social policy system introduced slogans calling for "the overhaul of welfare programs" and "establishing a Japanese-style Welfare Society."<sup>1</sup> These reforms were meant to "reward" women for safeguarding the welfare of the family in their capacity as wives and mothers. Such women were envisioned primarily as housewives who sometimes held part-time jobs to supplement family earnings. Accordingly, the reforms granted benefits in the form of tax credits on earnings to the husband in order to maintain the gendered division of labor.

For example, the annual income ceiling of a spouse to become eligible for Spouse Tax Deduction was repeatedly raised (in 1984, '87, '88, '89). This was followed by the introduction of a Special Tax Deduction for

<sup>1</sup> Welfare society, not a *Welfare State*.

**BOX 3.1****How 'Traditional' Are the Gender Roles in Japan?**

By Mari Osawa

*Professor, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Tokyo*

The practice of solely mothers looking after their children is, by no means, Japanese tradition. Until around 1960, the majority of Japanese people were born and raised in large extended families in a rural setting. In that context, farm work was the utmost priority for women. This meant childcare had to be shared among people of diverse relations and age groups among and outside the family. This included elderly family members, young aunts and uncles, elder siblings, children in the neighborhood and adults on leave. Children were often socialized and trained as apprentices in other households. Male farmers before the war performed one hour or more per day of household chores, while working much longer in the fields, compared to today's salaried workers. (Osawa, 2002) Thus, a childcare system that involves not only parents but also out-of-family services and an extended network of community support could very well be considered an attempt to reclaim "Japanese tradition" in the 21st century.

Japanese-style employment practices with three key elements such as "life-time" employment (long-term stable employment), a seniority wage system for regular male workers and a company-based union, are not very "traditional" either. In pre-war periods, "life-time" employment and a seniority wage system were applied only to white-collar (male) employees with higher than secondary-level education, while labor unions mainly organized male blue-collar workers, sometimes horizontally. The majority of pre-war factory workers were young women in the textile industries (silk and cotton). The male breadwinner norm, therefore, was not dominant among blue-collar workers, but rather among poor small-scale tenant farming households that formed the overwhelming majority of the pre-war Japanese population. Among urban middle class families, husbands were certainly breadwinners. However, their wives did not necessarily act solely as homemakers and care providers, since hired help was prominent among upper-middle class households.

What we know today as “Japanese-style employment practices” began to emerge when post-war trade unions organized white- and blue-collar workers on a company basis. Trade unions demanded the elimination of status-based discrimination, i.e. discrepancies among white and blue-collar workers (including a single door to the shop floor and a lunch hall for all employees etc., and, of course, application of the long-term stable employment and seniority wage system to blue-collar workers, as well). Satisfaction of trade union demands was achieved through serious trade disputes in the late 1940s and within the specific demographic situation at the time, markedly characterized by an increasing number of young persons. The seniority wage system is convenient and beneficial for management as long as the age structure of employees is pyramidal. This particular system keeps overall labor costs low.

Spouses (1987), which allowed a tax cut/exemption to the household of a worker whose spouse's annual income remained below the fixed ceiling.

### **The Lost Decade of the 1990s and the Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model**

Throughout the 1990s, Japan's economy grew at a historically low average of one percent per year. The 1990s in Japan can be considered a “lost decade”, as were the 1980s in Latin America and the Caribbean. With the exception of the public finance reform by the Hashimoto Administration (1996-1998), the successive governments of the decade tried to fight recession with large annual issues of government bonds. These efforts, however, not only failed, but also accelerated the deterioration of government finances, creating a greater societal perception of insecurity for the future. In 1990, the ratio of national and local government budget balances to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was still minus 0.8 percent (-0.8 percent), which was the lowest financial deficit among international comparators. In 1996, this figure fell to below minus six percent (-6 percent), and although the ratio recovered slightly through ‘reforms’ in 1996 and 1997, reaching minus 7.8 percent (-7.8 percent) with the economic decline of 2000. While the ratio of budget balance to GDP of other industrialized countries recovered in the 1990s, Japan's deficit kept growing. The ratio of debt balance to GDP exceeded 110 percent in 2000, the highest among the industrialized nations.

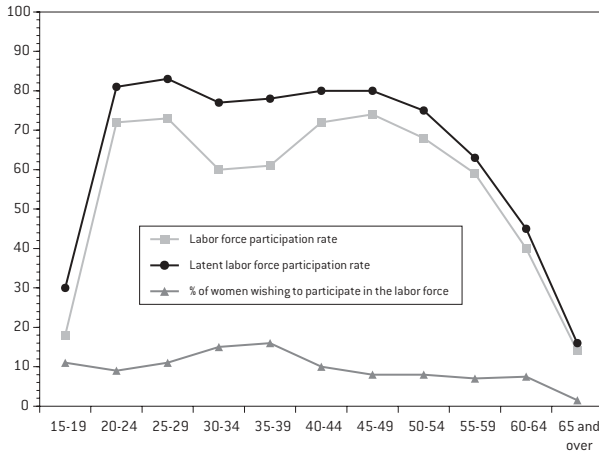
## BOX 3.2

## The M-Shaped Labor Force Participation Curve of Japanese Women

When graphed by age, the labor force participation rate of Japanese women forms an approximately M-shaped curve, as their participation declines during ages between 25 and 40 years, due to marriage, childbirth and childcare. The lowest point of participation in the labor force corresponds to the ages between 30 and 34. One out of every two married women in this age group leaves her job, and in most cases, stays home to raise children.

However, the latent labor force participation rate, which incorporates the labor force participation rate with the ratio of non-working women willing to work, smooths out the M-shape and makes the curve more similar to the approximate inverse U-shape curve that characterizes the male labor force participation rate.

Women's labor force participation rates in industrialized Western countries usually take on the approximate inverse U-shape, or what might be thought of as the shape of a trapezoid, be-



cause many women are active in the labor market even during their child-rearing years. In Japan, women tend to devote themselves to homemaking when they become pregnant or have a child because of the implicit cultural and customary assumption that "mothers should devote themselves to child-raising until the child reaches the age of about three." Other varied circumstances make it difficult for women to successfully manage both their work and the household at the same time.

Source: Contributions from Takashi Kashima and Haniwa Natori. Graph from "Present Status of Japanese Women", Basic Data on Gender Equality in Japan. [http://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/women2004/statistics/s02.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/women2004/statistics/s02.html)

In the meantime, management associations, pressured by severe global competition, restructured Japanese-style management and employment practices. The government initiated a series of deregulation measures in employment, but failed to mitigate the public sentiment of insecurity. Accordingly, the heyday of the 'male breadwinner' model is gone for good. Many corporations have revised their wage/promotion systems and shifted to meritocracy in assessing their employees' salaries. Even companies that have not opted for 'corporate restructuring' are now employing more atypical workers, e.g., mid-career recruits, part-timers and temporary staff.

In this new context, with one in every twenty workers unemployed (unemployment rate at the end of 2003: 5.3 percent), a single-income household of a 'male breadwinner / female housewife' is too vulnerable to the social climate of fluctuating employment and high risk of unemployment. The double- or multiple-income household has become a more predominant family financial strategy. Throughout the 1990s, however, no fundamental reform took place in the 'male breadwinner'-based social policy systems.

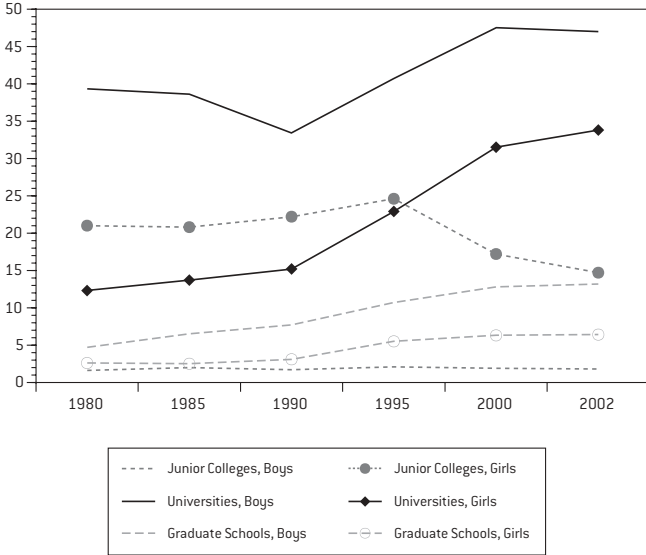
## The Current State of Gender Equality

### *Education*<sup>2</sup>

The percentage of students advancing into high school in Japan is extremely high, with the percentage of girls exceeding that of boys.<sup>3</sup> As Figure 3.1 indicates, just under 50 percent of males continue onto in-

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/index.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/index.html)

<sup>3</sup> In 2002, 96.5 percent of high school-aged girls and 95.2 of high school-aged boys were enrolled.

**FIGURE 3.1 Enrollments of Males, Females in Post-Secondary Education**

stitutions of higher education: in 2002, 47 percent were in universities (undergraduate) and approximately 2 percent in junior colleges (which continue to be predominantly female). In 2002, 33.8 percent of females of the corresponding age group were in universities (undergraduate) and 14.7 percent, in junior colleges. A noticeable trend in recent years has been for the percentage of girls advancing into universities (undergraduate) to increase and their advancement into junior colleges to decline.

The graduate school enrolment rate is rising for both men and women, but there is a persistent gender gap (male enrolment: 13.2 percent; and female: 6.4 percent). Regarding major fields of study, generally, female students still tend to major in human sciences, though this tendency has been decreasing since 1975. Women represent 53 percent of workers in fields related to health, 31 percent in life sciences, natural sciences and agriculture, and 31 percent in social sciences, commercial science, law, and service industries.

### *Employment and Income*

Women in Japan occupy approximately 40 percent of all positions in non-agricultural wage employment. This figure has not varied significantly in the last thirty years. The "Global Competitiveness Report 2001-2002" presented at the World Economy Forum in Davos placed the economic participation rate of Japanese women at 69th among 75 countries. Among the OECD economies, only Luxembourg and Spain had a lower rate in 2001.

Japanese women accounted for 55.5 percent of the total labor force engaged in agriculture and 14.3 percent in forestry in 2002, and 16.9 percent in fisheries in 2000. Women engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries play an important economic role and contribute greatly to maintaining and revitalizing their local communities.

Despite the improving trend in female higher education, women still have disproportionately low participation in managerial, decision-making or high-level technical positions. Although approximately 28 percent of doctoral degrees are completed by women, only 8.8 percent of university professors and 14.7 percent of university researchers are female. In non-agricultural employment, although women account for 40 percent of all workers, they held only 8.9 percent of managerial posts, including legislative positions and public and private sector management positions, in 1995 (in 2003, that figure increased slightly to 9.7 percent). These figures contrast with the rate of 46.0 percent in the US (2001), 26.9 percent in Germany (1998) and 30.5 percent in Sweden (2001). Women held 1.4 percent of managerial positions among national civil servants, although more than 20 percent of civil servants are women. Female participation in agricultural committees responsible for organizing the use of farmland stands at only 1.82 percent, though it is slowly on the rise .

A 2001 report of a panel organized by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare indicated "... if men's wages are equated to 100, women's stand at 65.3 (2001). Yet, in 1974, this figure might have been 53.9. (Trager, 1982) The trend is for the wage gap to decline over the long-term, but there is a large gap from an international perspective."<sup>4</sup> Since the type of position and the length of service (or seniority) continue to influence wages (although to a lesser degree than prior to the managerial and employment restructuring of the 1990s), female workers are more likely to have lower wages than their male counterparts. (Cabinet Office 2003: 16-18)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/women2003/news/n06.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/women2003/news/n06.html)

### *Domestic Violence*

Any reasonable degree of human rights protection, equity and participation in diverse spheres of public life depends on freedom from violence. Violence against women in the form of spousal abuse, sexual crimes, prostitution, sexual harassment, stalking behavior and so forth, comprises a major infringement of women's human rights, and is an essential issue to overcome in the formation of a gender-equal society. The "Survey on Domestic Violence," which was conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2002 showed that almost one in every five (19.1 percent) women in Japan has experienced physical assault, frightening threats and/or sexual coercion, and one in every twenty women suffers severe domestic violence that put her life in danger. The survey also revealed two percent of female respondents "received medical treatment for physical injury" resulting from domestic violence.

According to National Police Agency statistics in 2002, Japanese women are victims in 1,528 cases (91.7 percent) of murder and violence between spouses (including common-law partners). From 2001 to 2002, reported cases of violence increased from 59 to 211 (38.8 percent).

In April 2002, each local government started to provide spousal violence counseling services at women's counseling offices and other facilities. Currently, 103 facilities are providing counseling services, temporarily protecting spousal violence victims and providing related information.

### *Women's Political Participation*

Women in Japan also have very limited participation in government and politics. (Box 3.3) The 2003 UNDP *Human Development Report* indicates that women hold only 10 percent of parliamentary seats in Japan. And, while there have been increases in female participation in civil service, that rate continues to be remarkably lower in the higher ranks of public service.

With the exception of a short period after the war, the percentage of female members of the House of Representatives wavered between one and two percent, until the thirty-eighth general elections in 1986, when it began to rise. In 2003, women held 34 seats (7.1 percent) in the House of Representatives. Female membership in the House of Councilors rose gradually from 4 percent in the first ordinary elections in 1947 to 8.7 percent in 1986, then sharply to 13.1 percent in 1989 and 14.6 percent in March 2004. In 1996, the legislative electoral process introduced a mixture of single-seat constituencies and proportional representation (for the 41st election); this facilitated a significant increase in the percentage of female members in both chambers of the Diet.



**BOX 3.3****Women's Political Participation in Japan**

By Mitsuko Yamaguchi

*Executive Director, The Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association, Tokyo, Japan*

Today, Japanese women fall far behind their counterparts in terms of their participation in politics. In 2002 Japan placed last among all economically advanced countries, holding 7.3 percent of seats in parliament. In 2003, women held 7.5 percent of all seats in the House of Representatives and 14.17 percent of seats in the House of Councilors. The foundation for women's political participation is indeed weak, as only 7.6 percent of all local assembly members are women.

There are three factors that hamper both men and women candidates from winning seats in parliament: electoral base (organization), publicity base, and financial base. Additionally, the "household base" restrains women. The electoral system also has an influence on women's political participation.

In order to expand women's political participation, we would recommend advancing on four fronts:

- "Political education"
- Support for women juggling work and family life, revision of the electoral law and the election system, formulation of positive action policies for women in political parties
- Measures enabling women in politics to have a say in the government's Basic Gender-Equality Plan
- Establishment of a foundation for women's political participation by promoting women's advancement in regional local assemblies

In 2001, women held 5.8 percent of the seats in prefecture assemblies and accounted for 0.4 percent of city mayors, 0.2 percent of town mayors and 0.4 percent of village mayors.<sup>5</sup> Female representation in the assem-

<sup>5</sup> A prefecture is similar to a province or state. Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, and each prefecture, in turn, consists of numerous local units (which may be cities, towns, villages or special wards).

blies of certain special wards and cities (Tokyo: 20.2 percent in 2002) is comparatively high. However, in rural areas women account for 5.8 percent of local assembly members and 4.9 percent of town councilors. (Cabinet Office, 2002)

Women have accounted for a larger percentage of national government officials appointed in the salaried categories of civil service since 1985. In 2001, women accounted for a third (33.3 percent) of grade one positions, the entry level status of national government officials, and on average 10 percent of positions in Grades 4 to 6 (section chiefs in ministry headquarters). However, the rate of female participation declines in the higher positions. For instance, women occupy around one percent of Grade 7 to 11 positions, which correspond to directors or deputy directors in ministry headquarters. Women accounted for 4.5 percent of prefectural government officials and 5.9 percent of cabinet-order designated city officials in 2002. Both numbers have been increasing since 1998, especially the latter.

## Implications of Gender Inequality

### *Demographic Implications*

Delayed marriage and low fertility rates are associated with gender inequality in Japan. Surveys have found that one of every four men in their early thirties works more than sixty hours a week—more than four hours of overtime work each day. It is commonly perceived that it would be extremely difficult to raise children unless one member of the household becomes a full-time homemaker. In Japan's recent history, that has meant that women in their early thirties leave the labor force and assume practically sole responsibility for home and children. Over time, this responsibility has been understood as a burden that can be managed by women choosing to marry later and have fewer children. With increasingly insecure employment and stunted wages, it is difficult for men to see the advantage of marriage. Already in the late 1990s, the Council on Population Problems and the Annual White Paper of the Ministry of Health and Welfare had named gender inequality as the primary cause that made young people defer marriage.

Delaying marriage affects the fertility rate, but the low participation of Japanese males in household activity have further undermined the willingness of women to have more children. In 2003, Japan's fertility rate had fallen to 1.33 children per woman, one of the lowest in the world. (World Bank, 2004)

**BOX 3.4****Socio-economic Changes and the Status of Women in Japan after World War II**

By Ginko Sato

*President, Japan Association for the Advancement of Working Women  
Tokyo, Japan*

In the context of these reforms and growth, the demand for female labor has increased. In turn, the supply of women's labor has improved in quality. At present, about 96 percent of female students advance to senior high school upon completion of compulsory education, and approximately 50 percent of female graduates of senior high schools move on to colleges or universities. Women with higher education in the Japanese labor force have been increasing continuously since the war.

Before the war, the average life span for women was less than 50 years and they delivered an average of four to five children, making child-rearing their main life's work. At present, the average life span for Japanese women is 84 years, while the number of children per woman has fallen to 1.32. Naturally, present-day Japanese women devote only part of their life to child-rearing, and the duration of activities in the "public" or "social" sphere, including employment, is much longer.

Ironically, these demographic changes leave Japanese women in a position that has prepared them for a greater role in the public spheres of economic, social and political life. (See Box 3.4) At the same time, a greater role in public spheres may, in fact, be crucial to any effort to increase the birth rate in Japan. Looking at the international scene, countries with a higher employment rate for younger women also have a higher birth rate. Equally, smaller gender wage disparity is correlated with a higher birth rate. In Japan, the low employment rate of young women and the large gender wage gap coincides with a birth rate so low that it has caused concern among policymakers. Looking at the prefectural breakdown,



**BOX 3.5****Burden of the Male-Breadwinner Model  
on Japanese Men**

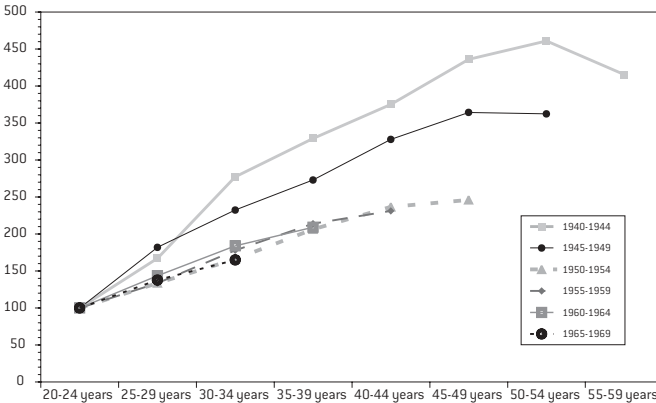
By Mari Osawa

*Professor, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Tokyo*

The National Police Agency reported in 2002 that for five consecutive years there had been more than 30,000 suicides a year, with an historic peak in suicides motivated by economic hardship. Over 70 percent of the cases were men, an estimated 10,000 of them in their 40s and 50s. Considering that the death toll of traffic accidents during the same year was below 9,000, the suicide of middle-aged and ageing men who are 'sole breadwinners of household' is indeed alarming. The curve of the suicide figures is known to run surprisingly parallel to the unemployment rate. And yet, the female rate of suicide has stayed relatively unchanged for the last two decades, despite increasing unemployment. Serious recession and uncertain employment prospects, which are plausible causes of the rising suicide rate, seem to hit the middle-aged and older males hardest.

The burden on the male provider has not eased much despite an increasing number of double-income households. This is because many wives work part-time and even curb their annual income to remain eligible for tax/social insurance premium exemption. Besides, in many companies, only shorter-hour, low-paid positions are available to women in their late 30s and older.

As Figure 3.3 indicates, the rate of real wage increase for men, based on seniority, has receded over time. Men born in the early 1940s could, in their 50s, earn as much as 4.5 times the wage they received in their early 20s. Today, men in their early 50s (born in early 1950s) barely earn 2.5 times as much as compared to their younger days. This shows how the men of the previous generation enjoyed exceptionally high wage increases based on seniority—owing to a large number of low-wage younger workers born after World War II, working hard for them as subordinates. By contrast, middle-aged men today are faced with extremely difficult economic situations.

**FIGURE 3.3 Growth of Real Wages, by Cohort***Male workers irrespective of educational background and corporate size*

Source: Basic Statistical Survey on Wage Structure (annual edition), Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare; Consumer Price Index, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications.

Note: Real wages are calculated by age bracket with those regularly paid to 20-24 year olds and their annual bonuses as 100.

per employee household also increased by JP¥3 million, and the ratio of savings to annual income increased from 151 percent in 1990 to 176 percent in 2000. These figures imply that consumption has become stagnant with stunted income growth and that shrinking disposable income is going more to savings.

This behavior may be closely linked to the existence of rigid gender roles, particularly given the high dependency of household income in Japan on 'the wage of the head of household', while the income of the spouse remains low. This prompts families to face the uncertainty of the times by setting aside their already shrinking disposable income for savings. Unfortunately, this decrease in consumption further discourages business activity and thereby exacerbates the recession.

**Measures to Promote Gender Inequality and Women's Participation**

In the 1990s, diverse institutions in Japanese society began to prioritize the proactive promotion of a gender-equal society, in which men and women mutually respect each other's human rights and are able to fully exercise their individuality and abilities regardless of their sex. The stag-

nation of the Japanese economy created additional impetus to promote women's participation in employment, decision-making and development. The economic crisis revealed the vulnerability of a single-income household and challenged the male breadwinner model, in contrast to a "work/life balance model". As a result, corporate and labor practices, government policies and family traditions have responded to the call for the promotion of gender equality.

### *Government Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality*

The Child/Family Care Leave Law was enforced (in '91, '95, '97), and the 'ILO 156 Convention regarding the equal opportunity/treatment of women and men with family responsibilities' was ratified in 1995. In 1996, the Japanese government formulated a "Plan for Gender Equality 2000: National Plan of Action for Promoting a Gender-Equal Society by the Year 2000". In 1997, with the call for the deregulation of employment, 'Protection Provisions for Women' were abolished from the Labor Standards Law, thereby pushing the Equal Employment Opportunity Law towards reform (effective April 1999).

In April 1997, the "Council for Gender Equality" was established with a mandate to examine basic and comprehensive policies as well as promoting the formation of a gender-equal society. The Council submitted a report entitled "Comments on the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society: Fundamental Conditions for Forming a Gender-Equal Society" in November 1998. Based on this report, the Prime Minister's Office formulated and submitted to the Diet a bill for the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society which contained the fundamental philosophy that 'no person shall be discriminated on the basis of gender'. (See Box 3.6) The bill was unanimously approved by the Lower House and Upper House in 1999.

The preamble to the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society suggests that there are multiple reasons for promoting gender equity:

*"...to respond to the rapid changes occurring in Japan's socio-economic situation, such as the trend toward fewer children, the aging of the population, and the maturation of domestic economic activities, it has become a matter of urgent importance to achieve a gender-equal society in which men and women respect the other's human rights and share their responsibilities, and every citizen is able to fully exercise their individuality and abilities regardless of gender. In light of this situation, it is vital to position the achievement of a gender-equal society as a top-priority task in determining the framework of 21st-century Japan, and implement policies related to promoting the formation of a gender-equal society in all fields."*

**BOX 3.6****Overview of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society**

(APPROVED JUNE 23, 1999)

By Mitsuko Yamaguchi

*Executive Director, The Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association***Objective**

A gender-equal society is one in which both men and women have the opportunity to participate voluntarily in social activities at all levels as equal partners, and are able to enjoy political, economic and cultural benefits as well as share responsibilities equally.

It is vitally important to achieve an affluent and vibrant society in which the human rights of women and men are respected, and a society capable of responding to socio-economic changes such as the trend toward an aging society with fewer children. This Basic Law, approved on June 23, 1999, was established to comprehensively and systematically promote the formation of such a gender-equal society.

**Major Points of the Basic Law****Basic Principles**

- Respect for the human rights of women and men, eradication of gender-based discriminatory treatment
- Conservation of social systems and practices
- Equal participation of women and men in policy planning and decision making
- Achievement of balance or compatibility between home-related activities and other activities
- International cooperation

**Responsibility of the National Government, Local Governments, and Citizens**

The national government, local governments, and citizens are each assigned responsibilities pursuant to the basic principles of this law. The national government is responsible for the comprehen-



sive formulation and implementation of policies to promote the formation of a gender-equal society (including positive actions).<sup>6</sup> Local governments have the responsibility for the formulation and implementation of policies based on national measures and policies corresponding to the characteristics of their respective region. Citizens' responsibilities include making efforts to contribute to the formation of a gender-equal society.

#### **Basic Governmental Interventions for Promoting a Gender-equal Society**

- Obligation of the government to formulate the Basic Plan for Gender Equality (including positive actions)
- Obligations of prefectures to formulate prefectural plans for gender equality (including positive actions)
- Obligations of municipalities to make efforts to formulate municipal plans for gender equality (including positive actions)
- Legislative and financial measures
- Annual report, etc.
- Considerations for the formulation of policies, etc.
- Measures to promote public understanding
- Handling of complaints, etc.
- Study and research
- Measures for gaining international cooperation
- Support for local governments and private bodies

<sup>6</sup> Positive action (or affirmative action): Positive provision of opportunities to either women or men, within the necessary limits, to redress gender disparities in such opportunities, in order for women and men to participate voluntarily in activities at all levels as equal partners in society.

The Basic Law gave "teeth" to some of the discourse regarding gender discrimination in Japan and paved the way for governmental, corporate and social action to advance toward gender equality and to promote women's participation in economic, social and political action. It also paved the way for other laws and policy measures, which would break male strongholds in labor policies, employment and the civil service.

Since this Basic Law, various laws and policy measures have been introduced. The “Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims” was enacted in April 2001. This law provides a system for notifying, counseling, protecting and supporting the self-reliance of victims of spousal violence. The main provisions of this law are Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers (SV Centers), protection orders, and notification.

In 2000, the government approved the Basic Plan for Gender Equality based on the Basic Law for Gender Equality. The Plan comprehensively and systematically examines measures to be addressed by the government in order to achieve a gender-equal society, and includes policies implemented by all ministries and agencies. It presents a basic perspective for long-term policies up to 2010, and provides concrete measures to be implemented by the end of fiscal 2005. It has paved the way for a new structure of government agencies to support the drive for a gender-equal society. (See Box 3.7)

Significant progress has been made to reform the ‘male breadwinner’-based social policy systems. It was decided in January 2003 that the Special Spouse Tax Deduction would be abolished as of January 2004. In the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, heated discussions on pension reform have been going on since January 2002. In 2003, the government stimulated nationwide discussions for pension reform in 2004, to establish a sustainable and credible public pension system.

Also, in 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi instructed the Council for Gender Equality to examine “support measures for women’s challenges” as part of his “structural reform of people’s lifestyles.” The measures involve two basic strategies: positive action and the creation of networks for the empowerment of women. (See Box 3.8)

Currently, the government itself is aggressively pursuing measures to recruit women into public administration. (See Box 3.9) The Cabinet Office has formed a “positive action study group” to examine the potential of implementing affirmative action policies in Japan mainly from the legislative perspective, and is expected to compile a final report during fiscal 2004.

The “Challenge Support Network Investigation Committee” is examining the “Challenge Network” from various angles, and is currently operating a sample “Challenge Site” (within the website of the Gender Equality Bureau) containing information on support measures at the governmental level. The committee intends to improve the site by providing more information on support measures, introducing successful cases, and presenting examples of model businesses. This information will be disseminated throughout Japan to promote the creation of regional networks.

**BOX 3.7****The Structure of the National Machinery for the Promotion of Gender Equality**By *Haniwa Natori**Director, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Tokyo, Japan*

Among the central government reforms implemented in January 2001, a new Council for Gender Equality was established in the Cabinet Office. The council is one of several which are comprised of relevant government ministers and persons with expertise and experience. The councils assist the Cabinet and the Prime Minister by serving as a "forum of knowledge" for them. The Council for Gender Equality supersedes the functions of the previous Council for Gender Equality and operates under the strong leadership of the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who serves as chairman. The group of ministers and experts who make up the council must be distributed so that neither the number of men nor women members falls below 40 percent of the total, as stipulated in the Basic Law for Gender-Equal Society.

The Prime Minister must consult with the Council for Gender Equality when formulating a proposal for the Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The Council monitors the measures implemented by the government for promoting gender equality, examines the impact of those measures on the advancement toward a gender-equal society, and when deemed necessary, submits its opinions to the Prime Minister or relevant minister.

The national machinery for promoting the formation of a gender-equal society was further strengthened with the establishment of the Gender Equality Bureau in the Cabinet Office. The Bureau has the mandate to formulate and coordinate plans relating to gender equality. Under this new structure, the government is working to permeate the perspective of gender equality throughout society and to comprehensively and systematically promote advancement toward a gender-equal society. For example, it is implementing measures to support women's challenges and their efforts to balance work with child-rearing, as well as various measures for the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

**BOX 3.8****Measures to “Support Women’s Challenges”**

By Haniwa Natori

*Director, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Tokyo, Japan*

The governmental initiatives to “support women’s challenges” refer to a series of measures meant to empower women to face the challenges that limit their opportunities to participate equally in social, economic and political dimensions of Japanese life.

***Women’s Challenges***

In order to facilitate greater participation by women in diverse social spheres, we must help them confront at least three types of challenges:

- **“Upward” challenges** facing women who aim to participate and take an active role in policy decision-making processes.
- **“Horizontal” challenges** to creating new opportunities in fields where there were traditionally few women, such as in the domains of entrepreneurs, researchers, and engineers.
- **Renewed challenges** by women who temporarily left their work to raise children or to provide nursing care for a family member: In order for women to take on challenges, those who wish to continue working or to re-enter the workforce require strong support so they may balance their work with child-rearing. Providing such support as part of the “challenge measures” would also be an effective countermeasure to the decreasing number of children.

***Support Measures***

Measures that would allow women to apply their diverse abilities toward the creation of a vibrant society in which both men and women can fully exercise their individuality and abilities cross almost all spheres of economic, social and political action, including: employment; business start-ups; non-profit organizations; agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; research; regional communities;

administrative bodies; and the global community. Two points provide common ground to the diverse proposals: affirmative action and the creation of networks for the empowerment of women.

#### **Affirmative Action**

In response to the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies and the target to help raise the ratio of women in supervisory positions to at least 30 percent throughout society by 2020, the government is encouraging all spheres in society to make independent efforts to achieve their respective numerical targets. Affirmative action initiatives are already being applied to employment policies, business start-ups, the agriculture industry, research activities, various organizations, and administrative bodies.

#### **Creation of Networks for the Empowerment of Women**

To enable women to take active part in various activities proportional to their motivation and abilities, information concerning support for women's challenges needs to be consolidated and provided through a network. An efficient information dissemination system ("Challenge Network") must be constructed, so that women can easily obtain the necessary information on re-employment, entrepreneurship, activities of non-profit organizations, activities in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries, research, and community revitalization efforts.

Regional companies, administrative bodies, universities, various organizations, NPO support centers, volunteer centers and family support centers can provide support for working mothers. A prime example of how we might create a support network for women's empowerment is that of Parea, Kumamoto Residents' Community Hall. Parea is a comprehensive facility that supports various voluntary and independent activities of the residents of Kumamoto prefecture. In addition to the Gender Equality Center, it consists of an employment support center, an NPO and volunteer support center, and a lifelong learning promotional center. The women's group "If" depends on Parea as its source of information, conducts studies and research on matters that directly concern Kumamoto residents and provides opportunities for women who wish to put their motivation and abilities to practical use.

### *Corporate Strategies to Promote a Gender-equal Society*

Recently, major corporations have taken on a central role in the effort to correct the gender disparity in the number of women in managerial positions and to allow women to more easily balance their jobs and home life. Called “positive action,”<sup>7</sup> this movement is increasingly gaining widespread attention. Some companies choose to call their approach “gender-free” actions. For example, a company may set a goal to increase its female managers by a certain amount over a certain number of years (goal and timetable) and then work toward that target.

However, male managers’ views about women pose an impediment to this effort and companies advocating positive action must first change the mentality of their middle-level managers, many of whom are unable to discard preconceived notions of women based on traditional gender roles. Companies must also work to change the attitudes of female employees who do not want a responsible job and do not welcome any attempts to improve their status.

In most cases, companies that promote positive action are supported by “mentors.” The majority of board members, presidents, and chairmen who assume the role of mentor have a certain aspect in common: most have taken on an overseas posting in the past. “When I was assigned to a post in the United States,” says an executive, “it was natural to see women actively participating among men. That’s why when I returned to Japan, it was bewildering to realize that all my business associates were men.” Dismayed at the disparity in the treatment of women workers, many of them became advocates of the movement for positive action.

The workplace itself in Japan must become a more gender-equal and family-friendly environment. Expectations with regard to overtime and family leave must be revisited. Individual ability and performance must take on a new role in human resource management.

The coming years will undoubtedly see the advent of a gender discrimination-free society which respects individual abilities. It is an almost indisputable fact that the Japanese labor market will suffer a labor shortage in the future as an effect of the declining birthrate. In local governments, there are now cases where corporate efforts for gender equality are also evaluated when examining public contracts. Furthermore, some companies and trading partners have begun to include the protection of women’s rights in their corporate social responsibilities. All of this intensifies the movement to make gender equality in the workplace a reality.

<sup>7</sup> Or, “affirmative action”.

**BOX 3.9****Governmental Effort to Increase Female Participation in Public Sector Employment**

By *Haniwa Natori*

*Director, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Tokyo, Japan*

The government is making efforts to quickly achieve its target for the percentage of female members on advisory boards—"30 percent by the end of 2005"—as determined by the Gender Equality Promotion Headquarters in August 2000. In 2001, the National Personnel Authority formulated "Guidelines concerning increased recruitment and promotion of female national public officers" and each ministry has a plan to increase the recruitment and the promotion of female officers, with targets set for 2005.

In May 2003, the National Personnel Authority conducted the second survey on the status of measures being implemented in line with each ministry's plan. This survey showed that nine ministries/agencies (32.1 percent of the total 28 surveyed) hired more female officials than in the previous fiscal year, among successful Level I exam candidates; 14 ministries/agencies (50.0 percent) employed more female officials among successful Level II candidates; and 13 ministries/agencies (46.4 percent) hired more female officials among Level III candidates. In terms of promotion, 19 ministries/agencies (67.9 percent) have more female officials at the section chief level; 14 ministries/agencies (50 percent) at assistant director level; and 5 ministries/agencies (17.9 percent) at the associate director level or higher. While government ministries/agencies increasingly try to appoint female officials to higher positions in general, promotion of female officials to executive positions is not sufficient. Most ministries have pointed out that job transfers with relocation and stereotypical perceptions among government officials prevent the appointment of female officials to higher positions.

## Conclusion

Legislation, administrative measures and policy statements since the mid-1990s indicate that Japan may, indeed, be able to move from a male-breadwinner model towards one that balances work and family life, promotes equal opportunity among women and men, and encourages individuals with family responsibilities to join the labor force, revitalize a corporate system in need of a new outlook in the era of global change, and revive society as a whole.

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# PART 2

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*Women and the Promotion of Community Development*

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## CHAPTER 4

# Women's Mobilization in Bulacan and Payatas for Community Development: A Study in Contrast and Convergence

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### Introduction

Strong communities can build a solid platform for broader social transformation by first providing community-based solutions to local problems. The more homogenous a community is, the easier it is to organize for collective action; the more diverse, the more difficult to organize. Each community has to discover ways of shaping its own destiny.

The story of the women in Payatas, a *barangay* (village) in Quezon City, and of women in the province of Bulacan in the Philippines is a story of change, of a journey towards engendering community development that is sensitive to the social and political development needs of women.

This paper will highlight the needs and concerns that led women to do something about their situation. It will outline the strategies employed and the results of their participation and involvement. It will also contrast the two experiences in terms of the issues, the mobilization strategies, the evolution of their roles and the concomitant results and effects on the women and their communities.

### Understanding Women's Needs and the Spectrum of Mobilization

For women's participation in community development to be meaningful, it should be based on the needs of the community and the women themselves. Practical gender needs are linked to women's unsatisfactory living conditions, the struggle for family survival and lack of resources. Strategic gender needs relate to women's subordinate position in society and include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their own bodies. The starting point for women's participation may be practical needs that later encompass more strategic concerns; or it could be more pressing strategic concerns that later include practical activities. In the actual development process, the distinction between the practical and strategic concerns becomes hazy, since they complement each other.

The situational context, the relational factors and the specific issues and concerns that women face, be it strategic or practical, may determine their type of participation or mobilization. In the community-organizing framework, mobilization comes after the issues have been identified, analyzed, prioritized, and when specific actions have been decided. Mobilization is focused around action areas of prioritized issues. Like participation, mobilization can either be passive or active; self-initiated or catalyzed by others; and, internally driven or externally stimulated.

Passive mobilization happens when women are just told what they should do, without understanding why they are undertaking certain actions, since they were not involved in the issue identification, analysis and decision making. At the other end of the continuum is self-mobilization, where women take their own initiatives, based on their identified issues and priorities.

## Background and Context: Women in the Philippines

### *Philippines, A Brief Background*

The Philippines is an archipelago composed of 7,100 islands, the most important being Luzon in the north, Visayas at the center and Mindanao in the south. The country is subdivided into 17 administrative regions, 79 provinces, 115 cities, 1,498 municipalities and 41,955 *barangays* (villages). Metro Manila is the national capital. The country has a total land area of 300,000 square kilometers with an estimated population of 84.6 million in 2003.

The country has 111 linguistic, cultural and racial groups with eight major dialects and two official languages—English and Filipino. More than 80 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and most of the rest are Protestant and Muslim. Fifty-nine percent (59 percent) reside in the urban areas and 37 percent fall below the poverty line. Infant mortality rate is almost 25 per 1,000 live births.

The Philippines has a unitary system of government with balanced executive, legislative and judiciary powers. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the present Head of State and Chief Executive, assumed the presidency when former president Joseph Estrada was forced to resign in 2001.

The Philippine economy- a mixture of agriculture, light industry, and supporting services—deteriorated in 1998 as a result of spillover from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and poor weather conditions. Growth fell to 0.6 percent in 1998 from 5 percent in 1997, but recovered to about 3.4

percent in 1999, 4 percent in 2000, and 3.4 percent in 2001. In 2002, the Philippines recorded a GDP growth of about 4.6 percent but also incurred a record budget deficit. As a result, the Philippines is now burdened with a public sector debt equal to more than 100 percent of its GDP.

### *Enabling Laws and Policies on Women*

Through its 1987 Constitution, the Philippine Government has enshrined the fundamental equality of women and men before the law. It is a signatory to various UN conventions, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has likewise committed itself to the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies and the Beijing Platform for Action.

NGOs and the government crafted the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD) for 1995-2025. The plan focuses on promoting rights-based and gender-oriented development where: a) women enjoy higher self-esteem, free from gender stereotypes, and are able to achieve their full human potential; b) women's rights are respected as human rights; c) basic needs are affordable and accessible to all; d) gender equality and equity prevail, and women and men participate in and benefit equally from development processes and their outcomes; e) the legal system guarantees women and men full legal protection and equal rights; and f) women are active participants in sustainable development, care of the environment and the country's economy.

The Philippine government has passed several pieces of legislation in compliance with its international commitments (see Table 4.1).

The executive branch has also initiated programs to address gender concerns, including: women-specific credit schemes to address gender imbalances in the distribution of program resources; women's desks in police precincts to help victims of violence and rape survivors; and sex-disaggregated data banks to draw attention to gender issues and women's contributions. A National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, established in 1975 under the Office of the President coordinates programs for women and acts as the major link between the government and the NGOs in the country.

The Local Government Code of 1991, which promotes the participation of women and other sectors in local governance through local special bodies, is also considered to be landmark legislation. The Code devolves powers and responsibilities to local governments, which take responsibility for providing five basic services: agriculture, health, social welfare, mainte-

**Table 4.1 Laws and Policies on Women in the Philippines**

Law or Policy	Date	Provisions
Republic Act 7192, otherwise known as the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act	1992	Recognizes the role of women in nation-building and fundamental equality before the law, providing equal access to resources, including credit and training, and requiring the allocation of 10 to 30 percent of official development assistance to gender and women's concerns
Local Government Code	1991	Provides for women's sectoral representation in local legislative bodies
New Family Code	1987	Stipulates women's right to own property and to contract employment and credit without their husband's consent
Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law	1988	Guarantees equal rights to ownership of land and its fruits, and equal representation in advisory or decision-making bodies of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.
Gender and Development Budget Act	1995	Sets aside 5 percent of funds of government agencies to conduct gender-related activities.

nance of public works and highways, and environmental protection. Local governments were provided with resources and granted autonomous taxing powers and were made accountable for community development.

Other governmental policies regarding women and gender equality include: establishing day care centers in every barangay in the country; outlawing mail-order marriages; increasing maternity benefits for female workers in the private sector; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and discrimination; increasing the minimum wage of house helpers; declaring sexual harassment in the workplace and schools to be unlawful; and providing assistance to women engaged in micro-business ventures and cottage industries.

Enforcement of gender-sensitive legislation and policies has been generally inadequate due to a lack of political will on the part of national and local governments, among other reasons. However, these enabling laws and policies provided a fertile environment for the emergence of community initiatives, as the two cases in this paper show.

### *Women in the Philippines*

Feminist researchers have discovered that women in pre-Spanish Philippines enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, economic importance

and equal relations with men. They had crucial roles in trade, diplomacy, politics and religion. As priestesses, they were consulted by the people in their spiritual affairs. They also determined the right time to plant and the necessity of going to war.

The Spanish colonizers, however, brought with them the notion of women as subservient to men and as dutiful and loving wives and mothers. The hardships and repression during nearly four centuries of Spanish rule emboldened some of the women to support their husbands' revolutionary struggle against Spain. Some performed secondary roles such as distributing food and medicines and taking care of the wounded Filipino soldiers, while others participated actively on the battlefields alongside the men. The Spaniards ceded control of the Philippines to the Americans in 1898 after the Spanish-American War. Filipino women won the right to vote in 1937, during the American occupation.

The egalitarian gender relations of the pre-colonial era inspired Filipino women to claim their place equal to men, both in and outside the home. While Filipino women are under-represented in government and politics, they have actively participated in nation-building through civil society organizations and social movements. They lobbied for the passage of the 1995 Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and the 1997 Anti-Rape Law. Abanse Pinay! (Advance Filipina!), an all-women's party, won a seat in the 1998 legislative elections.

Filipino women enjoy a higher social position than most Asian women, and have as much access to social services as men. The country ranks higher on the Gender and Development Index (GDI) than most Asian countries. However, a number of gender issues remain unresolved: human resource development, labor market participation, human rights and participation in politics and decision making (Illo, 1997).

In the history of Philippine politics, two women, in a long line of male presidents, toppled the country's most controversial administrations. Former President Corazon Aquino ended the twenty-year dictatorial reign of deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos in 1987, during the EDSA (People Power) Revolution. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo came to power after her predecessor, President Joseph E. Estrada, was declared unfit to govern after numerous resignations in his cabinet. Both women presidents, however, belonged to political clans: Cory Aquino's husband was a former senator, and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's father was a former president. Kinship has also facilitated the entry of most women into politics, especially at the local level, where 14 women have been elected as provincial chief executives and 132 are municipal or city chief executives.

Men head about 88 percent of all Philippine households (NSO, 1977) and are widely acknowledged as having a greater say in family investments, loans, and choice of contraceptive method. Women have their own areas of authority, such as childrearing and household budgeting, except in poor households with very little income to be budgeted in the first place. Women's powerlessness is emphasized by the violence they suffer at the hands of their spouse or male relatives. Women may be subjected to verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, as well as beatings and rape (Illo, 1997).

### **Case 1. The Women in Payatas, Quezon City: An issue-based mobilization**

#### *Payatas, A Barangay of Migrants*

Payatas is one of the 142 *barangays* of Quezon City, the largest among the twelve cities and five municipalities in Metro Manila (the National Capital Region). Quezon City was created in 1939 and was the national capital for 27 years. It is located in the northeast of Metro Manila and has a population of 2.2 million (in May 2000). The city has a literacy rate of 99 percent. Around 41 percent of its total population, mostly urban poor and informal settlers, need shelter. The city's vast, vacant spaces became attractive to migrants from congested neighboring areas and far-flung provinces. In 2001, infant mortality rate was around 20 per 1,000 live births while maternal mortality rate was 50 per 1,000 live births.

Payatas has a total area of 774 hectares, four of which belong to the National Government Center. With a population of 117,059 (in May 2000), it is the second-biggest *barangay* in the city and is growing at an average of 15.23 percent per year due to in-migration. Eighty percent (80 percent) of the *barangay's* total population are migrants from other calamity-stricken and war-torn provinces. Most reside in Payatas B, where a 16-hectare open garbage dump is located. The dump has been operating since 1993, but caught public attention only in July 2000, when thousands died due to a mudslide. The dump will continue to operate until 2005 and is central to the development of Payatas, as it provides a means of survival for the majority of the population.

Poverty is high in the area. The average wage is Php200.00 per day (approximately US\$3.70 per day). The maternal mortality rate is 58 per 1000 live births. Malnutrition is rampant among children, especially near the dump, where about 50 percent suffer from first- to third-degree malnutrition. The unabated influx of squatters remains a major problem and is usually blamed on squatter syndicates. It is not unusual to see several families residing in one house: the owner's, the lessee's and relatives of the owner who are in the city to look for jobs.



According to the Quezon City government, there are three conflicting perspectives on the land ownership issue in Payatas: a) The area is a forest reserve under the management of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources; b) The area has a private title dating back to Spanish times; and c) The area is part of the Payatas Estate Development Program under the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

### *The Payatas Council of Women, Inc. (PCWI)*

Registered in 1996 as a non-stock, non-profit organization, the Payatas Council of Women, Inc. (PCWI) was organized in 1982 on the initiative of Rose Juanich, a teacher who came to Payatas with her family in 1975 when the area was just grasslands.

Rose Juanich, together with other concerned women, mobilized against the growing lawlessness in Payatas. From 1982 to 1988, violent conflicts arising from land disputes erupted almost daily and several male leaders were killed. Government presence was not felt in the area. Lawlessness was pervasive. One woman described Payatas "like the Wild West".

The women in Payatas decided to do something to stop their men from killing or being killed. Fifty to two hundred women, some pregnant, used their bodies to shield or physically block the two warring factions from assaulting each other. They succeeded on several occasions, though some were hurt in the process. They then set out to prevent the illegal demolition of settlers' houses by land syndicates. Women would surround the area to be bulldozed and some, especially the pregnant women, would lie down on the streets. Some women even delivered their babies while fighting against illegal demolition.

They then moved on to the sensitive problem of domestic violence, frequently perceived to be an issue belonging to the private domain. Violence against a woman is especially likely when her husband is drunk. The husband's refusal to turn over his earnings and the wife's refusal to have sex were the usual reasons given for domestic violence. To put a stop to wife battering, the PCWI devised a form of communication with whistles as their main weapon. Every woman was given one to use when a beating incident seemed likely to occur. At the sound of a whistle, the women would be alerted to mobilize:

- The first long whistle would be a warning of a reported conflict between the wife and the husband.
- The second whistle would indicate shouting, screaming and/or things being thrown in the house.

- The third whistle was a warning that the battering had started.
- The fourth long whistle was a signal for the women, accompanied by the police or the *barangay* peacekeepers, to gather in front of the house where the battering was happening.

Not surprisingly, after fifteen mobilizations of this sort by 50 to 200 women, there were no more reports of wife beatings in the area.

After successes like these, the women began to look at how organized, collaborative efforts could contribute to satisfying their practical needs. The PCWI decided to embark on livelihood activities to increase family income. Around 30 women make and sell slippers, earning an average of P10 to P15 per slipper, or around P100.00 per day. Twenty women raise pigs in their backyards, buying piglets for P1,200 and selling them for P4,000 after three to four months of fattening. Others engage in herbal or vegetable gardening for medicine and daily consumption. Since they have not had any outside financial support, the projects have remained small. The organization decided not to seek loans from outside to prevent indebtedness. They saw that too many credit programs had failed because the money borrowed was used for personal emergencies. In fact, money became a cause of conflict among members and eventually led to the disintegration of the group.

PCWI is still a loose movement of women ready to mobilize on burning issues. Though they are still poor, life has become more peaceful for the women in Payatas. The *barangay* government, now headed by one of their own members, strives to continue what they have all started.

### *The Barangay Payatas Government in Action*

The face of Payatas has been significantly transformed since the 1980s. *Barangay* roads have been paved and the area is relatively clean. It is more crowded than before, but vibrant with activities.

The incumbent *barangay* captain of Payatas is Rose Dadulo, a member of the PCWI, who had been a member of the *barangay* council. A college degree holder and a migrant from a province in Northern Luzon, she is not a member of a political clan and beat another very strong woman candidate. She strives to improve the delivery of services, especially health and nutrition in Payatas together with the eight elected *barangay* council officials, half of whom are women. To facilitate community participation in decision-making, she activated the Barangay Development Council composed of 60 organizations operating in Payatas.

The *barangay* government is active and well-staffed. Volunteers include 31 Barangay Security and Development Officers, 20 members of

the Barangay Peace and Order Council, 21 members of the Community Service Brigade and 15 Barangay Traffic Enforcers. There are three health centers serviced by one physician, two nurses, two midwives and three aides. Volunteers include 279 *barangay* health workers and 200 *purok* leaders who help the health professionals deliver services. There are five public and three private elementary schools, one private and two public high schools and fifteen nursery/pre schools operating in the *barangay*. Two police blocks and a Woman's Desk operate in Payatas. The barangay government has also set up Barangay Service Development Outposts at strategic points to assist citizens needing help. The average crime rate has reportedly declined. A few cases of wife battering have been reported, but these were handled by the Women's Desk at the police station.

### *Influencing the Quezon City Government*

The government of Quezon established its own City Gender and Development (GAD) Council in response to growing concerns relating to women equality and empowerment. The GAD Resources and Coordinating Office acts as the council secretariat, focal point and resource group. Currently, the Council is preparing for future activities which include: a gender profiling and monitoring system for the city; capacity-building for planners and finance officers on gender responsive planning and budgeting; capacity-building for legislative staff and department heads on gender-responsive legislation and governance; pilot-testing the first all-women automotive training-cum-production course at the city hall; and integrating gender and rights-based topics into the city's licensing, work permit and counseling activities.

The city government has also initiated a micro finance project to help 260 women in Payatas. The first loan is Php5,000 and if this is repaid, there will be a second loan of Php7,000 and a third one of Php15,000. About 150 of the beneficiaries in Payatas are on their third loan.

### **Case Two: Women in Bulacan, The *Alay Paglingap* Program on Health, Nutrition and Population**

#### *Bulacan, Glorious Past, Progressive Province*

Bulacan is one of the 79 provinces in the Philippines located in Central Luzon, 42 kilometers north of Metro Manila. Bulacan figures prominently in Philippine history as the birthplace of three republics in the 1890s. Bulacan was one of the first eight provinces to revolt against Spanish tyranny in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and has produced several men and women who made their mark in the country's history.

Bulacan is the fourth most populous province in the country with 2.2 million inhabitants (in May, 2000). It has two cities, 22 municipalities and 568 *barangays*. The province is steadily becoming industrialized due to its proximity to Metro Manila. Many corporations have built industrial plants and sites in Bulacan. Some of these include leather tanning, cement bag making, fireworks manufacturing, ceramics, textiles, food processing, and shoe manufacturing. The rural areas, however, still depend mostly on agriculture as a source of income. Major crops include rice, corn, vegetables and mangoes.

The 2000 Family Income and Expenditure Survey estimated Bulacan's poverty incidence at 5.4 percent, the lowest in the region, and lower than the 8.5 percent reported in 1997 (even though the per capita threshold was increased from Php12,073 in 1997 to Php16,850 in 2000). Despite the Asian financial crisis, average family income increased from Php142,923 in 1997 to Php183,495 in 2000, the highest in the country.

### *The Alay Paglingap Program*

While there had been community-level efforts across the province on health and nutrition issues, these were disparate and sporadic. In 1990, the maternal mortality rate was 37 per 1,000 live births, infant mortality rate was around 18 per 1,000 live births and malnutrition among children stood at 12.4 percent. The provincial government was concerned, but did not have the resources to undertake a province-wide effort to deliver health and other basic services.

The *Alay Paglingap* program (literally: 'an offer of caring'), was launched by the provincial government in 1990, building on the spirit of volunteerism reigning in Bulacan. Wives and mothers are directly affected by health and nutrition problems, so they became the backbone of the program—an army of volunteers called *Lingkod Lingap sa Nayon* (LLN) or *barangay*-level care givers and Mother Leaders (ML) of *sitios*, a division of the *barangays*.

### **Objectives and Processes of Alay Paglingap**

The general objective of the program is to improve the delivery of health, nutrition and social services in the province. Specifically, the program aims to: 1) mobilize volunteer workers, the private sector, non-government organizations, religious and civic organizations to support nutrition, population and social services programs at the community level; and 2) deliver high-quality service to the people in the *barangays* through the community-based primary health and nutrition program.

**Table 4.2 Training Activities for Women Volunteers of *Alay Paglingap***

Training Activities	Knowledge/Skills Acquired
1. Alay Paglingap Basic Orientation Seminar	Primary data collection, skills in interviewing, community organizing concepts
2. Volunteerism and Leadership	Program background, value of volunteerism, duties and responsibilities, spot map preparation, reporting and action planning, facilitation and coordination
3. Interpersonal Communication	Communication skills
4. Project Management	Management skills, how to conduct meetings, make minutes, documentation, motivation skills
5. Livelihood Skills Training	Skills in soap making, food processing, stuffed toys and other novelty items, cosmetology, recycling
6. Gender and Development	Shared and equal responsibility
7. Reproductive Health and Family Planning	Family health care
8. Family Violence	Awareness and prevention of violence in the home

The program started by identifying the health and nutrition problems of *barangays*, then identified and trained women volunteers selected on the following criteria: bona fide resident of the *barangay*, at least complete high school education and willingness to perform her duties to the best of her ability. The volunteer caregivers signed service contracts, which have renewable annually, subject to the endorsement of their respective *barangay* captains.

#### **Enabling and Coordinating Women Volunteers**

The functions of the women volunteers include: 1) regular feeding programs and weighing of infants and preschoolers to monitor their health, and motivating parents to bring their children to the health center for monthly or quarterly check-ups; 2) census-taking and updating demographic data every month, including: deaths, births, in- and out-migration, marriages, and number of married women in reproductive age; 3) motivating couples to plan their families and refer them to appropriate agencies; and 4) facilitate the delivery of services to the disabled, senior citizens, victims of fire and natural calamities, and victims of violence and abuse.

To enhance their self-confidence and develop their skills, the women volunteers were trained in how to collect, document and analyze data,

how to organize a community, how to communicate and motivate, how to conduct meetings, how to manage community projects and also in leadership development. Gender and development training were provided to promote shared and equal responsibilities in their homes. They were also given orientation and training on family violence, responsible parenthood, family planning and reproductive health. Since the program's launch in 1990, annual training has been sponsored by the provincial government to continue developing their capacities (see Table 4.2).

In addition, the barangay- and sitio-based caregivers were given monthly allowances as incentives. For the LLNs (*barangay* care givers), a monthly allowance ranging from Php750<sup>1</sup> to Php1,600 was provided as follows: Php200 from the province, Php400 - Php1,000 from the municipality, and Php150 - Php400 from the barangay. The sitio-level MLs (mother leaders), received a monthly allowance in the range of Php150–Php400<sup>2</sup>. Volunteers also received: accident insurance, death assistance, free hospitalization in any government-owned hospital, free medicine for outpatient members, a uniform and an identification card for discounts at accredited establishments like drugstores and public hospitals. A yearly awards program was established to recognize outstanding performance of women leaders.

To coordinate the efforts of the mother leaders in the 568 *barangays* in the province, a program structure was established at the provincial, city and municipal levels. In 1991, the Bulacan Provincial Community Management Department, which managed the Alay Paglingap Program, became the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office, which included programs on nutrition, population and social services, further strengthening the institutional framework of the program.

### ***Results of the Alay Paglingap Program***

The following results have been attributed to the Alay Paglingap Program:

- **Improved health conditions in the province:** The malnutrition rate was reduced from 12.4 percent in 1990 to 1.52 percent in 2002; infant mortality fell from 17 per 1000 live births in 1990 to seven per 1000 in 2002; and maternal mortality rates from 37 to 29 per 1000 live births in 2002.
- **Increased income and savings:** The women volunteers increased their family income through their monthly allowance and saved on

<sup>1</sup> Php54 = US\$1

<sup>2</sup> Financial incentives vary depending on the size, population and income level of their municipalities and *barangays*.

medical expenses, thanks to the health benefits and privileges available through the program.

- **Improved referral services:** Mother leaders were given the authority and power to endorse or refer patients directly to government offices and medical centers. Thereby, red tape has been effectively reduced and patients have been able to receive more immediate medical attention.
- **Empowerment and leadership:** What the provincial government considers one of its greatest achievements is the empowerment of the volunteers who have been actively involved in the program from the very start—the women of Bulacan. The training sponsored by Alay Paglingap helped the women volunteers gain self-confidence and acquire new skills such as: identifying appropriate beneficiaries of the program; becoming effective communicators; organizing and presiding meetings; establishing good interpersonal and social relations; becoming effective leaders who can decide and act on matters relating to health and social services, even in the absence of the barangay captains; and teaching and guiding other women in setting up livelihood projects.

Alay Paglingap developed the women's confidence and served as the training ground for them to handle leadership positions beyond the program. Around 10 percent of the 4,023 women volunteers have been elected as *barangay* council members, some even as *barangay* captains (village heads) in their respective areas, and some are currently involved in cooperatives, religious and civic groups. This is a new phenomenon in Bulacan, considering its *macho* culture. Before the Alay Paglingap program, women seldom dared to "invade" the men's arena.

#### *An Organization of their Own: The Bayanihang Bulakenyo Foundation, Inc.*

In 1997, the village caregivers and mother leaders, who are all members of the Alay Paglingap, registered their organization with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 1998 as Bayanihang Bulakenyo Foundation, Inc. (BBFI).

The foundation is managed at the provincial level by a Board of Directors elected by the General Assembly. Officers have been elected at the municipal level to manage the activities in their respective areas. Each member contributes Php20.00 in annual membership dues and Php10.00 for the Damayan Fund, which provides Php5,000 to the family of a deceased member. The foundation also has a separate fund for livelihood projects and a revolving fund of Php100,000, which they won with the Galing Pook Awards on Innovation and Excellence in Local Governance in 1996. They have raised

around Php1 million through various fund-raising schemes and livelihood projects. One of their projects is to sell iodized salt, not only to raise funds, but also to promote the prevention of iodine deficiency.

The role of the volunteer workers has evolved from merely acting as extension agents of the provincial government to becoming partners of the provincial, city/municipal governments in implementing development programs. They have become community leaders and catalysts for change.

The foundation is a partner of the Provincial Commission on Women, helping women achieve their full potential and participate meaningfully in the development of Bulacan. Both are housed in the Women's Center, which also serves as a place where women can come for referrals, counseling or legal and financial assistance. The foundation and the commission are involved in the Bulacan Quick Response Team Command to speedily attend to the needs of abused women and children. Foundation members have also been actively involved in a self-employment assistance program for single parents and separated, widowed, and battered women.

Alay Paglingap has received the following awards and citations: the Green Banner Award from the National Nutrition Council, Hall of Fame in Population from the Commission on Population, and the Galing Pook Award for Innovation and Excellence in Local Governance from the Asian Institute of Management.

The active women's movement in Bulacan, spearheaded by Alay Paglingap volunteers, has produced the first woman governor in the history of the province. Governor Josie de la Cruz comes from a business family and is the only member of it who has gone into politics. She was elected by landslide in 1998 and has continued the vision and five-point development agenda of the former governor, who was of the same party. Bulacan's vision is that of a *"progressive, peaceful and self-reliant province, whose people are living models of its historic heritage and cultural excellence, with the middle class as the core of the citizenry, with equal access to opportunities and services."*

### **Analysis and Lessons Learned**

These two cases show that lives of women and men and of the community in general improve when women mobilize to address community and gender-specific community issues. While they vary in size, level and process of mobilization, Bulacan and Payatas have certain commonalities. Both areas are presently headed by women—a governor in Bulacan and a barangay captain in Payatas—who do not belong to a political clan. They both recognized that their victory was due to the support of the women in their respective areas.



### *Contrast in Situational Context*

Bulacan is a province while Payatas is a *barangay*, the smallest political unit in the Philippines. While Bulacan has a rich historical and cultural heritage as the seat of the First Philippine Republic in 1899, Payatas has a history of conflict and lawlessness stemming from land conflicts. Payatas is known as the dumping ground for Metro Manila's garbage. While Bulacan is one of the most progressive areas in the country, with the lowest poverty incidence among the provinces, poverty is at its worst in Payatas. Families dependent on the garbage dump are lucky to have one meal a day.

While ownership of land in Bulacan has been clearly determined, this is not the case in Payatas. While a majority of the residents in Bulacan are born in the province, almost all the residents of Payatas are migrants. Although the improvement of the quality of life is the objective of the people in Bulacan, in Payatas, it is survival. While the rich historical and cultural heritage of Bulacan imprisoned women in unequal and subordinate relations, the lack of history and tradition in Payatas emboldened women to take matters into their own hands. In contrast to the presence of an active government in the barangays in Bulacan, in Payatas there was no such presence in the 1980's. While Bulacan is a relatively peaceful province, violence was the order of the day in Payatas in the 1980s.

### *Differences in Initial Issues and Convergence as Mobilization Progressed*

Given the contrast in context, the initial issues that provided the impetus for women's mobilization were also different. In the case of Bulacan, practical needs like health and malnutrition motivated women to act through the Alay Paglingap provincial initiative. However, they later took on other issues such as domestic violence. The response to the issues was designed and programmed because there was no urgency to act.

In Payatas, survival was the initial issue. Killings among men, demolition of homes, and domestic abuse rallied the women in Payatas to take collective action. When the critical problems were minimized, if not stopped, the women shifted their focus to practical needs such as health and livelihood.

### *Internal or Self-mobilization vs. Externally-Stimulated Mobilization*

The women in the *barangays* of Bulacan were stimulated to act on the problems of health and nutrition by an external change agent—the provincial government. A concerned, credible and responsive government can encourage communities to take control of providing basic services like primary health care at the grassroots level, offering women incentives to act and capacity development.

In Payatas, the women mobilized on their own, taking collective action on pressing issues they themselves identified. It was not easy to mobilize women from diverse backgrounds. However, when lives are at stake, differences become irrelevant. The mobilization was not programmed, but emerged as the issues erupted. Creative strategies were employed, given limited time and resources. They had no choice but to become self-reliant because there was nobody they could depend on to solve their problems.

### *Similarities in Results*

A unique and significant aspect of the Alay Paglingap is the active participation of the village care givers and mother leaders, without whom the program would not have been launched. By initially acting as extension agents of the government, they developed self-confidence and leadership abilities and then took on other leadership positions in government and civil society organizations. In Payatas, the women have shown that despite tremendous obstacles, they can rise above poverty and address pressing issues of community and domestic violence. Their mobilization amounted to a confidence-building scheme and skills training. In both areas, their initiatives and mobilization, in the presence of responsive and accountable local government, improved their access to community services.

Both women's organizations have registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission as legal entities. While the Bulacan provincial women's organization, called the Bayanihang Bulakeno Foundation, Inc. (BBFI), has four thousand members, the Payatas Council of Women (PCWI), a barangay-based organization, has only two hundred.

The BBFI has become an active partner of the provincial government in the delivery of social services in the province and in promoting gender equality through the Commission on Women and the Women's Center. The provincial government, city and municipal governments have recognized the important role of the BBFI in lowering maternal mortality, infant mortality and malnutrition rates in the province.

The PCWI, meanwhile, has remained a small, loosely organized group, meeting infrequently and now undertaking small livelihood projects. The concerns that made them active and dynamic have been assumed by the *barangay* government structure because their members have become part of it. How the *barangay* in Payatas operates now is a microcosm of the Bulacan experience. Aside from helping in the transformation of their village, their influence can also be felt in the Quezon City government with the establishment of the GAD Council and livelihood projects for women.

## Remaining Challenges

### *Overcoming Barriers*

Women volunteers in Bulacan faced major cultural barriers. Because of the relatively better position of women in Bulacan, gender specific-issues are disguised in many ways. Most women still hesitate to assume leadership positions even if they are more qualified, due to the mistaken notion that men should be the leaders. However, the continuous training of the women has developed their confidence and faith in their own abilities. Hopefully, as they gain more confidence, there will be more women who will run for elected positions. Their provincial grassroots network can be further developed to foster leadership and a base for women's political participation.

Another constraint has been lack of time. The women of Bulacan are regarded as highly entrepreneurial, but their involvement in the Alay Paglingap program has taken them away from their business activities. To entice them to join, the provincial government invented a cost-sharing scheme with the other two levels of local government—the municipality/city and the barangays, each of which provides women with monthly allowances and privileges like insurance and medical benefits. Since the volunteers were mostly mothers, the local governments have established day care centers in all the villages and are raising men's awareness of the need to help with housework. The same can be said of the women in Payatas, where the effort of the *barangay* government and the PCWI is geared towards addressing economic and personal constraints.

### *Under-representation in Decision-making Positions*

Though a woman governor heads the province of Bulacan, women are under-represented in top elected positions in the province. All ten provincial council members are men. At the municipal/city level, only one of the 14 mayors is a woman and only 27 of the 192 legislative council members are women. At the village level, only 41 of the 568 *barangay* captains are women. It is important for women to assume these positions so that priority attention and significant resources of the local governments can be shifted to social and economic development. At this point, the women in Bulacan have managed to win seats at the barangay level, though not the critical they need to influence policies and resource allocation. In Payatas, the elective seats are equally shared between men and women.

## Strategies for the Promotion of Women's Participation in Community Development

The experiences of Payatas and Balacan suggest the following possible strategies to promote women's participation in community development:

- **Build on strengths and choose issues closest to the hearts of women and the community:** The provincial government is highly credible, so when it was easy to mobilize women's support. In Payatas, their strength was in their number. The issues chosen matched the concerns of women.
- **Provide incentives, share resources:** Women can earn more money if they engage in entrepreneurial activities. Recognizing this reality, the government needs to provide some financial support as replacement income. The multi-level sharing in Bulacan eased the load on one local government unit.
- **Build capacity for the various roles that women will play:** Capacity development is important for women to gain confidence in their own abilities. Involvement in activities served as their training ground for leadership responsibilities in the community: service providers, researchers, documenters, advocates, peacemakers, community leaders and managers. The competencies required of each role must be matched with existing capacities to identify training needs.
- **Develop a support system for women:** Given the multiple responsibilities of women, support systems like day care centers can be beneficial. The Philippine government has a mandate to establish day care centers in all the *barangays* in the country.
- **Recognize initiatives of women:** Awards and creative mechanisms at the local level can be developed to recognize the contribution of women and to inspire and motivate them to innovate and excel.
- **Develop a support system for women to take on decision-making positions:** A group could be organized to help women run for elected positions at the village level. When they win, they should have advisers either from universities, civil society organizations or the private sector.
- **Continue learning through shared experiences:** Aside from the usual training programs, women can benefit most from sharing their experiences in community mobilizations.
- **Think long term and scale up through networking and coalition building:** Community development is a multi-stakeholder respon-

sibility, a shared imperative. Given the multiplicity of concerns and interests, no single sector can claim to do it alone. Women's organizations should learn how to build networks and coalitions to scale up the development agenda to higher levels.

## Conclusions

Community development requires multi-level, multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional efforts by all stakeholders. The most effective agents of community change are women because they are closest to the problems. The enabling laws and policies of the national government, such as the Women in Nation Building Act and the Local Government Code of 1991 provided the push for the creation of mechanisms for local participation in governance. Numerous laws and programs promoting gender equality and empowerment were the product of vigorous advocacy by women's groups in the country. At the local government level, gender-sensitive elected officials are needed to allocate resources to directly benefit women and the community. At the local level, grassroots organizations of women are needed to pressure local governments to implement programs and projects for women.

Programs and projects can focus either on practical or strategic concerns. They can start with poverty and the special needs of women and move on to address discrimination, inequality and unequal gender power relations. Depending on the prioritized problem, development intervention can involve support services for health, nutrition and child care, productive skills for income generation, the integration of women in development planning and extension services, the mainstreaming of women's development, affirmative action to promote equal opportunity and empowerment through awareness-raising and collective action.

While self-mobilization by women has its advantages, externally stimulated mobilization of women anchored in shared values and commitments can produce the same results—bringing change within women themselves and in their communities. Both types of mobilization require the development of critical thinking and relational skills, guided by a clear idea of what women want for themselves and their communities. Women also need strategic and operational skills enabling them to respond to immediate needs, while building their organizational capacity for sustained mobilization for community development.

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## CHAPTER 5

# Community Kitchens: A Peruvian Experience

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### One Day in the Kitchen

**7 a.m.** Mrs. Mercedes opens the community kitchen door wondering, "What will we cook today?" She checks the gallon-size container and leaves in a hurry to buy kerosene fuel. When she returns, the Pantry Coordinator and the four women whose turn it is to cook that day have already arrived. They check the amount of leftovers and money from the previous day's sales in order to reach an agreement. "We have 42 soles, plus another 15 from the government subsidy, that's a total of 57 soles to spend at the marketplace."

**7.30 a.m.** Two of the women take off towards the San Pedro Market to do the shopping, "you get better prices there; not as low as those offered at La Parada, but at least it's not as far. We take the bus and get off five stops from here and then we return walking on our own two feet." Another of the women goes to fetch water from the faucet at the corner, while the other lights the fire in the stove. "We must wear our aprons and head gear," her friend reminds her. Then they fill up the pots with water to boil rice. 30 kilos each day is a good amount.

**8.00 a.m.** On the blackboard, they announce, TODAY Vegetable Soup, Main course: Rice and beans.

**9.30 a.m.** Those who had gone to market return. Each one has a different chore—wash the vegetables, slice the onions, peel potatoes, and check on the stove and the pots and pans. The rice pot starts to turn black, a sign that the stove is once again failing. The President of the Community Kitchen comes by at around 10 a.m. to see how the food is coming along and to lend a helping hand. Some other women drop by to pay and reserve their lunches.

**10.30 a.m.** Mrs. Dolores, whose turn it is to work today, says that one of the larger pans is beginning to leak. It's the one they're cooking the beans in. They force the pan to lean to one side so that it won't leak its contents into the fire. One of the associates offers to help because she realizes they're running late.

**11.30 a.m.** The menu is almost ready now. The cook uncovers the pots and pans, one by one, and tastes the food. After cleaning the large table they used to prepare the food, two of the women lift it and take it outside along with two benches.

The queue starts to form out front; in it there are women and children carrying small pails, bowls and pans.

**12.00 p.m.** Lunch is ready and the two women working today start serving the food. While one of them uses a ladle to dish out the portions, the other takes

*the clients' money. The people in line overhear a complaint about the bean, "Only two days ago they gave us the same." A regular client helps to serve the soup.*

*The clients who are "exempt" from payment are served last.*

**1.30 p.m.** *The distribution of food service ends. A late-comer asks, "Is there any food left?" "Too late," say the women, "It's all gone." Then the women who performed the day's work sit down to have lunch. Afterwards, they divide among themselves the rations they are entitled to take home.*

*As soon as they finish eating, they start to wash the pots and pans. Because water is scarce, the washing is done little by little. They clean the community kitchen and put everything in its place.*

**2.30 p.m.** *The Treasurer and one other woman count the money and work on the kitchen's accounting. They write down every point in their Control Notebook—so many rations sold to their associates, so many others sold to non-associated clients, and so many exempt from payment.*

**3.00 p.m.** *They finish the cleaning, wipe the table and take it back inside.*

**3.30 p.m.** *They say goodbye to each other and return home.*

\* \* \*

## **Peru: A Country of Inequality and Social Distance**

Inequality is characteristic of Peru and poverty has increased in the past ten years, affecting almost 55 percent of the population; 25 percent are extremely poor. In rural areas, six out of ten people are poor and more than three of these six are extremely poor. Over half the population live on less than \$1.45 a day on average, and 25 percent live on \$0.70 a day. This amount has to cover all of their expenses: food, clothing, transportation, education and health. While poverty increased, so did wealth—but only in the hands of very few. The richest 20 percent of Peruvians today control over 51 percent of the national income. There is a worrisome gap between growth and employment, which leads to even greater inequality.

There are huge gaps between social groups, depending on gender, ethnicity and place of residence. For example, while men in the cities go to school for over 10 years, urban women go for nine years. In the countryside, men go to school for six years, while women go for only 4.5 years. These numbers indicate large differences between the level of educational attainment between men and women, but this is most dramatic when comparing urban and rural areas.

In this setting, female illiteracy stands at 17 percent, while the national average is 12 percent. In the predominately indigenous regions (Huancavelica, Apurimac and the high parts of Cusco), female illiteracy



affects more than 40 percent of all women. These numbers do not include functional illiteracy resulting from lack of practice in reading and writing, or the terrorist activities that greatly increased illiteracy among indigenous women who refused to speak the dominant language as a means of protection, resistance and survival.

The document that our Truth and Reconciliation Committee has recently given all Peruvians shows the dramatic effects of 12 years of internal warfare: 75 percent of the dead and disappeared are indigenous peoples from the mountains and the jungles and 40 percent of these victims were in the Ayacucho region and the Andean highlands. Peru is not only a poor country, but more particularly one segmented by deep inequality.

Recently, the Peruvian government launched an ambitious decentralization process, transferring welfare programs designed to aid poor women from the central government to the municipal governments throughout the country. The Community Kitchens, direct beneficiaries of the National Food Assistance Program (PRONAA), thus inaugurated one of the most important and most anticipated policies of the government of President Toledo. However, there are few predictions that this will be a successful venture. First, the State was not ready to de-centralize: it does not have a bureaucracy capable of handling the transfer. Second, not even minimal procedures are in place to ensure that local governments can really run the programs. And third, there are not enough budget control mechanisms to guarantee that these social funds will, in fact, be invested in social projects, thus increasing the risks of corruption and political manipulation. Also, women's grassroots social organizations are now weak. The powerful unions and federations that used to bring poor women together no longer have the capacity to mobilize women, given members' mistrust of their top leaders. The decentralization of the food assistance programs and their transfer to municipal administrations may end up breaking an organization that has survived for twenty years, playing a central role at critical moments in the recent history of our country.

What are the Community Kitchens? How did they become beneficiaries and managers of the food assistance programs? Why are they now at risk of disappearing as a grassroots organization? In this paper, we will briefly present the history behind the Community Kitchens and analyze the major problems they face today.

### **Community Kitchens: Definition, Main Motivations and Problems**

The Community Kitchen attends to the dietary and nutritional needs of the poor. It is basically defined as an organization of women, home-mak-

ers, and neighbors, who get together to shop, cook and prepare nutritious daily meals for their families and other individual users (Córdova and Gorriti 1989:11, Boggio et al. 1990:14).

They gather in groups of 22 members on average, among whom they choose a Management Committee made up of leaders responsible for organizing the kitchen's activities: shopping, accounting, liaising with authorities, and handling internal dynamics. All members take turns with daily kitchen chores and receive free rations in return for their work. Whoever does not do the kitchen chores must pay a certain amount that exempts her from that task. Funds come from a state subsidy (20-25 percent), from the sale of rations to the members and to third parties, and from additional activities such as catering (75-80 percent).

The main motivation to join a community kitchen is the lower cost of food. Groups receive donations and subsidized food, and also benefit from buying wholesale and cooking large numbers of meals.

This system is not like distributing food to target groups (for example, pregnant mothers, breast-feeding mothers or small children) or like distributing uncooked staple food. Community kitchens allow for intra-family food distribution (Maguiña, 1989:49), minimizing the risk that rations are diluted within families or that food or subsidies do not reach the beneficiaries for whom they were intended.

Community Kitchens began in Lima in the late 1970s, when the country was returning to democracy after 12 years under a military regime. The political ideology behind the new urban and rural social movements was essentially leftist. Liberation Theology, embedded in the principles of social justice, was alive and well, promoted by the progressive sector of the Catholic Church. Feminism was gaining sympathy among middle-class women after the first United Nations Women's Conference in Mexico (1975). More than a State program, Community Kitchens emerged as a social movement joining the common interests of very different actors.

Each of these actors reached out to work with the poor: the Church, through parishes in catechism groups where women were their most enthusiastic followers; new feminist organizations approached low-income women in order to recruit them as allies in the struggle for women's rights; non-governmental development organizations engaged poor women, with the intention of engrossing their social base and international development agencies increasingly funded programs for low-income segments of the population.

In the midst of increasing economic crisis, thanks to international food donations, the State was able to distribute food to the poor, first through churches, and later by creating its own "cliente" among poor

women, who found Community Kitchens a way of contributing to the family budget, while freeing up time for other activities. It also provided an excuse to end their isolation and emerge from the four walls of the homes that imprisoned them.

There were three main motivations for organizing Community Kitchens:

- *To alleviate the economic problems of low-income families:* Increasing unemployment and poverty starting in the very early 80s as a consequence of political and economic, national and international changes, demanded an emergency response from the new democratic government of Fernando Belaunde. As the crisis became chronic, the Community Kitchens became a preferred mechanism of social aid.
- *To create mechanisms of inclusion and social and political integration for poor women:* "Barriadas" (poor neighborhoods) began to spread in the mid-50s and by the mid-70s required the State's attention and basic services. Women centered their social participation on the domestic, private sphere and once they had their plot of land and had built a house on it, they found themselves on the margins of local social life. However, when the vote was granted to all citizens, an important contingent of illiterate women entered the public arena and became recipients of social support through diverse political projects. Women's social organizations set out to provide this segment of the population with new spaces where they could socialize, learn and become citizens with full knowledge of their rights, while tackling the problems of poverty and scarcity.
- *To promote female leadership:* Recognizing the potential of this segment of the population, institutions invested more effort and resources to promote female leadership capable of helping reduce inequality between men and women, developing the notion of rights and duties among women, and eventually proposing a political agenda for a long-overdue discussion of women's issues, both at the local and national levels.

This scheme worked successfully until the mid-80s. Community Kitchens multiplied as the women's organization backing them became stronger and more independent of their cooperating institutions. They developed a hierarchy and internal order that clearly favored grassroots representation, effective working teams and a new generation of younger leaders. Nevertheless, the first signs of another economic crisis at the end of the decade weakened the model and forced the institutions to restructure their working methods. The initial model for the Community Kitchens had become inefficient and was overwhelmed by impossibly high demand for

its services. Hyperinflation, terrorism, and the pending economic crisis added to the weakness of a State that proved unable to generate social aid programs to help the poorest families, breaking the backbone of the Community Kitchens. Such high demand altered their systems of representation, participation and internal control. No functional alternative model was designed; instead, the State colonized women's social organizations and "mounted" itself on top of them to develop its improvised emergency social program.

With the next change of government, President Fujimori implemented a severe economic adjustment program and once again relied on the organizational structure of the Community Kitchens to force along his economic reactivation program. He depended on women's organizations and assigned them a great deal of responsibility, but did not give them the necessary organizational tools, capacity-building programs, or the human and economic resources needed to face such huge challenges. This, along with the attacks by Sendero Luminoso, the terrorist group, eroded the original model of the Community Kitchens. Although many of the women leaders trained in the ways and practices of the original model survived, and thousands of new Community Kitchens were set up by the State, this process of deterioration and "colonization" of poor women's organizations repeated itself through the following years.

This led to two additional problems:

First, the Community Kitchens lost their autonomy. They were frozen into dependence on governmental donations. They did not have incentives or motivation to innovate in order to achieve self-sustainability or to develop entrepreneurial capacities.

Second, successive governments have lost the ability to reach the poorest segments of the population precisely because they have built their social programs on top of the Community Kitchens. The State's limited budget does not allow it to open Community Kitchens at the same rate as the number of families in extreme poverty increases. At the same time, it is "tied" to its client Community Kitchens without even a timetable that would allow it to compare the list of its beneficiaries with the most recent poverty indicators. The National Survey on Standards of Living (ENNIV 2000) shows that at least a third of the beneficiaries of Community Kitchens belong to the "non-poor" segment, while very few extremely poor people are served.

So, Community Kitchens have become dependent on the State, while acting as clients of the system. With the initial aims with of the Community Kitchens in mind, we could evaluate today's Community Kitchens by whether they:

- ① *Serve poor families:* In fact, they do, but they do not reach the segments of the population in extreme poverty. This should be one of the main objectives of the new Community Kitchen organizations.
- ② *Create mechanisms of inclusion and integration for poor women:* Community Kitchens once acted as schools for learning about citizenship. Their current disorganization, however, favors practices that turn beneficiaries into clients who act subserviently toward the donor of food aid. For different reasons, many women's organizations have lost their unity, their common objectives, their capacity to negotiate, and their political representation as a social movement.
- ③ *Promote female leadership:* A number of women leaders have gone through a process of emancipation to become the social leaders of their communities. However, due to their low level of education, a depressed market and a chaotic political arena, these women cannot yet translate their experiences into economic well-being or political power.

### Community Kitchens: Trajectory and Periods

Prior to the Community Kitchens, the Peruvian government, churches and political parties promoted different kinds of collective action for poor women in the "barriadas" of Lima<sup>1</sup>. Food distribution programs go back to the government of General Odria (1948—1956) when the first Mothers' Clubs were founded under the auspices of the First Lady, María Delgado de Odria, and her Center for Social Assistance. This institution was particularly dedicated to the poorest segments of the population as a means of gaining popular support and building political bases for the government (Collier, 1978). At the same time, the Catholic Church's Lima Mission began giving out food and medicines donated by CARITAS to mother-child programs, thus beginning its social work crusade in the "barriadas" outside the capital. Women of the higher social classes did "good deeds," visiting poor neighborhoods once or twice a week and bringing together poor women in Mothers' Clubs to knit, sew and do handicrafts to generate income.

In the following decades, charitable programs for poor women diversified and grew in number. These included the distribution of food and presents to poor neighborhoods through the Office of the First Lady. The Adventist Church (OFASA) promoted the exchange of communal work for food in the Mothers' Clubs. The Mother-Child Program (PAMI), ex-

<sup>1</sup> The term "barriada" was first used to denote the poor areas on the outskirts of Lima that first became populated in the late 40s as people squatted on public and private lots.

ecuted through the Ministry of Health, also distributed raw staple food. All of these institutions, to a larger or lesser degree, had a paternalistic relationship with poor women.

Nevertheless, the struggle for basic services such as water, electricity, public transportation, schools and health services in the “barriadas” made it necessary for squatters to petition the State tirelessly during the 60s and 70s. Neighborhood organizations became places to learn about social and political activism. Even though women did not participate at the higher leadership levels, they had considerable presence in the preparation of communal meals (ollas comunes) to support community endeavors, and in the marches on public offices. These experiences affected their paternalistic attitudes about dependence on the State, and they became more confrontational, along with other segments of the population .

In 1978-79, the Educational Workers Union (SUTEP), which was pressuring the government for better salaries for public school teachers, held a series of public demonstrations in poor neighborhoods and ended up “taking” the schools in the name of the people. The women expressed their solidarity with the teachers and gave the strike their full support, even cooking large communal meals for the striking teachers. Parent Teacher Associations and communal organizations joined in and, for weeks, the schools became spaces of political discussion where the concerns of daily life met with community concerns and with the current social and political conflict (Palomino, 1985). This experience was particularly important for women concerned about their children’s education. From then on, many women from the “barrios” widened their participation in neighborhood organizations, as would be later reflected in the women’s organizations created to manage food aid.

To summarize, over the years there were diverse social activities that encouraged the active participation of women in low-income urban neighborhoods of Peru. These tended to be associated with very immediate domestic issues, involving the construction and upkeep of the family space and the organization of daily life in the new neighborhoods. These activities helped women break the isolation of the private sphere and become conscious of the importance of collective action to obtain individual benefits, and of the need to establish relationships with institutions and the State. This body of knowledge and information would feed subsequent experiments in female organization.

### *The First Community Kitchens: The Kingdom of the Church in the “Barrios”*

The first autonomous Community Kitchens were created in the people’s district of Comas, north of Lima, in 1978, against a backdrop of looming

economic crisis. The presence of the nun and nurse Maria Van der Linde, who had ample experience working with women in the “barrios,” was pivotal to the creation and development of the new Collective Kitchens, as was the support of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action (CEAS) during the first few months of the experiment.

Little by little, word of the experience spread. Representatives of other parishes and of development NGOs from other districts came to observe the new Community Kitchens in Comas and then reproduced the experience. In only one year, the Community Kitchens spread to El Agustino, Villa El Salvador and San Martin de Porres. According to CARE’s First Census of Community Kitchens, between 1978 and 1982 more than 200 were founded in the Lima metropolitan area. Each one had an advisor, generally a nun or a priest. These pioneering Community Kitchens, in turn, promoted the creation of similar organizations.

Philanthropic agencies also became interested in the new organization. Rosa Ballon, a Catholic nun who at that time directed the office of CARITAS in Lima, agreed to modify her food distribution program so that women could cook together.

While north of the capital the Community Kitchens were being born, the so-called “managed community kitchens” came into existence south of Lima in what is now the district of Villa El Salvador. As Sara Lafosse (1984) pointed out, there were originally two distinct types of Community Kitchens: “managed” kitchens founded and managed by the pastor of Villa Maria del Triunfo; and “independent” or “autonomously managed community kitchens” that began in Comas and in El Agustino, promoted by pastoral agents and by food donation programs (Sara Lafosse, 1984; Van der Linde, 1994, interview). Kitchens of both types joined the Female Group for the Defense and Promotion of Women (AFEDEPROM) in Comas in 1978 and the El Agustino Coordinating Group in 1979, these being the first networks of Community Kitchens in Lima. (Barrenechea, 1991).

A new characteristic common to all these autonomously-managed community kitchens promoted by the Church was self-help and self-service, aimed at emphasizing the independence of the poor from the State and from charitable institutions, in contrast to the dependence that other programs so easily allowed. It is important to highlight the people’s initiative and the investment of great personal effort in the birth of these community kitchens, as well as their resistance to working in coordination with government programs.

Meanwhile, the State was executing other food distribution programs—the School Food Program (PAE) and the Mother-Infant Program (PAMI)—and began the Family Kitchens Program in 1982. Due to the rel-

ative success of the first Community Kitchens in the “barrios” of Lima, and because she was convinced of the importance of the principles of popular cooperation to defeat poverty, Mrs. Violeta Correa de Belaunde, the First Lady, gave a great personal boost to the Community Kitchens program, providing monetary aid and food donations.<sup>2</sup> Barrig (1992) points out correctly that the creation of Violeta’s Kitchens marked the beginning of the official Community Kitchens programs. However, they did not take into account the existence of over 200 kitchens that were already active, nor was there any coordination with the ongoing food aid programs. From the beginning, a number of organizations ran parallel to the autonomously-managed community kitchens (supported by the Church), making it a point to emphasize autonomy from the official State system. The almost unbridgeable gap that separated the people’s grassroots organizations from those promoted by official State programs was a constant issue in the relationship between the social movement and the State during that period.

Neither the government nor the advisors of the Community Kitchens took the time to establish agreements that could have strengthened the independent community kitchens. The political differences between the ruling party, Acción Popular, and the United Left made it impossible for them to look beyond the short term. They worked to institutionalize an organization designed to respond to a very specific problem, but at the same time encouraged the growth of a citizen’s conscience among poor women.

### 1984–1988. *Centralization and Frowth: From Self-help to Confrontation with the State*

This period was probably the richest in the organization of poor women. The United Left won the municipal elections in Lima and Alfonso Barrantes, the new Mayor, began his mandate in 1984 with the Glass of Milk Municipal Program. The Glass of Milk committees multiplied rapidly and were largely organized by poor women from low-income “barrios.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1985, the government of Alan García, the flamboyant new president, created the Direct Assistance Program (PAD). The PAD Mothers’ Clubs offered three basic services to poor women: cottage industries, Community Kitchens and schools for small children (PRONOEI). In this single program, women could make money by doing productive work,

<sup>2</sup> In 1962, her party, Acción Popular, created the Program for Popular Cooperation, a fund for development among the poor that was built on the principle of self-help.

<sup>3</sup> There was initial debate about whether to support these programs, which were based on free work by beneficiaries: whether participation in collective action with other women was a “liberating” experience or one that reinforces the subordination of women.



improve their family's nutrition and collectively take care of their young children, while freeing up time for other activities.

These Clubs were coordinated by the Office of the First Lady in the Ministry of the Presidency and grew alongside existing women's organizations. They were additions to the existing organizational scheme, but had the advantage of being promoted by the government, which assured them the donation both food and money. As a result, between 1985 and 1988 the number of Community Kitchens more than doubled, from 884 to 1,861.

During this same period, feminist organizations—mainly left-leaning ones under the tutelage of progressive sectors of the churches—and the new development NGOs embraced the option of working with poor women's organizations. International cooperation agencies contributed considerable funds for a variety of courses and capacity-building sessions in various areas of interest. Women were trained in nutrition and infant health; in management, organization and leadership; in tasks such as sewing, embroidery, knitting, the confection of "arpilleras" and all sorts of handicrafts; in legal aspects and basic female health issues; and in subjects directly related to gender discrimination, domestic violence, sexual abuse, abortion, birth control and women's right to make decisions affecting their own bodies.

With the support of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action (CEAS), the First National Encounter of Autonomously-Managed Community Kitchens was held. For the first time, almost 300 women leaders of the different Community Kitchens from the districts around Lima and from other cities in other parts of the country gathered to share experiences and study proposals for the development of their organizations. At this key meeting, the women decided to demand of the government: a direct subsidy, the reactivation of agriculture to ensure easier provisions for the Community Kitchens, the recognition of these organizations and a process to centralize their organizations under one leadership. The National Commission of Community Kitchens was created to ensure their demands were met.

Between 1984 and 1988, women gained a well-deserved central role at the local levels, precisely because of their involvement in the Community Kitchens and people's kitchens, and later, in the PAD mother's clubs and the Glass of Milk committees. Each of these organizations, however, kept its distance from the others and emphasized their differences. The possibility of integrating all the groups into one large poor women's movement was not even considered at that time. The advisory institutions (the Church, the development NGOs, the feminist groups and the governing political parties) did not facilitate this; rather, each promoted the growth of the organization it sponsored.

### 1988–1990. *The First Adjustment and the Political Action of Poor Women*

The following years brought successive waves of uncontrollable economic, social and political crises that would plague the country. Garcia's government was unable to maintain its initial policy of economic reactivation and was forced to apply the first shock measures of economic adjustment.

The demand for food increased considerably, while the number of women who joined the organizations rose sharply. Between 1988 and the first quarter of 1990, the number of Community Kitchens appears to have grown 70 percent, from 1,900 to over 3,000—with more than one thousand created in 1989 alone. The government and CARITAS took complete control of all food donations and the supply of food was assured only to the organizations sponsored by these two institutions. Most of the autonomously-managed Community Kitchens were left without food donations.

The effects of these measures were dramatic. Differences and conflicts between the various organizations became more acute, and the distance between the leaders and the women at the base increased. The leaders, on the advice of the development NGOs, drafted a proposal demanding that the State subsidize 58 percent of the cost of the rations prepared by the Community Kitchens, but their demand was not met (Barrig, 1992). As the State pulled back and washed its hands of its social duties, poor women began to act openly in the political arena, calling for marches and mass demonstrations.

The women at the base of the Community Kitchens organization tried, on their own, different ways to overcome the economic crisis. There were some interesting local attempts to develop productive programs to support the kitchens. Collective cooking and eating were combined with new small "businesses" run in the kitchens themselves, such as restaurants for construction workers and catering operations serving the development NGOs. However, most of the basic social organizations were in dire straits due to the lack of food aid and the ever more serious economic situation. Their discontent with their leaders had grown and they were willing to receive a favor no matter from whom it came, even if it meant risking losing the autonomy they valued so greatly.

All in all, the social setting began to show quite clearly the social segmentation that had been growing throughout the decade due to the social heterogeneity of the women's organizations and to the presence of external institutions with such varied interests. On the one hand, the gap widened between the leaders of the Federations of Community Kitchens and their bases—the former were playing politics, while the

latter were trying to respond in a very pragmatic and local manner to the economic crisis. On the other hand, the differences between the various poor women's organizations deepened considerably. The State contributed to this process of social fragmentation by renouncing its role as a purveyor of services and transferring that responsibility to the poor families themselves, regulating distribution channels according to party politics. (Barrig, 1992).

### 1990-1993. *Fuji Shock and Terrorist Violence; Wrath against Poor Women*

In July 1990, an engineer, Alberto Fujimori, assumed the presidency of the country for the next five years. He had defeated novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, who had warned that an economic shock was unavoidable and had, thus, been rejected by the people. Without many alternatives, after only one month in office, the new president put into practice the most severe program of structural adjustment in Peruvian and Latin American history. This program would not have worked were it not for a general feeling of terminal despair shared by all Peruvians after the terrible hyperinflation the previous year, the uncontrollable terrorist violence, and from another perspective, the courage and resistance of the women of the poorer segments of society who bore the shock measures with unrivalled stoicism, while contributing their free work and solidarity to the construction of an efficient social protection network.

The Social Emergency Program (PES) was absolutely insufficient during the first months of the adjustment and then it failed completely. Without State support, poor women took responsibility for the task facing them. They used the experience they had gained in twelve years turned of Community Kitchens, opening these and community meal operations ("ollas comunes") all over the poor "barrios" of the city. According to estimates by YUNTA, CARITAS and PAD, on August 31, 1990 only 23 days after the application of the adjustment measures, the number of Community Kitchens in Metropolitan Lima, including community meal operations, increased to 7,000—more than double the number registered by CARE in the first quarter of 1990.

If the State seemed like an enemy by not recognizing or lending its support to this survival network, the terrorist acts by Sendero Luminoso utterly discouraged poor women. The terrorists threatened, beat and murdered the leaders of the Community Kitchens. Such was the case of María Elena Moyano of Villa El Salvador, assassinated on February 15, 1992, and of Emma Hilario of Villa María del Triunfo, who had to request asylum due to threats and aggressions. The "Senderista" discourse silenced some

women's organizations and co-opted others. Fear, mistrust and a total lack of stability weakened the foundations of the already fragile Community Kitchens. Sendero Luminoso knew how to exploit differences and jealous streaks among the women. It discovered the right language to communicate with each one. In a situation of such uncertainty and of extreme poverty, reason falters and fears and envy grow unchecked. Women doubted their leaders. They doubted their neighbors. They even mistrusted themselves. The task of cooking collectively carried a permanent risk of death or aggression. The absence of legitimate security, or a trustworthy army or police force made the situation even worse.

The development NGOs had to stop their work in the "barrios." They did not, however, stop advising the leaders. Instead of having a physical presence in the Community Kitchen, the leaders of each kitchen went to visit their advisors in their offices in other parts of town. Where there had previously been an easy flow of traffic from the "barrios" to the residential areas of town, Sendero imposed an interruption of such activity.

The tense situation would have continued in every aspect of the life of the organization had it not been for the capture of Sendero Luminoso's top leader, Abimael Guzman, together with a significant portion of its Management Committee. When the leaders of the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso fell into the hands of the police, a window of hope and opportunity opened for all Peruvian citizens, especially for the poorer segments of the population, gravely affected by its disruptive presence in the "barrios." September 12, 1992 will be remembered as the day when the country was saved at the brink of total collapse.

The women in the Community Kitchens did not take long to respond to the turn of events. Many Community Kitchens had closed under pressures from Sendero or because their husbands had forbidden women to even venture there. Others had continued working, but with the doors closed, so as not to attract attention. In the months following the memorable capture of Guzman and his associates, the kitchens rediscovered their vitality. However, the consequences of the terrorist war were so severe that even today they are still felt.

### **Community Kitchens in the New Century**

Today, there are 15,000 Community Kitchens in Peru. Five thousand of these are in Lima and the rest are in mid-size cities all over the country, plus a few in rural areas.

According to a recent survey by the Institute of Peruvian Studies, the Community Kitchens of Lima bring together about 100,000 organized

women who cook over 480,000 daily rations of food. Six percent of families in Lima eat their food every day. Of these, 62 percent are below the poverty line and 12 percent are extremely poor families. The State invests US\$39 million annually in the Community Kitchens Program in Lima. Even though this is no longer the strong organization it was 15 years ago, it is still a huge network of poor women, probably the country's most important social network, and continues to play a vital role in the fight against poverty. A considerable percentage of families who supposedly fall into the category of "non-poor," but who eat Community Kitchen meals, tread dangerously close to the borders of poverty, and are saved from crossing the line because of their access to this food service (Tanaka and Trivelli, 2002). If these families were not served by the Community Kitchens, it is quite possible that the number of poor in the capital would increase significantly.

In this sense, Community Kitchens today are a sort of "popular food service" by poor women for poor women and their families. It is a service that allows a group of three to five women to cook daily while the rest of the Community Kitchen associates and neighbors are able to leave the "barrio" and go out to work, knowing that their children will have a balanced diet. It may now be true that this service does not reach families in extreme poverty because they are not yet capable of establishing a relationship with an organization and paying \$0.30 cents per ration a day. In this light, the State should come up with other, more effective programs designed especially for them. Nevertheless, the Community Kitchens network is a cheap system to feed the poor and plays a key role in keeping poverty at bay among the poor urban population.

This network's relationship with the market is deficient. While plenty of women have independently set up small food businesses, the women who remain in the Community Kitchens still work hard without getting paid for their labor. They also continue to work under the same very poor conditions that they have had to endure from the beginning: their pots, pans, bowls and stoves are old; kitchen space is rented or loaned; many have earthen floors and no electricity; and very few can make a profit. It would seem they are trapped in a kind of a "solidarity economy" that systematically repeats a tiresome work routine, while they continue to depend on the State to give them food donations. This inhibits any entrepreneurial initiative they might have on their own. Even if the government subsidy they receive is very small, it still keeps them functioning outside the laws of the marketplace. They are captive organizations that are not forced to compete or develop any managerial or entrepreneurial intent.

### Some Key Questions...

Why do women keep going to the Community Kitchens if the benefits they receive in exchange are few and the working conditions are poor?

Because in a socially fragmented and unreliable scenario of high unemployment that does not offer better working options or clear references, being a member of a Community Kitchen gives a woman a sense of identity, a sense of belonging. At the same time, her membership signals her as someone and, to a certain degree, protects her from anonymity, social aggression and domestic violence. The Community Kitchens are, in fact, places where women come together to learn and enjoy themselves, to share experiences and spend time together.

### *Must the State Continue to Subsidize Community Kitchens, Even if They Do Not Satisfy the Demands of the Poorest Families?*

That depends on which strategy the State decides to apply in the fight against poverty. There is evidence that the Community Kitchens today are the largest, most efficient network for the production of food at low cost and that they play quite a significant economic role. Thanks to their services, many women are able to work outside the home and feed their children well. If the State decides to pay the Community Kitchens to offer their food services to families in conditions of extreme poverty, it would be using a network that is already working efficiently, while at the same time giving the kitchens the opportunity to move towards more entrepreneurial management of food production. This necessarily implies that the system must be modernized to include: the "monetization" of the subsidy (no more food donations), updated lists of the extreme poor in each locality, and the guarantee that the network will keep on working by ensuring that the transfer of aid (which will soon be in the hands of the municipal governments) reaches the Community Kitchens themselves and not new, improvised clients.

However, if the State does not have a strategy that takes into consideration the modernization and monetization of the system of food aid and the optimization of the existing network of Community Kitchens, but instead proceeds to decentralize the subsidy without applying more control, and if municipal authorities assign food aid at their own discretion, the current organization of Community Kitchens will hopelessly disappear and social programs will fail without remedy. Dependence on the State has been pernicious to the Community Kitchens, which now need to become operative units of a new, decentralized State social program.

### *Can the Community Kitchens Become Restaurants, Bakeries or Other Businesses?*

This would be difficult. Studies show that the current structure of the Community Kitchens make it hard to turn them into small businesses. Established dynamics, the number of members, their poor education and lack of training are combined with the dispersion of capacity-building programs and a lack of capital, significantly reducing their chances of growing as businesses under market conditions. Community Kitchens cannot compete with existing small restaurants because their local clients cannot pay more than a meager price. If they had to pay more, they would be better off cooking at home, despite the many benefits of the Community Kitchen.

### *How to Empower Women If They Don't Receive Food Aid?*

Considering the great experience gained by women in these organizations, it is clear that they can play a central role in social monitoring and citizens' participation programs. Basic issues such as health, education, nutrition and security often demand citizen participation. However it is also well known that, without a clear and concrete motivation to satisfy a need, such as family nutrition, it is hard to get women to participate actively in community life. However, in this case, the Community Kitchen experience has become part of women's popular culture. Churches, feminist groups, civil society associations, political parties, the State and international cooperation agencies will now find quite a contingency of empowered women ready to participate in their activities and join their initiatives.

These women have gained significant knowledge about their rights and about how to demand respect as citizens. There is still a long road ahead, but the path already covered by the Community Kitchens greatly increases the social capital built up by poor women in Peru.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Networking for Women's Access to Justice in Brazil

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"Perhaps the ultimate argument for a focus on the women's *agent condition* can be precisely the role this condition may have in the removal of the inequalities that restrict female welfare."

—Amartya Sen in *Development as Freedom*

Among the many inequalities faced by women in Brazil, limited access to the justice system may be the grossest. There is a disparity between the constitutional guarantees of gender equality and the actual social, economic, cultural and political situation of women in the country. This gap is wider for black and indigenous women.

Although international agreements on women's rights have been incorporated into national law through constitutional provisions, neither the judiciary nor juridical doctrine recognize the status of such agreements or their direct applicability. It is not unusual, for instance, for courts to acquit men who kill their wives or female partners on the basis that they were "defending their honor." At the end of 2003, Penal Code provisions for prosecuting sexual offenders still indicated that for a female victim to actually be a victim, she had to be an "honest woman."

Domestic violence is a major problem in Brazil: every fifteen seconds, a woman is beaten and 33% of women have already been a victim of violence. Up to 70% of the offenses occur in the home, committed by the woman's husband or male partner.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, neither society at large nor the government recognizes the dimension of this social ill. A cultural divide between public and private life means the family is a kind of "territory beyond the reach of law" (Linhares, 1998). Despite the ratification of international agreements and the constitutional provisions for protecting women's human rights, there is still no specific law on domestic violence in Brazil. Cases of domestic violence against women have been referred

<sup>1</sup> From the survey "A mulher brasileira nos espaços público e privado" ("Brazilian women in the public and the private spaces") conducted by Fundação Perseu Abramo in 2001.

to the Special Criminal Courts, created by law 9.099/95, which deals with “less potentially offensive” crimes and punishes offenders with fines or the obligation to render community services, giving no compensation to the woman or protection against further offenses.

The lack of official data regarding violence against women also illustrates the low level of government attention to this problem and represents an obstacle to public policies for prevention.

Improving women’s access to justice may contribute to the elimination of major factors that hinder women’s autonomy (such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, violation of reproductive and sexual rights, work discrimination, etc.) and will empower women and facilitate their full participation in the promotion of social development. This text relates the experience of Themis, an NGO dedicated to legal assistance and gender studies, in its efforts to facilitate women’s effective access to justice.

### Country background

Brazil is the largest country in South America, with an area of 8,547,403 square kilometers. It is a federation of 26 states plus the Federal District, distributed in five regions, which differ culturally, socially and economically.

After twenty years of military dictatorship (1964-1985), Brazil embarked on a process of democracy building that culminated in a new Constitution in 1998. The 1998 Charter gave the country the juridical framework for the democratic transition and the guaranteed human rights. Brazil is a multiparty democracy, with a presidential system and a bicameral legislature.

According to the 2000 National Census, the country has 169,590,693 inhabitants. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil’s population increased ten times, but the last two decades have seen the lowest growth rates (2.48 percent for 1970-80; 1.93 percent for 1980-91; and 1.63 percent for the last decade of the century).

The 2000 Census indicates that the country is increasingly urban. In 2000, 81 percent of the population was urban. The South and Southeast regions concentrate 57.4 percent of the population in 17.6 percent of the country’s total area.

In terms of gross domestic product, Brazil is among the 10 richest countries in the world, with a GDP in the order of US\$ 730.4 billion in 1999 and a *per capita* income of US\$ 4,350. However, such figures do not reveal the gross inequalities existing in the country. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the richest decile of the population receives 46 percent of the total income generated in the

country and the poorest decile receives only one percent. About 28 percent of the Brazilian population lives in poverty (defined by the IBGE as a per capita income that is less than half a minimum wage).

Black people constitute 45 percent of the total population. The Afro-descendent population in Brazil is the second greatest in the world, inferior only to that of Nigeria. In 1999, there were an estimated 73 million Afro-Brazilians, concentrated in the Northeast region of the country. 70 percent of the people considered poor or indigent in the country are black (Henriques, 2001).

Women make up 51 percent of the population. Approximately one third (32 percent) of Brazilian homes are supported mainly by women, and women participate as the secondary provider in another 44 percent of homes. However, women's participation in the regular labor market (that is, registered jobs subject to normal labor legislation) represents only 37.3 percent of the total<sup>2</sup>. Men earn an average of 5.9 minimum wages, while women earn an average of 4.6. Women's wages are consistently lower, regardless of education or sector.

The 2003 Human Development Report (HDR) recognizes that the country has made some advances in the gender equality indicators used in the Millennium Development Goals: for every 100 boys registered in primary and secondary schools, Brazil now has 103 girls registered. However, illiteracy rates are still high in the country and relatively few women have gone beyond primary school.

Regarding the first Millennium Development Goal—reducing poverty and hunger—the 2003 HDR calls attention to Brazil's unequal rates of development. Although the Northeast region has achieved a dramatic reduction in poverty, success there falls short of that needed to meet the goal for 2015. The North, on the other hand, experienced an increase in poverty during the last decade, while the South seems to be the only region able to reach the goal of reducing poverty to half the current rates.

### **Themis and Access to Justice**

Themis—Legal Assistance and Gender Studies, a non-governmental organization, has identified the gap in the guarantee of women's human rights as the main obstacle to achieving gender equality and a just society in Brazil. Moreover, the organization has diagnosed two main causes for women's failure to access justice (Feix, 2001a):

<sup>2</sup> Data issued by the Labor Ministry—*Relação Anual de Informações Sociais*—RAIS (National Report on Social Information), 1997.

- ① Ignorance of legal rights, entitlements and the justice process by women from economically disadvantaged social segments, hindering their sense of social belonging (citizenship), the primary condition for participating in social and political life and for claiming rights and social change;
- ② A judicial system contaminated by the “normative standards of masculinity”; which, for centuries has reduced women to objects or incapable, inferior beings; and which is impregnated with the myths of “neutrality” and “equality” that reduce recognition of the prejudices and discrimination existing in our society.

To combat both of these causes, Themis’ founders—three young feminist lawyers—inspired by paralegal training projects existing in Latin America, designed a project to improve women’s access to justice through innovative and alternative mechanisms for the defense and promotion of women’s rights, and through the dissemination of legal information. This has been the organization’s mission since its creation in 1993.

The organization’s name, Themis, was inspired by Greek mythology’s goddess of justice. This reference is a call to consider and propose new practices in gender and law, especially questioning the theoretical and cultural foundations responsible for the gap between the expectation of justice and its fulfillment for the large majority of women in our society.

Themis is located in Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil. The city has about 1.8 million inhabitants distributed among eight districts (called *micro-regiões*). Every district has its own structure of public services such as schools, health units, police stations and an office of the Protective Council (*Conselho Tutelar*)<sup>3</sup>. As of September 2003, the PLPs training project has been implemented in six of the eight districts, each of which comprises a great number of neighborhoods (*vilas*), some without sewers or paved streets.

Porto Alegre has a special history of public mobilization: it was the first city in Brazil to introduce the Participatory Budget (Orçamento Participativo). The city also hosted the first two editions of the World Social Forum. The Participatory Budget experience opened a space for discussion of public policies, particularly in poor communities. Training in the citizen’s role in the process of social development has been used by Popular Legal Promoters to introduce gender issues into local discussions.

<sup>3</sup> *Conselho Tutelar*: municipal council, formed by people elected in the community who are responsible for monitoring compliance with the “Child and Adolescent Statute” (ECA) by families and institutions in the community. The ECA is a Brazilian law specially designed for the protection of children and teenagers.

### The Mission Fulfillment—Themis' Programs

Themis has identified target groups for its projects: women from the urban outskirts, characterized by low educational levels and poor economic conditions, are the main target group. Law enforcement officials and judicial system officers (judges, lawyers and prosecutors) are also a significant target group for promoting women's access to justice.

Themis' three main lines of action are aimed at these target groups through the organization's programs: Popular Legal Promoters, Feminist Advocacy and Studies and Publications. These lines of action reflect Themis' mission: prevention (of rights violations), defense and promotion of human rights.

The Popular Legal Promoters (PLPs) program aims at providing legal literacy to women who are community leaders in urban neighborhoods, as well as establishing and supporting community units such as the Woman's Information Service (WIS)<sup>4</sup>. During their training course, women from these neighborhoods gain basic notions of law, human rights, structure and functioning of the State and Judicial System, family law, violence against woman, reproductive and sexual rights and all forms of discrimination. After 80 hours of training, these women graduate as Popular Legal Promoters (PLPs). They are expected to pass on their knowledge and create awareness of legal rights within their communities, either as volunteers in the WIS units or simply by continuing their leadership activities.

The Feminist Advocacy program seeks to win legal decisions in favor of women through individual and collective litigation, by presenting the fundamentals of feminist theory and proposing a gender approach in the application of the law. It aims to make political use of the law by questioning the way laws have traditionally been applied in our legal system. Themis exposes the way women are treated by the State by assisting victims of rights violation, generally referred by the Popular Legal Promoters through their work at WIS.

Themis' third line of action is to analyze and reflect on specific examples of women's access to justice. This is the work of the Studies and Publications program, which nourishes the theoretical debate on the link between gender and law, and provides a substantive basis for action in other programs.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: SIM—*Serviço de Informação à Mulher*, a volunteer service delivered by the PLPs in their communities, where they give advice on legal rights and citizenship issues, refer people to public services and refer female victims of violence, violation of sexual or reproductive rights, or discrimination to Themis' Legal Assistance (Feminist Advocacy program).

### The Popular Legal Promoters (PLP) program

The PLP program targets poor communities that are characterized by high degrees of violence, both domestic and urban, unemployment, crime and drug trafficking. The legal training course was designed for women from low-income communities on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, and courses are targeted in such a way that a group of women will be trained in each community. Once the region of the city is chosen, Themis selects about 30 women for the course. They must be literate and possess extensive leadership experience within their community.

The selected trainees begin an 80-hour course of weekly sessions held in their community, with the following units: Human Rights, Gender and Justice Organization and Functioning of the Government and Justice System; Family Law; Labor and Social Security Law; Domestic and Sexual Violence; Reproductive Rights and Sexual Rights and Racial Discrimination. Each unit is approached from a gender and women's rights perspective.

The training methodology includes lectures by experts in each area, workshops with group activities, case studies, jury simulations, visits to social and legal institutions (such as the courts, state councils of rights, the legislative assembly, police stations, etc.).

Holding the course in the community has several purposes: to provide law practitioners and other experts who give lectures with a closer look at the reality of the community; to reduce trainees' sense that such professionals are inaccessible; and to facilitate their contacts with institutions and professionals in the relevant areas after the course.

A package of basic and supporting materials is provided when trainees start the course. This package includes primary legislation such as the National Constitution and the Child and Adolescent Statute, as well as texts and training materials.

The course has three main goals, expressed in terms of changes to be achieved by the trainees:

- to develop awareness and knowledge of rights;
- to develop a feeling of social inclusion by embracing the concept of citizenship and strengthening self-esteem; and
- to expand the concept of justice beyond the limits of the judiciary, understanding it as an everyday value rooted in social practices and in the full exercise of the rights supposedly guaranteed by the State through legislation and public policies.

Themis seeks to work in partnership with law officers to create a conceptual framework<sup>5</sup> to close the gap between the law and its application. Feminist

theory must meet the law's critical thinking in order for solutions and proposals to emerge to bridge this gap, which has three main causes:

- a lack of effective rules and legal tools to protect women's rights;
- a lack of adequate institutions for filing and processing claims of rights' violations; and
- the overwhelming presence of a patriarchal culture among law officers, which contributes to making women and the specific circumstances that surround them invisible to the legal system.

### **Empowering Women through Popular Legal Promoters**

In a social context in which women's human rights are systematically disregarded, the Popular Legal Promoters project provides for gradual empowerment and mobilization of women in low-class communities.

Such empowerment starts with the PLPs themselves, whose training introduces them to a new perspective on life. The contents of the training course are not limited to legal issues and promote a different approach to Law, awareness-building on human rights issues and an awakening of the sense of social belonging and the exercise of citizenship. Observed transformations among the trained women range from improvements in personal appearance, to returning to school, questioning conjugal relationships and an increasing presence in the city's public arenas (forums, political parties, social movements, elected posts such as community health agents and protective councils).

#### *A Testimony of Empowerment<sup>6</sup>*

Marli Medeiros, 46 years old, mother of four daughters and one son, became a PLP with the first group, in 1994. She lives in Vila Pinto, a "vila" (neighborhood) known as one of the most violent in Porto Alegre. In her own words, she describes the empowerment experience:

"My (involvement) in the community movement was due to the lack of leadership in my neighborhood. When I arrived there, Vila Pinto was being structured. The Participatory Budget process was starting and they needed people, leaders that had a better un-

<sup>5</sup> In developing this framework, Themis was inspired by the work of Women, Law and Development International (WLDI), a partner organization that also focuses on the connection between gender and law. See *Women's Human Rights Step by Step*, WLDI, Washington, D.C., 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Extracted from FONSECA, Cláudia (Org.) *Themis: Gênero e Justiça*. THEMIS: Porto Alegre, 1998.

derstanding of the process to look after the community's needs. (...) And in 1993, there I was, as delegate of the participatory budget. During the meeting came the invitation to participate in the Popular Legal Promoter course. And, as I had been leader for two years, I felt the need to be able to mediate in the community where I worked. It was for the women in the "vila," to help in the issue of Justice, and also for my own information, because at that time I was in a complicated marriage and I didn't know how to get out of it. (...)

I attended the course and one of the first things I learned was that I had the right to separate from my husband. That's when I started to devote myself to the work of Popular Legal Promoter. I have made many trips and when, in Mar del Plata, I saw on a large chart that my region, the "vila" where I used to live, was one of the Latin America's poorest, I came back committed to do something to changing this picture. (...)

We developed a survey where the women said they need their own income; that violence happened because they were too dependent on their husbands. If they had income, they would have the hope to be free. And we went after a project, with Themis' help. (...) One day we made a collective effort in the community, with the partnership of the DMLU (Municipal Department of Urban Cleaning). The DMLU brought the trucks and we cleaned the backyards, a huge amount of garbage, and then came the idea: garbage could be changed into raw materials, and this would solve the problems for the women—to have income, to have a job.

In 1994, I was still a trainee in the course and was connected to Themis. I had the project in my mind and we developed the whole methodology and organized the project to send it to the Municipal Administration and the DMLU. And in 1994, I went to Brasília. While I was away from Porto Alegre, I got to make some political contacts with people in power—the Mayor was there—and I was at the same level as them. (...) When I came back to Porto Alegre, DMLU was open to talk about the project, which had been complicated because the guys didn't believe that I could manage a big project inside Vila Pinto. That was one of the most violent neighbors, where nothing used to get done and any investment used to be useless. The guys were a bit scared.

The project is about creating an NGO working in recycling with women, children and adolescents. Today we have 46 women working and we are already working on expanding it to 150. (...)



They receive about R\$320 and R\$350 per month.<sup>7</sup>(...)

Today, we have partners and funding from GTZ, and we are the best structured recycling shed in Porto Alegre. The garbage itself is sorted. A woman from the “vila,” black, poor, leading a project on garbage...it was very difficult. But I had many political contacts and, thank God, I had the partnership of Themis. (...) Everybody used to say, Marli, you are dreaming. And a lot of people dreamed with me, including the WHO- World Health Organization (...).

Today I am a speaker; I give lectures in several cities as a Popular Legal Promoter, as coordinator of the Recyclers Federation of Rio Grande do Sul. I see the work of Popular Legal Promoters as one of the most revolutionary projects in Brazil. (...). When you recognize yourself as a person, you discover your whole potential, you discover yourself as a woman, you discover yourself as a human being, you discover yourself as a citizen and you know that you have the same rights as anybody else.”

### The PLPs and the WIS—Woman’s Information Service

Through the WIS—Woman’s Information Service, PLPs apply their knowledge and skills in three areas: **defense**, in the form of the counseling service; **prevention**, through educational and informational activities that they promote in community schools, associations, health units, etc.; and **promotion**, by representing as much the WIS project itself as the broader project on gender equality at different forums and institutions within or outside their communities.

PLP status confers a certain authority to these women. This self-perceived authority makes them feel strong enough to demand the rights and services they are entitled to as citizens, but which public institutions frequently deny to those who—due to fear, ignorance or shyness—do not make demands. Also, public servants, who frequently disregard citizens’ rights, change their attitude when someone is introduced with a title like Popular Legal Promoter. This is very typically Brazilian and the PLPs make good use of it, monitoring the public services in their communities (health, social work, public security, defense counsel) and accompanying women to guarantee the delivery of services.

As the Popular Legal Promoters, through the WIS, develop their work on the three lines of action—defense, prevention and promotion—they

<sup>7</sup> At current exchange rates: US\$110 to US\$120.

become visible in their communities, foster social micro-networks and become reference points for matters involving women's rights. For example, women and girls in situations of physical or sexual violence are often referred by social workers and protective counselors<sup>8</sup> to PLPs. The potential for raising awareness on women's human rights is clear.

In their daily activities PLPs merge practical expertise on the needs of the women in their communities with acquired knowledge of rights and the law (Bonetti et. al 2002). This combination has several valuable effects, including greater clarity of the concepts of citizenship and rights and the personal transformation of each woman who goes through this learning experience.

The personal changes motivated by the PLP course often affect the family relationships of the trainee women. When they recognize themselves as human beings, subject to rights equal to their other family members, they start to question their position at home, their conjugal relationships and sexual relations. This tends to provoke a shakeup of these relationships and a consequent negotiation process that, in general, reaches stability under new conditions, but sometimes results in a break.

It is worth emphasizing the volunteer<sup>9</sup> nature of PLP work and their immense dedication to this activity. Almost all of the women volunteers have large families and are responsible for contributing to the family incomes, but are able to conciliate it with the PLPs activities and often involve their family members as volunteers or simply as an audience.

### **Empowered Women Mobilizing Community**

"Being a PLP is being a person who shares her knowledge with other people; being an activist in community movements; becoming an agent to change public services policy, holding the feminist vision to guide her struggle." (PLP, WIS Report / October, 2000).

Initially, PLP training motivates personal changes in individual women. Then, as community leaders, those women are able to transfer their learning to the community. Acting in spaces as diverse as neighborhood associations, churches, schools, nurseries, political parties etc., they manage the right tools and language to pass the information on to other people, mobilizing them for change.

<sup>8</sup> In Portuguese: *Conselheiros Tutelares*, people elected in the community for monitoring compliance with the *Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA)*. (see note 2)

<sup>9</sup> The work of PLPs at WIS is rendered on a voluntary basis. Themis covers the costs of the service with materials, transportation, telephone, food, etc.

PLPs are holders of a particular expertise: they know the law and the different public institutions responsible for guaranteeing women's rights. This gives them some power to act in cases of rights violations. They put pressure on public institutions and bring to light the violation of these rights.

PLPs take the WIS to the community. Issues involving women's human rights are present in every forum and institution of the community where PLPs participate. Working with educators, students and parents in the schools, with health technicians and users of the health units, with neighbors in local associations, with police and other security officers, with attorneys and court judges, with NGOs members and with civil servants in the local administration offices, these volunteer women successfully work to integrate efforts and services within the community. In doing so, they induce changes both in culture and behavior, thanks to their mobilization and network building<sup>10</sup>.

### Replicating the Experience

After five years of implementing this project in Porto Alegre and in Canoas (another major city in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre), Themis was invited by one of its sponsors, the Ministry of Justice, to replicate the legal literacy programs in other non-governmental organizations from various Brazilian states and with diverse target groups.

The South of Brazil and especially Porto Alegre have very particular conditions for the development of citizenship projects—a specific culture, political environment, economic situation and historical background, boosted by a very responsive population, which facilitates such innovative social experiments. Would this project respond with the same results in regions of different cultures and social conditions? The challenge was posed and Themis accepted it!

In 1998, the organization started a pilot project to transfer its methodology for legal and gender training to other NGOs all around Brazil, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The first step of the project was to contact the NGOs identified and selected by the Ministry of Justice. These groups of NGOs worked in a broad spectrum of human rights promotion, targeting either racial discrimination, homosexual discrimination,

<sup>10</sup> The work developed by the PLPs in the region of Restinga, in Porto Alegre, is very representative of this mobilization. There, PLPs have been piloting a process for establishing a local network that includes the social movements and governmental institutions in a program for the prevention of violence against women and attention to women victims of violence. Such mobilization allows the PLPs to intervene in social programs to reduce poverty and promote social development.

the defense of women's human rights or the defense of the rights of children and adolescents. The first contact with these NGOs was to determine if they had the structural capability to implement the program: the human resources and a minimum infrastructure (offices and communications systems), as well as partnerships with other institutions for trainers and teachers.

Twenty-two NGOs from seven states were selected. Each of them designated a coordinator or staff person to participate in the training seminar organized and held by Themis in Porto Alegre in December 1998. This person would be in charge of coordinating the implementation of the methodology by her/his NGO. Financial resources would be transferred to the partner organization to prepare and carry out a training course for the respective target group/s.

Concurrently to the selection process, background material<sup>11</sup> was elaborated and published, containing the systematization of the PLPs experience, training methodology and conceptual supporting texts. Organizing this material helped us understand the relevance of a project directed at creating and training citizenship agents, while identifying obstacles and solutions in similar projects.

The representatives of each organization attended a ten-day training seminar organized by Themis in December 1998. They represented organizations working against ethnic, racial and homosexual discrimination, and on behalf of children's and adolescents' rights, women's rights and prisoners' rights.

During 1999, Themis coordinated the technical and financial aspects of this project with 22 NGOs from the states of: Pernambuco, Sergipe, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul and Rio Grande do Sul. Each NGO implemented a legal training course in their region and this has been monitored by Themis. The project trained about 700 citizenship agents and involved more than 150 law practitioners, including judges, lawyers and public prosecutors.

This pilot project allowed Themis to broaden its approach to social intervention by sharing experience and learning from NGOs that work against racial discrimination, homosexual discrimination, and on behalf of children and adolescents. This acquired knowledge has been integrated into the curriculum of the new courses for training PLPs in Porto Alegre.

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<sup>11</sup> This material has been organized into a set of three brochures: FONSECA, Cláudia (Org.) *Themis: Gênero e Justiça* (Themis: Gender and Justice); FONSECA, Cláudia (Org.) *Programas de Capacitação Legal* (Legal Training Programs); and BONETTI, Alinne (Org.) *A Experiência das Promotoras Legais Populares* (The Popular Legal Promoters Experience)—Themis: Porto Alegre, 1998.

At the same time, the NGOs that participated in the project gained specialized knowledge in the areas of gender and law, and in training methodology, enhancing their capabilities and giving them a new perspective on promoting human rights. All the NGOs reported that the project stimulated institutional growth and maturity, as well as greater social visibility.

Nevertheless, further evaluation of this project identified some useful lessons regarding replication of the experience. First, the set of NGOs selected was too diverse, both in their objectives and structure. Some had no insertion in the community, limiting the implementation of a project focused on participatory mechanisms for accessing justice. Others had no paid staff or stable volunteer support, so that the people trained by Themis left the project shortly after training.

Second, a single training seminar proved insufficient to guarantee full appropriation of the methodology by the participants. Other meetings would be necessary, during the implementation of the project, to share experiences, clarify doubts and evaluate progress. The monitoring and advisory visits by Themis were not sufficient to address the problems resulting from the diversity of NGO structures and their contextual realities. Some of the partner NGOs, however, have been very creative in adapting techniques and contents to their target group.

Finally, by the end of the project it became clear that we should have included follow-up actions to sustain the network of agents that had been created.

Despite these unforeseen circumstances, in the end, the experience proved to be extremely fruitful: 1) the methodological project for legal literacy was spread to several regions of the country; 2) the participating organizations gained expertise and knowledge on gender and law issues, and also on planning and financial techniques; 3) people within the communities where the partner organizations intervene accessed valuable information on law and the justice system; 4) bringing together different social segments that suffer from discrimination (black people, homosexuals, children, women, prisoners' relatives) allowed Themis to establish a dialogue with them, to start linking their concerns in the context of human rights and improve legal training courses on the defense of their rights; 5) the "citizenship agents" project established the experimental basis for a public policy founded extending the access to justice in the country through participatory mechanisms aimed at social control of the judicial process.

## The Second Replication Experience

The lessons learned from the “Citizen Agents” project led Themis to propose a new replication project, this time especially targeted at women’s rights organizations in a more concentrated geographical area. The state of Rio Grande do Sul was chosen, based on costs and on the availability of monitoring facilities, and also because women’s movements from different cities in the state had asked for PLP courses. After an unsuccessful attempt to get funds from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the “Gender and Justice State Network” project, was sponsored by the Ministry of Justice/PNUD.

A similar process was established for selecting NGOs interested in the implementation of a PLP program in their city, this time managed by Themis and based on criteria solely established by the organization, including evidence of community work and public recognition. Eleven institutions were selected, each from a different city. As in the former project, Themis transferred funds to the organizations to hold the courses in their cities.

This new project included additional training meetings, a final evaluation seminar and ongoing technical assistance to the groups involved. As expected, the focus on gender issues, the geographical proximity and the continuous advice from Themis laid the foundations for a network on gender and justice, stimulated by a sense of identity and sisterhood among the participant organizations and PLPs. The methodology was fully appropriated by NGO coordinators and the coordination group was, in general, very stable and participatory. Efforts to establish local networks were made by almost all the NGOs involved, thus impacting the public policies targeted at women in each city. The partner NGOs were encouraged by Themis to install a WIS—Woman’s Information Service in their cities.

As these activities were coming to the end, Themis was contacted by the IDB about available funds for the “Gender and Justice State Network” project. The news was enthusiastically received and Themis immediately prepared a follow-up project.

This new phase included a training seminar on installing and running WIS units, while strengthening conceptual issues involving gender and violence against women. The project also included a state-wide meeting of the Popular Legal Promoters and an important one-year campaign on women’s rights.

By the end of the project, WIS units were installed in every city in the network and the PLPs were trained for the activities stipulated by the service units in Porto Alegre—defense, prevention and promotion of women’s fundamental rights.

The network partners chose sexual violence against women as the focus of the planned campaign. Their joint efforts provided excellent campaign materials, intensive media work and valuable institutional partners. Activities were held in every city in the network, both spreading the campaign message—that sexual violence is always a violation of rights, even if it occurs inside the home, by a sexual partner or a relative—and putting pressure on the public services responsible for the attention to victims (health, police, social work, courts) for adequate service delivery.

The climax of the “Gender and Justice State Network” project was the first General State Meeting of PLPs in Porto Alegre, in November 2002. This meeting was attended by almost 300 PLPs from every city in the network, by the news media, and by authorities from all levels of government and the judiciary, including the state governor. For the first time, the PLPs could perceive the power they represent as a group and the possibilities developed by this project.

This second stage of the project has now also ended. However, the network partners continue sharing tools, expertise and information, helping each other raise funds to sustain the project and hold new courses for training other PLPs. The Popular Legal Promoters from the different cities have maintained contact since the meeting and established a parallel support network and the partner NGOs are trying to expand their activities to other neighboring cities.

### **Changing Lives and Culture—networking on Women's Rights**

The profile of Popular Legal Promoters is very similar in all the cities involved in this project: women aged 35 to 60, with little schooling or economic resources, many of them victims of domestic violence, with an average of three children. The changes motivated by the training course begin in the PLPs' own lives and extend to other women in their communities who, overcoming violent situations, feel strong enough to participate with the PLPs in the promotion of human rights. Many are women defended by the PLPs, who share their life story in the lectures and workshops promoted by the group.

The changes also extend to the institutions in the PLPs' communities, which work with public servants to provide better service that takes into account women's rights. Working with public institutions (in the areas of health, security, justice, education and social work) also fosters local networks that can contribute to gender equality.

According to Amartya Sen (2000), social development relies strongly on individual capabilities and freedoms. In *Development as Freedom*, he focuses on the need to expand people's capabilities according to the qual-

ity of life they value, affirming that, on one hand, their capabilities can be enhanced by public policy and, on the other hand, the effective participatory use of people's capabilities can influence public policies. In his analysis, Sen stresses that social success must be assessed, primarily, according to the substantive freedoms enjoyed by members of society.

Awareness of one's own rights and knowledge of how to access these rights is a fundamental freedom. Such knowledge constitutes a fundamental element of individuals' quest to effectively participate in social life and influence public policies and social development. However, collective or concerted action is essential for bringing about social changes and improvements. Here, networks play a fundamental role in social development and group empowerment. As Manuel Castells (1999) affirms, in *The Rise of the Network Society*, "the political characteristic and social trends of the 1990s are the creation of policies and social actions focused on primary or given identities, geographically or historically rooted, or newly attributed, into an eager search for meaning and spirituality."

The international women's movement constitutes one of these identity groups, focusing on their shared problems in the search for gender equality. Yet, women's identity is crossed by several others (race, class, age, nationality, religion, tradition etc), leading to the need for new links to build public policies to meet their specific demands. As new groups join in, their social action is also likely to contribute to accomplishing the major goals of the primary identity group. Therefore, strengthening and expanding this network is one of the major goals both of Themis and of all the partner organizations in this network.

Themis is now coordinating a new replication experience targeting the Northern and Northeastern Brazilian states, building on the lessons that the organization has learned from prior experiences, including the establishment and coordination of the Gender and Justice Network. The objective of this new initiative is to expand this network nationally and to set the basis for a national public policy based on the action of the Popular Legal Promoters and the Citizenship Agents. Inspired by a national policy created by the Ministry of Health, which has created "Community Health Agents," Themis, in partnership with other NGOs and some governmental institutions, is now designing a proposal for the creation of "Community Justice Agents." This proposal will build on the experience with the PLPs and Citizenship Agents and on legal training provided by Themis to establish a government program that will employ people from the community to work on three lines of action related to human rights: defense, prevention and promotion, with emphasis on gender equality.



Themis believes that women's conditions will be enhanced and social development will be facilitated by promoting women's access to justice through the guarantee of human rights.

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## CHAPTER 7

# Gender and Transformative Legal Aid

## An Analysis of APIK, the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice

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### Introduction

The Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan, APIK) was established in August 1995 to fight for gender justice in Indonesia, using the concept of 'gender and transformative legal aid'. APIK gives direct legal aid to women who are victims of violence and discrimination, is active in the fields of legal advocacy and training, and conducts research. It has built a strong network with other women's organizations and has set up its own legal self-help groups for female survivors of violence, Mitra APIK. This paper will analyze the impact of APIK, using a triangular model, which includes relations with the State and its institutions, with the wider society and with the women's movement.

### Country Background

Indonesia is an archipelago with 210 million people, 90 percent of whom are Muslim. It is a multiethnic and multicultural country with a patriarchal tradition. The coming of Islam during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the spread of Dutch colonialism from the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century strengthened and institutionalized patriarchal culture, primarily in the legal system. The Dutch legal system was racially and sexually discriminatory,<sup>1</sup> but in several regions, for example, Aceh or the Moluccans, women commanded significant political and economic power by becoming queens or sultanas, commanders, and soldiers. Unfortunately, historiography has contributed to the disappearance of records that contradict current law and the culture of the society.

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<sup>1</sup> During the Dutch colonial government, the population was divided into 3 groups (European, Chinese/Arab and Indigenous). A different law applied to each group, but women were not even considered a subject of Dutch law. For further information on the Indonesian Legal System see Lindsey, Timothy (ed) *Indonesia: Law and Society* (1999).

Indonesian women began organizing formally around modern ideas of nationalism, feminism, and socialism at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Suryocondro, 1984).<sup>2</sup> When Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, the constitution guaranteed every citizen equality under law and government. Nevertheless, Indonesian family law still applies different legal principles to different groups based on religion, customs and gender. Several other laws detrimental to women have also been passed. This can be primarily attributed to a patriarchal interpretation of Islam<sup>3</sup>. Although Indonesia publicly states that it is a secular republic, Islamic groups have been fighting from the start for the introduction of Islamic religious law.

In 1965, a bloody *coup d'état* led to the murder of the six most senior generals. It is still not clear who was behind it, but members of a popular women's organization called Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, Indonesian Women's Movement), known to be progressive and close to the Communist party, was accused of having castrated the generals while dancing naked. The Communist party and the women's organization were declared illegal in 1966. The accusation and prohibition were very effective in suppressing the women's movement, despite the fact that, according to Wieringa (2002), the accusation was simple defamation. Fear of communism and large women's organizations still persists today.

The New Order regime of General Soeharto formulated various policies to control women and to reinforce its own power. One was "State *Ibuism*"<sup>4</sup> (Suryakusuma 1987). Law (particularly the Marriage Law) and institutional policies confirming patriarchal values and gender ideology fortified this concept.<sup>5</sup> This policy brought about the retreat of women's organizations from the political arena. Instead, their activities became

<sup>2</sup> RA. Kartini, the first Indonesian feminist expressed her criticisms against this system in letters that were later published in different languages, including : Letters from Kartini, An Indonesian Feminist, 1900-1904, (1991).

<sup>3</sup> Many employment regulations adopt religious teachings that state that husbands are the breadwinners and the head of the family while the wives are the homemakers; as such, women have no access to credit without the approval of their husbands.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of State *Ibuisme* is the mystification of the concept of the noble housewife and was used by the State to maintain law and order.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of the woman as housekeeper and the man as the head of the family was strengthened through the 1974 Marriage Law. Also in the same year, the government strengthened the *Dharma Wanita* organization (wives of civil servants) and the *PKK* (for village women) with an organizational structure that pegged them to the position of their husbands. Simultaneously, the government issued the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five Duties of Women): as a wife that stands by her husband, a mother that educates her children, a housekeeper, a social worker, and a citizen. Also in the same year, the government applied the KB (Family Planning) program, targeting women groups. For more on political sexuality and reproductive rights of women, see Katjasungkana & Wieringa (2002).

geared toward welfare movements and economic development. The women's organizations were controlled by the government, serving as instruments of mass mobilization for perpetuating state power.

In 1978, the government introduced the concept of a dual role for women in order to support the economic development program and industrialization. This policy encouraged women to fulfill their wifely/motherly duties and enter the world of business and industry. Women in the rural areas were encouraged to migrate to the cities, either within the country or abroad. Having little education, the majority of them work in the informal sector, earn low wages, or go abroad and work as domestic helpers.

In the 80s, the prohibition against political involvement and establishing mass organizations stimulated the emergence of new women's organizations<sup>6</sup> concerned mostly with economic endeavors and social prosperity. Very few were conducting efforts for social and political change. It was only in the 90s that women's organizations began conducting advocacy work on land issues, workers' rights, and human rights in general. The military often intervened violently, arresting, detaining (often without any legal process), and even kidnapping and murdering female activists.

The downfall of the New Order government of Soeharto in 1998, offered great opportunities to non-governmental organizations and the national policy for women's empowerment also underwent many changes.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, when the national government introduced its policy of decentralization and regional autonomy, many provinces wanted to apply more sectarian regulations, based on patriarchal and fundamentalist interpretations of customs and religion, particularly the Islamic religion,<sup>8</sup> backed by groups that often use threats and violence.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the

<sup>6</sup> These are legal bodies for non-profit endeavors, but with a very feudal structure. In 2001, new regulations on such institutions enabled government intervention and control, while making them subject to taxation.

<sup>7</sup> For the first time in the State Guidelines (1999), the concept of gender equality was used in a state document as the basis to promote women's empowerment. The government implemented a strategy of gender mainstreaming in all the development sectors, established the National Commission against Violence against Women, formulated the National Action Plan for Women's Empowerment, the Eradication of Violence against Women etc.

<sup>8</sup> In general, the objective of these regional regulations is to limit the mobility of women by prohibiting women from going out at night unless in the company of a male relative), prohibiting tight-fitting clothes, requiring the use of headgear (jilbab), and excluding women from decision-making processes by allowing only the head of the family to vote in local elections.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in Aceh, several women who were not wearing headgear, were punished with a hair cut. In Tasikmalaya, a woman experienced sexual harassment because she went out at night unaccompanied by a male relative. In Solo and Yogyakarta, a discussion on gays and lesbians was attacked by mobs.

economic crisis that beset Indonesia in 1997 has not yet been resolved and various armed conflicts in the country have made women vulnerable to violence and trafficking.

### Origins, Goals and Objectives of APIK

In response to the discriminative legal system and repressive political system described above, in 1995, seven women lawyers in Jakarta founded the Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan, APIK—Indonesian Women’s Association for Justice.<sup>10</sup> Five of them had worked in the Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Jakarta (Legal Aid Institute), a very popular human rights organization in Indonesia that developed the concept of structural legal assistance.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the Legal Aid Institution, which is not critical of the system, the primary goal of APIK is to create a just legal system in terms of gender relations and other social relations.

In view of the above, Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, one of the founders and the director of APIK, formulated a concept for legal aid called “structural gender legal aid.” Based on feminist legal theory, the concept was expanded to become a tool for social transformation and its name was changed to “gender and transformative legal aid.”<sup>12</sup> Based on this concept, APIK formulated its mission to correct unjust gender relations that are the basis of the legal system and to eradicate structural poverty that imprisons the majority of Indonesian women.

APIK formulated a strategic plan with the following goals:

- To provide legal aid to poor women, particularly women workers (including domestic workers) and women who experience various forms of violence.

<sup>10</sup> APIK is a membership organization. Every member of APIK is obliged to establish a legal aid institution in his or her respective area. At present, APIK has 30 members who are, in general, lawyers.

<sup>11</sup> The basic concept of the structural legal aid is to use legal cases as instruments to obtain the legal resources of the society so that they can use the law to change the legal system and the social system that makes these groups in the society economically and politically poor. For further elaborations on this concept, see Nasution & Lubis in HM. Scoble and LS Wiseberg (eds) *Access to Justice: The Struggle for Human Rights in South East Asia* (1985) and see also D. Lev, *Legal Evolution and Political authority in Indonesia*, Chapter on Legal Aid in Indonesia (The Hague : Kluwer Law International, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> In my work with Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Jakarta (Legal Aid Institute Jakarta), I added the gender perspective to the concept of structural legal aid and called it “Structural Gender Legal Aid”. I am grateful to Dr. Sylvia Tiwon at the University of California at Berkeley, who provided valuable input and criticism to the initial concept formulated in 1994 and later applied by APIK in 1995.

- To offer education and training, particularly for law enforcers: police, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers, including paralegal training.
- To conduct research and review public policies that have a big impact on the position and role of women.
- To document cases, particularly cases of violence against women and other landmark cases, as well as to publish various forms of legal information based on a gender perspective.
- To conduct policy advocacy in order to make the Indonesian legal system more gender responsive.
- To conduct networking with women's organizations and other human rights organizations here and abroad to support advocacy work.
- To strengthen APIK in terms of human resources, finances and infrastructure.

### **A Triangular Model for Analysis**

The focus of the analysis of APIK that we propose in this text is based on the triangular model of analysis of women's empowerment developed by Vargas and Wieringa (1998). This model is preferred over a dialectical model that focuses on the relationship between only two actors, the organization and the community. The triangular model allows for more actors to be analyzed, and focuses on the dynamics between these actors. The three angles of the triangle for APIK are: first, the State and its institutions, laws, parliament, ministries and agencies, including the police; second, society, which is limited to victims of violence, and particularly the women's survivors groups (Mitra APIK); and third, the women's movement, with APIK at the center.

First, we will give an outline of APIK's main activities and then return to the triangle.

### **Program Content**

#### *Legal Assistance Program*

The legal assistance program is the core program of APIK. It is conducted in the form of consultations (direct, via email or by telephone) and litigation (representing and accompanying clients, who are referred to as partners so as not to form a patronage relationship inside and outside the court). This program provides legal services to poor women who have

experienced gender inequality and domestic violence and violence at the work place.

The clients, who are gathered in a forum called APIK partners, are always involved in working on their own cases. They participate directly in formulating their defense strategy and follow the stages of the process. The objective is to enhance their awareness of how the legal system affects their lives. For clients who have an average or high educational attainment, APIK provides only consultations and the draft legal documents needed for their defense, so that clients can solve their own problems. They are expected to share their experiences with the people close to them or to the community around them. Their cases are entry points to identify the oppressive structures encountered by women.

In cases that have an important impact and occur frequently, with the approval of the concerned women, APIK works with the media to reveal significant aspects of unequal gender relations as they relate to other socio-cultural aspects. The purpose is to disclose the insensitivity of society and law enforcers towards the issue of gender inequality.

### *Training and Mass Education Program*

This program consists of training for strategic and special groups, as well as education and outreach for the broad community. The goal is to enhance the gender sensitivity of strategic groups, such as judges, prosecutors, police, lawyers, academicians, and prominent personalities in the society. Survivors and women *majelis taklim* (who are involved in a joint study of the Islamic religion) receive paralegal training. Later, these participants set up paralegal depots to assist the community (community-based legal aid).

Mass education is conducted through the radio, TV, and newspapers/ tabloids. For the urban poor, the focus is on land rights and economic rights, such as the right to work as a becak driver or street vendor. Other topics include marriage law, labor laws and violence against women. The publication division of APIK has prepared info sheets, bulletins, posters and stickers on these issues. APIK members also conduct workshops or seminars, which are usually covered widely by the media.

The training is based on feminist legal theory that links legal theory with gender analysis. Specific topics include international conventions (particularly CEDAW) and (the making of) national laws, as well as violence against women. This training increases the number of lawyers with the skills necessary to provide legal assistance to women, while increasing the number of law enforcers who are aware of gender issues. It also helps recruit members to APIK.



### *Research and Policy Study Program*

The research carried out by APIK provides a deeper understanding of gender stereotyping in state policies and legislation. Research projects have been conducted on: i) the history of the Marriage Law; ii) the response of religion towards gender stereotyping; iii) the impact of gender stereotyping in the Marriage Law on various state policies; iv) the attitude of poor communities towards gender stereotyping; v) discrimination of women in the legal system as observed from CEDAW; vi) articles in the Koran and Hadith that support the principle of gender equality; vii) the position of women under Islamic Law in Indonesia; viii) base line research on VAW; ix) impact of gender stereotyping on the working conditions of low-income women; and x) an Alternative Report on the Implementation of CEDAW in Indonesia (1998).

APIK has also analyzed various public policies prepared by the government and has formulated position papers on these policies and has drafted legislation on domestic violence.

### *Publication and Documentation*

APIK provides legal information to the public and specific target groups through its library, a website, books and bulletins.

### *Strengthening Networks*

APIK is aware that changing the legal system means a direct confrontation with patriarchal moral and religious powers. The growth of fundamentalism is a problem that has to be confronted by all groups interested in reform. APIK has established three major forms of strategic cooperation that fall within the 'movement' angle of the triangle of women's empowerment.

First, APIK cooperates with its clients and other partner organizations. APIK has established a national network, the Women's Vow (Kaulan Perempuan) to support the laws on Domestic Violence and Criminal Law, and the Network for the Elimination of Violence for survivors who became APIK clients. APIK has also sought cooperation with Islamic organizations.

Second, APIK has established a national network for feminist legal activities, both nationally and abroad. At present, there are ten independent legal assistance institutions using the APIK name in ten cities, plus three others that do not use the APIK name. Internationally, APIK cooperates mainly with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development—APWLD (based in Thailand), the Women, Law and Development International—WL&DI (based in Washington, D.C.), the

Women's Legal Bureau, Inc. (Philippines), and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women—CATW (New York and Philippines).

Third, APIK cooperates closely with the Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi (KPI, Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy), the first large women's organization to be consolidated after the downfall of President Soeharto in May 1998. It is a national organization interested in various economic and social cultural groups. KPI aims to increase the political representation and participation of women. At the national level, KPI conducted several interventions on various bills and proposed government policies, including the Amendment of the Constitution, the Political Party Law and the Election Law. Its proposal to have a 30 percent quota for women among candidates for the national parliament was approved. APIK has provided KPI with various forms of assistance since its inception.

### Legislative Advocacy: Examples

During its first two years, 65 percent of APIK's cases involved domestic violence, including two cases in which the wife murdered her husband because she suffered continuous violence. From these cases, we learned that victims generally do not want to report their cases to the police for several reasons: religious concerns (the right of the husband to beat his wife to educate her); family honor (they are embarrassed to disclose their private secrets and deal with the police); the career and job of the husband is at stake; economic dependence, particularly in relation to children; they are not aware that domestic violence is a crime; and finally, experience has demonstrated that reporting the case to the police will only make the husband/perpetrator commit the violence more often.

The victims of domestic violence are not only wives, children or parents, as defined in article 356 of the Criminal Code<sup>13</sup>. They include housemaids, people who live together either because of marriage (legal or not) or blood relations, and those who have other intimate relationships, including homosexuals. Although there is a regulation that punishes the perpetrators of domestic violence, it is not effective. Both the Marriage Law and the wider society consider the husband the head of the family who should be respected. Therefore, reporting the husband to the police can be interpreted as challenging the position of the husband as stipulated by the

<sup>13</sup> Article 351 of the Penal Code states that the penalty stipulated in article 351, 353 and 355 of the Penal Code (on torture and maltreatment) can be increased by one third if the crime is against the mother, father (based on legal marriage) wife or children of the guilty party.

Law and religious teachings. Also, the Criminal Code only defines physical violence; it does not include psychological violence. What is more, there are no mechanisms to protect the victims, either before, after or during the court case, or any rehabilitation or compensation for the victim.

Law enforcers (police, prosecutors, judges and lawyers) as well as marriage counselors, informal leaders, and professionals (doctors, paramedics, psychologists, etc.) generally consider the issue of domestic violence a private issue in which nobody should interfere. They usually believe that violence is the fault of the victim herself because she did not obey her husband or did not perform her duties as a good wife and housekeeper. These attitudes make it difficult to handle cases of domestic violence, as do expensive legal procedures and corrupt bureaucracy.

The following example of APIK's dealings with domestic violence illustrates some of the interactions among the three angles of the triangle: the women's movement, civil society and the State.

- **Legal Aid.** APIK provides legal assistance to victims both within and outside the court (for example, deciding on the support that the husband should provide while the case is being tried in court). If the victim requires it, APIK takes her to a crisis center to obtain psychological/counseling.
- **Campaign and public education.** APIK conducted a campaign using certain cases, including that of the wife who murdered her husband, to indicate the failure of the legal system and other social institutions in responding to domestic violence. Indonesian society holds harmony in the family and the duties of women in high esteem and APIK made use of this by saying that domestic violence not only violates women's rights, but also endangers other structures in society; also development will be undermined because the government incurs huge social and economic costs. In cooperation with radio stations in 17 cities throughout Indonesia, the complaints of victims were presented on-air or through letters, revealing that domestic violence occurs in all social classes and all over Indonesia with almost the same pattern. This was accompanied by an information campaign to make the public realize that domestic violence is a crime.
- **Consultative meetings with stakeholders and strengthening the network.** APIK held a series of workshops on the "Response of Religion and Law to Domestic Violence," with law enforcers, representatives of all religions, and victims/survivors. This led to the Department of Religion publishing a booklet on domestic violence.

- **Conducting research and policy studies.** On the basis of a comparative study of national laws against domestic violence and various scholarly studies on the topic, APIK prepared an academic draft together with feminists in the Faculty of Law. The draft promoted women's empowerment through the elimination of all social cultural practices that allow violence against women, with simultaneous concern for family harmony.<sup>14</sup>
- **National Consultancy.** The draft was then presented to the wider society in various provinces, in cooperation with local NGOs, universities and members of DPR.
- **Lobbying parliament and government.** APIK lobbied Parliament (DPR) and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and invited the two institutions to discuss the draft together. For almost a year, National Parliament held a weekly discussion with APIK and its network. The National Commission against Violence against Women of the DPR invited experts from several countries. Law enforcement authorities were lobbied and received training on how to handle cases of violence against women. At present, the government is reviewing this draft<sup>15</sup>.

## Output

An increasing number of women are asking for legal assistance from APIK. Since its inception and up to 2002, APIK has dealt with 1,628 cases, but more people have been assisted because many cases are handled collectively, including up to thousands of workers.

More than half of the cases concern domestic issues: divorce, inheritance, conjugal property, and child custody, as well as domestic violence, the main reasons for which are economic support, polygamy, and infidelity. Other cases involve rape or sexual harassment, including violence against housemaids, children and workers. APIK is also involved in cases that affect poor people, such as the seizure of lands and the prohibition of pedicabs (becaks)<sup>16</sup> in Jakarta.

<sup>14</sup> This draft is based on equal access for men and women, active participation of society, the protection of victims, rehabilitation for perpetrators and victims, and compensation for victims.

<sup>15</sup> DPR adopted the APIK concept of domestic violence: that violence that occurs in families related through marriage (both recorded and not recorded) and blood relations, at work and in other intimate relationships. Meanwhile, the government limited domestic violence to recorded (legal) marriages and blood relations.

<sup>16</sup> The becak is a very important form of transportation, particularly for women and children.

The citizen's lawsuit is a new procedure created by APIK and LBH Jakarta. The citizen's lawsuit was used against the President due to neglect of migrant workers deported by the government of Malaysia. APIK, together with the becak drivers filed a class action in which the drivers won their case against the Governor of Jakarta, who wanted to eliminate the becak from the city.

At present, APIK has provided training to approximately 1,000 people from the strategic groups mentioned above, both through training conducted by APIK itself and training provided by other organizations and prepared by APIK. In six years, ten studies have been produced that will continue to be used to advocate changes in various policies that discriminate against women and that are based on gender stereotyping.

The networking described above has put APIK on the front line of the struggle for women's empowerment. Its success hinges on a vision and mission shared with its collaborating partners.

### Obstacles

APIK has experienced many obstacles in implementing its mission. Most relate to the cultural, political, social and religious conditions in Indonesia.

A major internal problem is the availability of human resources. In general, new staff members are recent graduates and their education is still gender-biased. Because funds are available only for programs, staff training can only be provided on-the-job, under the supervision of senior APIK staff. This is difficult because there are not very many senior staff members. Although APIK is also intended to be a training ground for lawyers, uncertainty about funding prevents APIK from retaining expert or senior staff, primarily because the facilities and honoraria cannot compare with working for a company or opening a law office.

Donor dependency also means that programs cannot be implemented in a sustainable manner. Fighting all forms of discrimination, particularly the ones legitimized by religion and tradition, while at the same time being forced to conduct fundraising activities, disrupts concentration and costs considerable effort, sometimes making it impossible for the organization to reach its objectives.

There are multiple obstacles confronted by the survivors who rely on community-based legal assistance. In the first place, their husbands often divorce them after violence is reported. Divorce means not only a social stigma, but also an economic burden. Second, domestic chores often prevent women from participating in activities outside their homes. Third, the separation of private and public spheres is still very strong. Assistance

given by a fellow woman in the community could be considered an unwelcome intervention in private affairs. Fourth, financial constraints may prevent women from participating in community activities. Fifth, many husbands do not allow their wives to participate in APIK activities. Husbands may even complain to their bosses, who may call the wives to discourage them from participating. This actually occurred in the training of an Islamic women's study group. Sixth, most APIK clients are very poor and often change residence, making it difficult to organize them.

### Lessons Learned

If we apply the triangular model of analysis of women's empowerment to the work of APIK described above, some interesting dynamics become apparent. A brief, two-step analysis will be presented here. First, each angle of the triangle will be discussed in relation to the work of APIK. Second, the dynamics between these actors will be analyzed.

#### *The Actors: The Three Angles of the Triangle*

The first angle considered here is that of the State: the lawmaking bodies including the national parliament (DPR) and the Senate (MPR), the various ministries and the state apparatus such as the military and the police.

APIK confronts several difficulties with government bureaucracy: First, there are few femocrats (feminist bureaucrats) who can push for the implementation of gender-equitable processes and procedures. Second, there is very little coordination and cooperation among the various ministries. Also, the military has a bad record of human rights violations, including acts of sexual violence against women.

APIK has been successful in revealing the patriarchal structure of the Indonesian legal system and this, in turn, has motivated the government to conduct gender mainstreaming in the field of law. APIK activists are often asked to help in this work and to provide training in various legal institutions and sectors. APIK and KPI always participate in teams that draft proposals for laws and state policies such as the Anti-Rape Law, the National Action Plan for the Empowerment of Women, the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the National Action Plan against the Trafficking of Women and Children. Three founders of APIK have been members of the Parliament/People's Consultative Assembly since 1999.

The second angle corresponds to the women's movement in Indonesia, of which APIK forms a part. Because, as discussed earlier, APIK is continuously under-funded, it has a small, young staff; the lack of senior lawyers

is felt acutely. Also, Indonesia is very much an oral society. Written information must often be supplemented with verbal communication. This adds to the workload.

An evaluation of APIK programs (Tiwon, 2002) concluded that they have had a major impact on the women's movement in Indonesia. APIK has inspired other organizations to conduct similar activities or to set up new units offering legal aid activities with a gender perspective.

The third angle corresponds to society at large. APIK initially focused on women workers, then shifted to issues of violence against women, actively advocating legal changes in this area. This was apparent in APIK's response to the economic crisis of 1997, the mass rapes in May 1998, and the organization's involvement in the issue of the condition of women in conflictive areas and the increasing trafficking of women and children. APIK also highlighted the growing pressure on women to submit to the increasingly patriarchal interpretation of Islam and the revival of customs that oppress women. The organization's work in these areas has gained it the support of the wider society.

### *The Dynamics: The Construction and Movement of the Triangle*

The second step in applying the model of the triangle of women's empowerment to the work of APIK is to analyze the dynamics among the actors, specifically, between the women's movement, including APIK, and the State, and between APIK and the women's movement.

As for the former, there have been some successes, such as drafting and lobbying for a law on domestic violence. Good relations with the media have helped. Since the beginning of the Reformation period (1998), the media has played a major role in mobilizing public opinion for democracy and educating the public.

Some successes in changing repressive laws into laws that aim to protect women have already been discussed above, but the reverse is also happening. Of particular concern is the draft revision of the Criminal Code, which is currently under discussion. The proposed revisions strengthen some of the repressive legal regulations of the Dutch period, and further criminalize abortion and various forms of sexual behavior, such as adultery, living together out of wedlock, oral and anal sex, sodomy and homosexuality. Worrying trends in the relationship between civil society and the State, which have a bearing on gender relations, include the growing influence of the military, rising levels of corruption, the growing influence of conservative religious groups, particularly Islamic fundamentalism, and the strengthening of repressive regulations of customary law in relation to the process of regional autonomy.

We can conclude that APIK's strategy has been effective in the process of changing various laws and policies to include women's perspective. However, APIK's tasks are limited by the very few people in the government and in DPR who have a gender perspective and the weak coordination of the departments that are responsible for the process of changing laws.

The second aspect of the dynamics operating between the various angles of the triangle is the relationship between APIK and the wider society. The legal aid program implemented by APIK is a dynamic means of communication with its constituents. It is a participatory process that introduces women to the rigid legal system and the process of law-making. APIK clients realize how the legal system discriminates against women and this awareness has encouraged APIK to cooperate with other organizations that work within the political system to increase the participation and political representation of women in decision-making processes.

APIK has successfully penetrated the rigid separation of the domestic and public arenas. The sphere of the family and household is now open to plans for better legal protection for the personal relations within it: marriage, blood relations, work relations, other social or intimate relationships.

An interesting example of cooperation between MITRA APIK and KPI, and the impact this can have on the wider society, was in 2001, when the regional parliament of the province of West Sumatra issued a draft regional regulation which, among other things, prohibited women from wearing tight-fitting clothes or going out at night, unless accompanied by a male relative. It also defined homosexuality and prostitution as criminal activities. In response, APIK West Sumatra conducted a gender analysis on the draft, wrote a column in the local newspaper and held a talk show on the radio. The objective of these activities was to invite the wider society, particularly women, to reject the proposed regulation because it contradicts CEDAW and the Constitution.

Based on the information given by APIK West Sumatra, APIK Jakarta sent a protest letter to the parliament of West Sumatra. At the national level, KPI also sent a protest letter that received the wide attention of the mass media, threatening to report the government to the CEDAW Committee if it did not cancel the draft. Before issuing a press statement and writing a letter to the regional parliament, KPI was invited by a radio station to participate in a talk show with the member of parliament who headed the team drafting the regulation. In the dialogue, KPI vehemently expressed its objection to the draft and said that parliament was taking a very simplistic attitude toward the issue of prostitution and that the draft



discriminated against women based on gender and class. The prohibition against going out at night, aside from discriminating against women, also removed the economic right of poor women to work at night, both in entertainment places and in the market as vendors or storeowners. APIK West Sumatra worked together with KPI West Sumatra and with other women organizations and conducted a hearing with parliament to reject the draft. During this hearing the women's wing of the biggest Islamic mass organization actually supported the proposed draft regulation with the argument that it is in accordance with the teaching of Islam. But because of the strong pressure from APIK and KPI, ratification of the draft was eventually cancelled.

Another lesson learned is that efforts to strengthen and develop APIK should become a program that is equally important as its other programs. However, the organization's inability to curb its dependency on foreign funds is a problem that could imperil its continuity.

### Conclusions

We can conclude that APIK's interventions can be most effective if there is synergy between the wider women's movement, the media, the grass-roots women's groups and politicians. The two national legislative bodies are the most receptive to APIK's efforts, while the lack of femocrats and the fragmentation of the ministries make changes at that level more difficult. The police have been more receptive to APIK's work than the military so far. APIK and the KPI also attempt to work together with liberal Muslim groups to help stem the tide of rising fundamentalism. Despite difficult circumstances, with the help of the media, the level of gender consciousness in society is rising, although repression against feminism is also growing.

The triangle discussed above works most effectively if all its corners strengthen themselves internally and move together as forcefully as possible to work towards greater gender justice.

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# PART 3

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*Women's Leadership and Political Participation*

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## CHAPTER 8

# Using Cinema to Pave Women's Way to Empowerment in Argentina

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### Introduction

This text describes an experience carried out by the Institute for Gender, Law and Development, which promotes equality among men and women in Argentina. The experience was centered around the idea of devising a novel, effective and motivating methodology for gender awareness-building to be used as a tool to promote women's empowerment and participation in public spheres. Specifically, it used cinema as a powerful tool to provoke dialogue and learning. The ultimate goal of this initiative was to contribute to the struggle with the stark reality of women's unequal participation in decision-making processes in economic and political spheres.

### Brief Country Background: Argentina

Argentina gained its independence from Spain in 1810. The Constitution of 1853 established a federation in which power was held mainly by one province, Buenos Aires. Immigration (mainly Italian and Spanish) was encouraged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on the premise that the arrival of white, educated Europeans would spread their progressive ideas among our population of mainly Creole, indigenous and mixed-race people. This was accompanied by an economic model based on agricultural exports that continues to be important today, after years of unfavorable agricultural policies.

Argentina's history in the twentieth century was not the exception to the rule in Latin America. During the 1960s and 70s, Argentina was ruled by military dictatorships. Approximately 30,000 people "disappeared" at the hands of the military regime. This era squashed citizens' rights and initiatives to participate in political decision-making.

After a great struggle, democracy returned to Argentina in 1983. Citizens began to recognize their rights and to organize and mobilize. Participation in democracy is increasing today, although this phenomenon is a response to the dire needs of the Argentine people, a consequence of the successive financial and economic crises suffered by the country, including hyperin-



flation and measures to expropriate bank deposits (2001–2002). On the verge of institutional anarchy, the country had five different presidents in ten days (December 2001–January 2002). Political parties and governments lost their legitimacy and credibility due to prevailing corruption.

Argentina has over 36 million people (2001 census) in 25 jurisdictions: 24 provinces and an autonomous city (Buenos Aires) with very low annual population growth. The country is the third largest in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico.

Argentina has been called “a country of poor companies and rich businessmen.” The economy is based on an agricultural export model; in the last fiscal year, enough food was exported for 300 million people in other parts of the world. Ironically, however, 57 percent of Argentina’s total population lives below the official poverty line. 73 percent of these are children under 14 years of age. (INDEC, 2002).

An average Argentine woman’s life expectancy at birth is 77 years, while for men it is 70 years. Health services are free and universal. The quality of these services is good, but it has started to deteriorate due to financial crisis.

Historically, Argentina has prided itself on the quality of its education, which has always been equivalent to that of developed countries, although the quality of public education is highly questioned nowadays.

According to the National Institute for Census and Statistics, in 1998–1999, 13.2 percent of the population was unemployed and 13.7 percent was underemployed, directly affecting 3.5 million people. In 2001–2002, the unemployment situation worsened, discouraging job seekers. This “hidden unemployment” increases structural poverty.

To face this situation, women have increasingly entered the labor force, frequently to replace income earned by men. Approximately 40 percent of women over the age of 15 are economically active. (Zurutuza, 2003) Female unemployment stands at 20.3 percent, compared to 15.7 percent for men. Women with low qualifications work in domestic service, street vending, the food industry, unskilled positions in the health sector and, of course, prostitution. Qualified women workers in Argentina earn 38.5 percent less than men for a job of the same value.<sup>1</sup>

Women’s political participation has increased since 1991, when the Quota Law was passed, establishing compulsory 30 percent female participation on the ballot list. In the House of Representatives, women continue to follow traditional lines, represented mostly on the social and family commissions.

<sup>1</sup> Estimates by the General Department of Women Issues, Autonomous Government, Buenos Aires).

### **Project: The Republic of Women. The Cinema Gives Us Clues.**

The Institute for Gender, Law and Development is a non-governmental organization whose objectives include the improvement of the social and judicial conditions of girls and women, gender equality, the full exercise of citizenship, and respect for human rights. Although the Institute works primarily in the city of Rosario, its work has a broader scope since it collaborates with other organizations from Argentina and Latin America.

The Institute proposed the cinema project to promote women's participation in politics, union activity and social development and to get them involved in decision-making. It sought to reflect critically and creatively on women's participation in diverse dimensions of public life and generate a participatory culture. The experience was based on a dialectical theory of knowledge that considers the enabling quality of an educational process as its most important characteristic.

Cinema is a medium that can represent diverse dimensions of reality. Its instant, concrete images are perceived as almost real by the audience, who feel completely involved in the situation. Cinema bridges space and time, facilitating reflection on complex women's issues that are difficult to express in words.

Cinema was chosen as a tool also because it is a mass medium that enters people's daily lives and influences popular culture. Giroux (1996) proposes "a pedagogy of representation which focuses on demystifying the representation act and process by revealing the ways in which meaning is produced in the framework of power relations that conceive identities through history, social conventions and the ways of ethical treatments...". Cinema provides a means to reflect on female representation so that after a constructive debate we can construct alternative representations and realities with which women can identify.

In this framework, our methodology focused on:

- starting from reality—from what each person knows, lives and feels;
- using the stimulus provided by film to develop a theory of this practice and, together with the participants, locate the individual in his or her collective, social, historical, and structural context; and
- creating, as a result of this process, transformations and improvements in practice.

The Institute's team held 30 film-debate sessions, attended by men and women from different political parties, unions, and social groups. The films were viewed and debated in several neighborhoods and business

organizations, mostly in urban areas. To reach the other provinces of our country, we worked with local women's groups and organizations.

The team traveled to different sites with a film projector, a screen and the selected commercial films, which narrated stories about violence and discrimination by social class, gender, race or religion. Each film was proposed and agreed to by each group. Some groups going through a difficult time needed an activity that would unite them.

The team members would present our organization, our proposal and a brief summary of the film to be projected. We either projected the film first and then introduced the issues presented in the film, or vice versa. The team invited the participants to watch the film from a gender perspective, emphasizing gender relationships, the different representations of women, how these women conditioned their development in different domains, women's capacities and attitudes to produce changes, and women's relationship with power.

The debate would usually start with questions like, "What did you feel when you saw the film?" or "Did you identify with the scenes or the characters?" These questions bridged the gap between fiction and reality, so that women could speak about their own problems, identify them as gender-related problems, share them and try to work out plausible solutions. This last goal called for shared effort, and with certain groups it did not always produce results because of limited time. Nevertheless, with the groups we met more than once, the exchange of ideas proved to be quite enriching, leading to deep analysis. These fruitful experiences attracted publicity by word of mouth and other organizations contacted us for a film debate session.

The last stage involved an individual anonymous survey completed by each participant at the end of each session. This allowed us to collect data about the women's lives and experiences. These surveys were not aimed only at women, but the participants were mostly women. All debates were filmed.

The following issues were put forth during the debates:

- the false dichotomy between the public and the private spheres;
- women's need to be heard;
- their children's views;
- questioning and critical analysis of the culturally upheld notion of power;
- a lack of confidence related to low levels of education;



- the dual responsibility felt by women in decision-making positions and the higher expectations placed on women politicians in comparison to their male counterparts;
- women's choice to participate in community organizations and action;
- whether the private sphere, its problems and concerns are secondary to the public sphere in the formulation of policies;
- women as subjects of their own wishes and protagonists of their own decisions;
- women's participation in groups and organizations, as a strategy for gender strengthening; overcoming barriers related to a lack of self-esteem;
- the importance of women's own experiences as knowledge;
- the strategic value of young girls' observing the example of participative mothers;
- women's general resistance to politics. However, as the participants became more involved in the debate and the reasons for women's participation in politics were analyzed, many women admitted that they would like to evolve in that field.
- gender solidarity as an indispensable input to empowerment;
- women's capacity to carry out and sustain social leadership;
- the rescue and recognition of the tradition of participation that women have built and taken part in throughout Argentine history.
- whether it is possible or not to reconcile professional success, motherhood and the couple;
- men and their "sacrifices".

### Women's Views

In this section, we will examine three groups of women and the ways they organize themselves, their vicissitudes, and especially the paths they take to improve their lives and their communities' living conditions: i) those who participate in associations or neighborhood groups; ii) those who are active in politics; and iii) women in professional or business organizations.

All three groups of women seem to be affected by:

- high demands on their time, attributable to their multiple roles. Time constraints condition their participation in diverse domains.

- high demands imposed on them, especially on those who participate in economic and political domains—demands based on very particular parameters of appearance, marital status, and so on.
- biological factors, such as motherhood, that become barriers due to the shortage of services such as nurseries, which would allow women more peace of mind and independence. The present situation requires exclusive allegiance to the motherly role, forcing women to stop working for a period or delay career advancement.

### *Women in Associations or Neighborhood Groups*

These women usually got together and organized in response to the needs of their communities. The intention was always the same: to improve their quality of life (diet, health, security). It is important, of course, to emphasize that for poor women quality of life means simply trying to meet basic needs. Poor or marginalized women are generally mobilized by their concern for others. However, as time goes by they begin to take more care of themselves, and their own needs and concerns.

One woman from the non-governmental organization “Lola Mora” indicated that to bring women together when they first started was a very exacting task. They received answers such as “I don’t know if I’ll be able to do it,” or “I don’t know if I’ll be up to something like that.” However, she said that “as your family’s mind starts changing, your neighbour’s mind starts changing, you get more and more accepted, and those people who at the beginning were horrified at the idea later come to you for advice on how to change things in their neighbourhood.”

Another woman comments that she joined a community organization motivated by her interest in improving her community’s living conditions. They started by setting up a community-dining hall during the looting period.<sup>2</sup> She remarks that the community-dining hall has opened many doors and they have achieved many things they never imagined they would.

The presence of a woman leader is perceived to be fundamental in this kind of group. She is the pillar on which the other members rely.

Women’s organizations or neighborhood groups based on solidarity flourish as the need to help and to be helped motivates women to continue their efforts. Shared difficulties, feelings of sympathy and a

<sup>2</sup> Lootings in Argentina have become a way of obtaining food during crisis periods, since the lack of food forces the poor to break into shops and loot.

growing identification with the group itself transform this space as time goes by. The group becomes a space for autonomous learning and even research on the gender perspective. Even when some of these women are illiterate, sooner or later the discrimination and/or inequality they suffer every day, both in the public and in the private spheres, emerges as a problem.

It is precisely this reality that makes the group a true resource that strengthens and helps its members in their search for other resources that contribute to their growth and well-being. These resources may simply be someone who listens to them, so that they can express their feelings and wants, opening the way to self-determination, autonomy, independence and self confidence. However, the chief obstacle these women face on their road to empowerment is the sustainability of the group. Resources at their disposal include applying for grants; setting up or maintaining community dining halls; starting sewing bees; manufacturing clothes and organizing recreational events for their neighborhoods, like theater and street music.

According to the National Centre of Community Organizations (Cenoc), based on a sample of 2,912 organizations in Argentina, 92 percent of human resources (107,408 persons) are volunteers. Of these, 73 percent are women. Of course, their vital contribution is under-valued in relation to the contribution of the "productive labor force".

### *Women in Politics*

Women active in politics in Argentina have not yet formed a political party that unites them. They have joined the traditional political parties, making it difficult for them to prioritize gender demands and vindications.

On the other hand, women in the traditional parties have to deal with feelings of alienation, as they do not belong to what seems to be the political groups' interests: production, macroeconomy, alliances. Meanwhile, women's interests are left invisible, since women have been historically associated with the private sphere (Villar Márquez, 1994 ).

Some women consider politics to be filthy; they do not like the political environment. This amounts to saying that they would seek a new road into politics, without following or adapting masculine standards.

Another aspect of women's political careers is the influence their parents' political activity has had on them; either their mother's or father's. The existence of a role model in their families and their parents' involvement in politics seem to enable these women to take their first political steps.

The debating process raised a question that addresses the pivotal issue of organization: Why is it that movements as strong and persistent as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, formed exclusively by women, have not become political parties? For Cheresky (1996), there is a clear-cut answer in the loss of credibility and legitimacy that political parties (in general) have suffered in Argentina. As a matter of fact, many participants believe that for the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo to become involved in traditional politics would be a shady deal, as it would "sell out" or misrepresent the movement's objectives. Accordingly, several participants in the debates concluded that "social leadership is easier for women than political leadership."

Women involved in politics share a belief: "in order to become political leaders, we need the support of other women, too." A similar notion is that "in order to achieve empowerment, it is necessary to achieve solidarity and respect, especially gender solidarity." Women groups worked together successfully, for instance, in favor of the Quota Law. However, not all women who reach positions of power support those who are trying to enter the political arena or have a gender perspective or even gender awareness.

### *Professional and Business Women's Organizations*

The professional and business women's organizations we have contacted seemed to be completely guided by their gender identity, as indicated by their names: the Commission of Professional Women of the Council of Professionals of Economic Sciences, and the Commission of Women in Small and Medium-sized Businesses of the Business Association of Rosario.

In the first of these commissions, the number of members has increased as a result of women's initiatives and training. Before "...women didn't let themselves get involved for fear of making mistakes," one participant commented. One woman asserts that although women constitute 52 percent of the Council, they feel a permanent hostility from most men. Many men's opinion is that by forming this commission, women discriminate against males. According to the women, the commission is highly productive, but it has proved difficult to increase the number of female participants.. The erroneous perception that the organization fosters hostility towards males keeps some women away. Others do not seem to understand what the commission works for.

Women also encounter differences in salaries and chances for promotion. In Argentina, the most noticeable gender difference is among qualified professionals, where women earn 65 percent of what men earn (Woman's Undersecretary Office, 1998). Research in the public sector has

shown that women are much younger and more qualified than their male colleagues, but are less represented in decision-making and management positions. Women tend to be in dead-end jobs, have lower salaries and fewer chances of participating in management training.

In the debates on this issue, controversy arose as to whether this is the result of discrimination or of self-selection. Women's opinions reveal a combination of situations, but self-selection appears as a very strong factor, a consequence of an educational and cultural process with discriminatory characteristics. Women are content with less demanding positions that allow them to fulfill their multiple economic and domestic roles (Correia, 1999). At the same time, despite high levels of training, women shy away from the market's demand for competitiveness, since they have been brought up in a society that represses this in women and fosters it in men.

Professionals and businesswomen have indicated that the opportunity to start their own business would provide them with independence, an income and perhaps a balance between their professional and personal life. Even if some progress has been achieved in this sense, it is still far from what is desirable. For example, to obtain a loan to establish a small or medium-sized enterprise, barriers such as guarantees and documentation are usually more rigid for women. All these are still challenges remaining on the State's agenda, and of course, men and women should commit themselves to meeting them.

### **Women and Their Multiple Roles**

A matter that comes up in all debates is the dilemma that women face when it comes to combining their multiple roles, in a culture that produces and reproduces roles and stereotypes according to sex.

A study by Wainerman (1998) of 35 couples with average and high-average income in the city of Buenos Aires shows that in spite of the changes produced in the labor force, the division of labor at home has changed little. While men have taken on a more active role in bringing up the children and doing the housework, women are still burdened with the responsibility for cooking, laundering, ironing and cleaning, while men assume more occasional jobs, such as domestic repairs or car maintenance.

The need to promote changes in the relationship of couples is compelling. These include: motherhood, women's exit from paid work; work inside and outside the home; double and triple work shifts; women's professional development inside the couple; children's upbringing and education; and the care of ill and old people in the family. In relation to the exchange of

roles between men and women, Anderson (1998) suggests “the question is to establish exchanges that express justice in spite of the inherent conflicts between the genders—distinguished by Sen- and the different portfolios of assets and talents each gender has and contributes.”

During the Institute’s debates, several women aired similar views. Many said their husbands tried to prevent them from attending the meetings. A member of the Housekeepers Union claimed that their husbands value housework—a job without payment—only when they have to do it themselves. Another woman commented that the arguments she had with her husband when she started attending the group later led to divorce. A third woman commented that her husband expected her to be his maid. After five years of pondering on the conflict, “I re-defined my life and I’m happy that I did,” she said. She feels now great satisfaction in relation to her children, because “a man who knows how to cook and sew a button just as well as a woman knows how to defend her place in society.”

### Reflections on the Survey

The following observations are based on the answers to the surveys conducted among the women participants in the film-debate sessions:

- Most women work outside the home as well as inside; many women work double shifts.
- There have been few advances in the redistribution of housework. The household continues to be the domain of women. The extra work in the private sphere is one of the chief barriers to women’s access to the public sphere.
- Women have increased their number of paid working hours, but in most cases this does not mean better pay for the job done.
- Women’s participation in public spheres is limited by caring for others, organizing family life and doing household chores, as well as by where they live. In rural areas, more hours are dedicated to housework than to paid work.
- Women’s socio-economic level and education condition their participation.
- Women have not been educated for politics or power. They usually say they are not interested and they have not been given the opportunity to participate. The women who have done so confront difficul-

ties and obstacles at home, in their communities, with men in their own political parties, union, workplace or social sector, and with other women.

- The mass media in Argentina, as well as educational institutions, foster gender stereotypes and behavior that condition the future development of women and of the relationships between men and women.
- Women value sensitivity to the issue of gender equality, in both men and women.

### Lessons Learned

We have formulated some basic questions related to women's participation in the public spheres of politics and economic activity. The suggested responses have been taken from reflections on the film and the ensuing debates.

*Is the reality of women's participation in politics and unions seen from an individual or a collective perspective? Does it include a gender perspective?*

- Women discover discrimination or inequality when they reflect on their experiences and the obstacles and problems they face when they want access to power. Women tend to seek unity and solidarity with other women and opportunities for training. Only then can a mature view of reality with a gender perspective develop.
- Female politicians and union members have been seen as "partners" or "associates", but almost never as true protagonists in elections, even after having participated actively in the campaigns. With two exceptions, the women who participated in our groups have never been on top of the lists on the ballot.
- The dominant view of politics among women emerges from social, inclusive concerns that have to do with improving living conditions for everyone.
- In difficult or critical situations, women offer their cooperation unconditionally, but when things return to normal, they are left to retreat to their private roles.
- Commitment and political activity in rural areas arise from the need to improve general living conditions, to achieve concrete objectives, such as improved infrastructure and job creation.

***Why do women participate in social movements but not take active part in politics and unions?***

- In general, political parties are not attractive to women. All women politicians in the province of Tucumán who participated in the sessions and who belonged to a party or union said they benefited more from experiences that included various parties or unions than from their activities within their own party or union.
- Women feel more comfortable in the dynamics of social movements than in those of political parties. Political participation implies responsibility that leads to conflicts in the private sphere.

***What obstacles do women encounter in political and/or union participation? What should this participation be like?***

- Political participation is based on hierarchical, authoritarian principles. Women would prefer more collective ways of carrying out political activity.
- Women want to participate in politics and/or unions mostly because of problems in their daily lives, their quality of life, and social services. They are less willing to use eloquent speeches or great image campaigns to win votes.
- The history of women's political participation must be recovered, to be used as a reference and model for the present..
- Women politicians and unionists are watched more for their mistakes than their successes.
- Women continue to dedicate their time predominantly to the private sphere. Assuming a leading role in the public sphere means a redistribution of time and responsibilities.
- In general, there is a rather negative view of political and/or union activity.

**Possible Strategies That Would Foster Women's Empowerment**

- Capitalize creatively on women's resourcefulness in confronting daily problems.
- Encourage women to make their absence felt by discontinuing tasks that are culturally expected of them, making others aware of the importance and value of what women demand.



- Encourage women to promote education that favors and promotes self-esteem and the capacity to lead not only social processes, but also political and economic ones. The mechanism could be first to influence the design of public policies and then to fight from the different sectors in which we work.
- Increase the number of women who set up their own businesses as a way to balance their personal lives and their professional development.
- Use gender identity as an enabling and driving tool for the emergence of women's organizations.
- Use gender solidarity as a key element and an enabling instrument for a participatory future, professional development, and women's access to decision-making positions.
- Use women's capacity to create and discover new resources to promote women's issues.
- Consider promoting and stimulating responsible procreation.

### Reflections on the Workshop

The harsh reality of Argentina and the importance of encouraging universal participation, particularly by women, to construct a participative democracy, makes it essential to build a new "social contract". This means that "... we should include, increasingly, all those groups and social sectors that were not included in the process of creation of the modern equality paradigm" (Faur and Lipszyc: 2003)

There is no chance of this happening without the involvement, the commitment, and the participation of people who understand the issues, have good intentions, and are ready to improve things, "starting at home". And this is what I would like to highlight from our shared days in Japan. Two important variables converged in Japan to make our experience very valuable: committed and concerned individuals and shared working time.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Young Women's Leadership: The CAFRA Experience in Trinidad and Tobago

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### The Caribbean Commonwealth: A Brief Background<sup>1</sup>

The "Caribbean Commonwealth" generally refers to the English-speaking islands in the Caribbean and the mainland nations of Belize and Guyana that once constituted the Caribbean portion of the British Empire. An extended group of countries would also include Haiti and Suriname. This group of nations is characterized by huge differences in population, size, income and ethnic composition. The largest populations are in Haiti (8.4 million people), Jamaica (2.6 million) and Trinidad and Tobago (1.3 million), while several island nations have less than 100,000 persons. The nations with the highest standards of living are the Bahamas, Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis, while the poorest countries are Haiti, Guyana and Suriname.

The Caribbean nations share historical experiences that bind them and that make them different from their Latin American neighbors. Their transformation during the seventeenth century from a tobacco- to a sugar-based economy permanently changed life on the islands, creating a plantation society that initially employed African slave labor.

After 1970, the sugar industry began to decline. Unemployment, balance of payments deficits, increasing levels of external indebtedness and the corresponding macroeconomic problems resulted. By the 1980s, it became clear that the sugar industry could no longer sustain the Caribbean economies. Tourism emerged as an alternative and today it is the major industry of the smaller islands.

However, the economies of the region are vulnerable to external shocks. In an effort to minimize the associated risks, the independent nations of the Commonwealth Caribbean established the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973. CARICOM's greatest successes have been the creation and successful operation of about twenty regional

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws heavily from the Library of Congress Country Study on the Commonwealth of Caribbean Islands: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ctoc.html>

institutions, including the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Caribbean Meteorological Council, the West Indies Shipping Corporation (WISCO), and the Caribbean Marketing Enterprise. The organization is now working to establish a Caribbean Court of Justice and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

The political systems of the Commonwealth Caribbean nations are generally stable. They have inherited strong British democratic traditions and parliamentary systems. Political succession normally has been handled peacefully and democratically.

The region has a rich tradition of civil society organizations, the majority of which operate without any government support and depend on funding from the private sector and international agencies.

Women in the English-speaking Caribbean have relatively high levels of education. Enrolment rates tend to be higher for girls at both the primary and secondary levels. However, labor force statistics have consistently shown higher rates of unemployment among women, as well as lower participation. Other social issues that affect women are the increasing number of women and children contracting HIV/AIDS and the incidence of domestic violence.

### *Trinidad and Tobago*

Trinidad and Tobago, a twin island republic, is the most southerly of the English-speaking Caribbean islands, located close to Venezuela. Oil and gas, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism are the main foreign exchange earners, making the country susceptible to the rise and fall of the prices of these commodities.

Trinidad and Tobago also has a relatively stable political system, with a two-party, Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. The country is multi-racial and multi-cultural; the majority of the population are descendants of slaves and indentured Indians laborers. The main social issues are similar to those in the rest of the Caribbean.

### **Women's Affairs in the Caribbean Commonwealth**

The Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, held in 1996 in Port-of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, was a landmark in the history of policies for women and gender equity in the Caribbean. The Meeting reviewed the Beijing Action Plan and in the process, revised its structure in order to mainstream gender concerns in all its policies.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, speaking at the opening ceremony said, "when the Commonwealth Heads of Governments endorsed the (Beijing) Plan of Action in 1995, they lit a torch which will provide the light to lead women in the Commonwealth into the twenty-first century" (Gender and Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

The countries reported on action plans and strategies for gender mainstreaming, gender and development, elements of Gender Management Systems, and specific legislation on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

For the countries reporting on the number of female members of national parliaments, the proportion was generally less than 10 percent. None of the countries had reached the target of 30 percent set in 1995. Similarly, women's participation in ministerial positions was generally low; only Health (43 percent) and Youth (34 percent) showed any significant movement.

The following are some key recommendations from the meeting:

- "Governments should develop national gender and development action plans for integrating gender issues into all policies and programs by the year 2000.
- Ministers of Education should initiate more dynamic strategies for ensuring that girls and women are given equal access to educational opportunities, and participate more fully in training for non-traditional occupations such as science, technology and commerce.
- Governments are urged to implement recommendations for gender integration made at ministerial meetings in the areas of education, finance, health, law science and youth.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat should continue the process of engendering its programs to provide gender-inclusive technical assistance to governments until mid-2000, and should support governments in implementing the Plan of Action by providing advice, training and technical assistance, and the exchange of experiences on good practice."

To carry out these recommendations, the Commonwealth Secretariat proposed:

- Gender Management Systems—an approach to mainstreaming gender;
- Gender and macroeconomic policy—gender integration into national budgetary policies;

- Engendering political decision-making—getting more women into decision-making roles in politics;
- Gender, politics, conflict prevention and resolution—recognition of women’s pro-active role in peace and conflict resolution;
- Gender and local government—reforming local government systems from a gender perspective;
- Women’s rights as human rights—promoting the human rights of women and girl.

### *Women’s Organizations in the Caribbean*

Several strong organizations advocate and work for the advancement of women in the Caribbean. Among them, the NGO Commonwealth Women’s Network, based in Trinidad and Tobago, is a pioneer that brings together existing women’s organizations and networks in the Commonwealth. Many network members have a high profile in the discussion of public policies and interventions for the promotion of gender equality and other dimensions of social development.

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) is a regional organization formed in 1985, with branches in fifteen English, Spanish, and Dutch-speaking territories in the Caribbean. For more than a decade, CAFRA was influential in producing leaders who are now making contributions to the social sector at the national, regional and international levels. During that time, CAFRA made a conscious decision to lobby, negotiate and use various strategies to empower women and to influence policy and laws, nationally and regionally.

This text will discuss one of the Network’s initiatives, as well as one of CAFRA’s.

### *Strategies in the Region since the 1996 Conference*

Caribbean governments, NGOs and other agencies have been implementing programs and projects to fulfill the mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action through the Commonwealth Secretariat structure and outside initiatives.

In 1999, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Caribbean office proposed a project “to promote political and economic empowerment of Caribbean women in ways that reflect the development imperatives of the sub-region.” The UNIFEM Transformational Leadership project proposed a new paradigm for female leadership in the Caribbean,

based on that organization's concept of "transformational leadership". Dr. Joycelin Massiah, in her opening remarks at the project's 1999 Advisory Group Meeting, gave the context in which this paradigm shift was being proposed, saying it was "a social revolution which is questioning gender attitudes, behavior and the structural imbalances of power between men and women, and, an economic revolution.... Transformational Leadership should be neither stagnant nor static, but should involve moving from one stage to another as a continuum. It is leadership that should be holistic and incorporates all types of people, all sectors, and builds networks among individuals."

From a feminist perspective, female leadership is not an imitation of male leadership. Women have to take into consideration the issues women's movements have been addressing for decades. Women also bring to the table issues such as childcare, food prices, the environment, reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS, poverty and domestic violence, to name a few.

This new paradigm of transformational leadership, which is still evolving, sparked several initiatives for the promotion and strengthening of women's leadership in the Caribbean. This text will describe two such initiatives, both in Trinidad and Tobago, and will highlight lessons learned and concepts that we can bring to other programs and projects which seek to enhance female leadership.

## **Two Experiences in the Empowerment of Women in Trinidad and Tobago**

### *The "Engendering Local Government" Project*

The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, which is a member of the NGO Commonwealth Women's Network, launched a non-partisan political platform for the advancement of women, as part of its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action Plan. One component of this was the project entitled "Engendering Local Government".

The project sought to deal with the dearth of women candidates and female leaders in local government. It was sparked by the recognition that thousands of women in Trinidad and Tobago are the engines behind the election campaigns of the longest-serving political party. They have been applauded by a succession of male leaders for electing them to government. However, few of these women have put themselves forward as candidates, especially at the national level. This project was aimed at dealing with this imbalance.

The short-term goals of the project were:

- “To provide a critical mass of competent, effective, gender-sensitive, committed women politicians to influence decision making in local political bodies through their direct participation as elected or appointed representatives.”
- To prepare an enabling environment for women’s effective participation in the decision-making process. (Brown, 2000 )

To accomplish these goals, the Network involved women from the three political parties, independent candidates, female campaign managers and other activists. They participated in a training program that included: (i) the role and functioning of local government and (ii) introducing a gender perspective into the decision-making process of local government.

In the 1999 elections, after the training program, 28 of the 91 women who ran for local government positions won seats – an increase of almost 100 percent over the 1996 elections – and 50 percent more women won seats than in 1996. All 14 municipalities now have at least one female representative, with 17 percent to 26 percent female representation.

Although the project was completed in 2000, the Network continues to monitor elections. An interesting statistic has emerged from the recently-held local government elections (2003): The number of women who ran declined to 71, but the number who won seats rose to 40 out of 126 (31.75 percent). Therefore, the target of thirty (30) percent proposed at the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs was reached in 2003.

### *Young Women’s Leadership Project*

CAFRA T&T is the Trinidad and Tobago branch of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action. As the founders of CAFRA moved on to become leaders in other institutions and agencies, CAFRA T&T realized that younger women had to be incorporated into the organization. A training program was set up to encourage young women to take the reins of leadership in the organization and society as a whole.

CAFRA T&T responded to the call by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for proposals to promote women’s leadership. As one of the successful applicants from the Caribbean, PROLEAD—Young Women’s Leadership program—was implemented in two phases in 1999-2002, with a mandate to train thirty-two young women.

Participants were divided into two groups, Years I and II. The two cohorts participated in some common activities, while other activities were specific to each group, making for an interesting comparative study.



The main objectives of the program were:

- To develop a cadre of young leaders by raising and improving their social consciousness, self-confidence and political awareness, who would begin to advocate for a voice or space in the decision-making of the country.
- To facilitate the creation of a network of well-trained peer facilitators who would facilitate sessions for CAFRA T&T's programs, community projects, NGOs and other relevant institutions.
- To produce a booklet that relates the life histories of the mentors and the experiences of the participants during the program.

Participants were selected through a competitive process designed to identify the candidate's perspectives on problems affecting young women from a youth perspective, her knowledge of the focus issues and her knowledge of the work of CAFRA T&T. Applicants were then interviewed.

An evaluation of the interviews revealed the following:

- Approximately 90 percent of the participants could not name women leaders in their own society. Most of them mentioned Oprah, Princess Diana or a relative. No applicant had previously worked with a mentor.
- However, they were all able to articulate the problems affecting young people, the most common ones being teenage pregnancy, domestic violence and unemployment.

The first activity with the training participants was an Orientation Camp, which consisted of trust-building games, small group discussions, and popular theatre, particularly for the team-building modules. Question-and-answer sessions and general discussion tested participants' knowledge. Various chapters of the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution were incorporated into an exercise to illustrate the source of the legal and political systems of the country. A social worker held group counseling sessions and meals were prepared together by participants and facilitators.

The Camps were held at a beach house in Cumana, a rural area on the north-east coast of Trinidad, far from distractions, in tranquil surroundings. The final participants were selected by the end of the weekend.

The selected participants ranged in age from 15 to 26. Most were full-time secondary school students or were attending part-time classes.

Others were awaiting examination results or unemployed and searching for jobs. Efforts were made to have as broad a cross-section as possible, with a rural/urban/ethnic mix and participants from both islands (Trinidad and Tobago). One criterion for selection was active membership in a youth group or club.

### **The Seminar Series**

The seminar series consisted of five one-day seminars on focus issues, which included legal, management, political, economic and social themes. There were 40 contact hours, plus another 24 hours of assignments. For the year II group, an additional day was devoted to a workshop on the use of computer technology.

The challenge was to select facilitators who were not only knowledgeable, but who could also maintain the interest of the young people and make the sessions participatory. Some facilitators used interactive methods including skits, popular theatre, and discussion.

### **Mentors**

Mentors were selected after a careful search that lasted two months. Women with high public profiles were deliberately chosen to give the program visibility. It took some effort to persuade very busy women to devote two and a half hours a week to young people they did not know. For most of the mentors, it was the first time they had performed such a role in a structured way. It was also a new experience for the participants, who had never had a mentor before, or written a formal document. During the visits with their mentors, the participants conducted interviews with them and documented their life histories. The project coordinator kept in touch with the mentors to monitor their progress. Feedback from the participants was reviewed at the bi-weekly education-day sessions.

In some cases, the participants assisted with or visited their mentor's community projects. One particular mentor's project was visiting a women's prison on Saturdays. The young women who went on these visits were intrigued by the whole experience. Participants also had discussions with mentors regarding academic and career goals, even after the program was over. On completion of the program, a booklet was produced with short testimonials by the participants and the life histories of the mentors, as written by the participants.

### **Work Placements**

Participants in pairs volunteered their services to specific projects, two days a week for eight weeks. The young women were required to keep a

ledger of each day's activities and at the end of the placement make a presentation to their supervisor and the staff of the organization. They were also required to submit a report to CAFRA T&T and make presentations to their peers.

This practical training was designed to complement the theoretical knowledge gained in the seminar series and provide the young women with insight into the operation of the various NGOs. It also gave participants experience needed to enter the work world. Work placements were selected based on the interest of the participants in the various focus issues. For example, one participant whose focus issue was legal and who had a specific interest in social issues, was fortunate to work with a lawyer who was also a politician and activist in her community.

### **Education Day Sessions**

During the work placement and mentorship phases of the program, the Management Team met every two weeks with the participants to maintain the cohesion of the group, monitor and receive feedback on the participants' interaction with their mentors, and review the writing of the work placement summary report. Group discussion and counseling sessions were very important and a conscious effort was made to ensure that all participants made a contribution, especially the shy ones.

### **Participants' Presentations**

In Year I, the participants conducted workshops in small groups, using themes from the focus issues. This gave the Management Team the opportunity to evaluate the use made of the information received in the program, and the participants' ability to share this with people their own age. Each group was required to select a topic, to conduct the research, invite an audience and make the presentation using a chosen format. The themes of the groups included domestic violence, youth issues (juvenile delinquency, street children, unemployment and crime) and Youth and HIV/AIDS.

### **Community Projects**

In response to feedback from Year I participants, community projects replaced the participants' presentations in Year II. One such project was a response to a call from the Matura Women's Group for assistance with the expansion of their small library. Matura is a rural district with the nearest public library some 20 kilometers away. The plan was to develop the library from a couple of shelves into a 30x12 feet space, to increase the services and the readership. The participants' task was to source building materials from hardware stores and manufacturers. They also assisted with labor.

### **Call-Back Session**

At the end of each year of the program, there was a Call-Back Session, which was essentially an evaluation of the program by the participants—a mix of workshops and fun on the beach. Comments were requested for changes that could be made to improve the delivery of the program and how the new information would be used to benefit other young people. A session was also held to prepare participants for job searches.

### **Production of the Booklet**

The booklet entitled “It Still Takes A Village” was written by the participants. It comprises the stories of the lives of the women who served as mentors during the program and short biographies of the authors. A writer’s camp was held to assist the young women with writing techniques. The editorial team reviewed the biographies, which were sent to the mentors for vetting. Sponsors were sought to finance the printing of the booklet. Copies were distributed to sponsors, libraries and schools, other CAFRA branches in the region and NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Results and Products**

Twenty-nine young women participated in the full program and four attended part-time. They made friends and contacts, obtained work experience and interviewing skills, were trained in leadership, skills received and wrote a book. They graduated with knowledge of management, legal, economic, social and political issues. They all got the opportunity to work with other NGOs through their work placements and on community projects. They also gained a better understanding of social issues, particularly those concerning youth. Most got their first opportunity to speak in public to a large audience. They also gained mentors with whom they could network on matters of leadership, education, career guidance and community development.

While the most tangible product of the program is the booklet “It Still Takes a Village”, the work placement organizations each also benefited from the work of two young persons who assisted them with their social programs. Approximately 230 children and 130 youths attended special sessions delivered by the participants. Two communities also benefited from the projects undertaken by the three groups, including the Matura Library project, which serves 85 children and will later cater to adult members.

Another product is the project design itself. It is a template for the development of other programs, and some aspects have already been replicated by other organizations.

### Outcomes

Human resource development has been the major outcome of the program. A short-term assessment of a sample survey of a randomly-selected 25 percent of the participants has been recently conducted. The respondents stated that the ability to express themselves, to speak in public and a feeling of confidence were their greatest achievements. It must be noted that in Caribbean culture it is not common practice that young people, particularly young women, are allowed to articulate their feelings.

Seventy-five percent of those interviewed have taken up leadership positions in organizations, 37 percent at the national level. Among the volunteers is a secretary for the management of a micro loan facility sponsored by UNDP, the Youth Officer for the Roxborough Village Council Tobago, Peer Facilitators for the Family Planning Association, Peer Educator HIV/AIDS awareness for the Centre for Gender Studies and the secretary for the group Advocate for Youth Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights. Three of the participants were elected to the executive body of CAFRA T&T. Five participants have also represented CAFRA T&T at national and regional conferences.

### Obstacles

During the course of the program, there were a number of factors that impeded the smooth execution of the project. An important factor was the inability to attract the proposed ethnic mix of participants in spite of our appeal to organizations of all races. For example, the leader of a Hindu Women's Group explained the cultural and religious reasons why members did not apply. Interaction among diverse groups is particularly difficult when certain social issues are to be discussed.

Funding for meals also proved to be a major challenge. In the Caribbean, lack of meals may determine the success or failure of a training program.

### Factors Which Facilitated Project Implementation

Many factors facilitated the success of the program. The Management Team members volunteered their time; the CAFRA Secretariat contributed to the production of the booklet; some CAFRA T&T members were mentors; and the work placement organizations facilitated the work experience of the young women and allowed their staff to supervise them. Mentors and corporate sponsors provided their valuable time and resources. Participants were enthusiastic, cooperative and willing to learn, and parents were supportive.

### *Lessons Learned*

The most important lesson was that young women, given the opportunity, were willing to become involved in the work of civil society. Exposure to issues that are of concern to civil society tend to come from projects like the Young Women's Leadership program, rather than from the school system. Mentorship is a very useful learning tool. The work placement experience assisted the participants to better understand the theoretical aspect of the seminar series. It also afforded the participants useful information on the work of NGOs and civil society in general. Because of the participatory nature of the program, their ideas and concerns were validated by their peers and some emerged as leaders ready for the next stage in their development.

An intense project of this kind cannot be sustained without full-time staff although volunteers contributed in a meaningful way to the implementation of the project. The lack of administrative funding continues to weaken the development of the NGO sector.

As regards project implementation, the lessons learned from the first year were used to improve the program for Year II.

### **Recommendations: Strategies for the Promotion of Women's Leadership**

The women's movement is concerned with the recruitment of youth to work for social justice, particularly in this difficult age of individualism. The CAFRA T&T experience with the Young Women's Leadership project shows that young people placed in the 'right' environment and provided with training can become activists for social change.

The program suggests that woman-woman mentorship can be an effective means of promoting leadership. Alliances were formed between women of difference ages, classes, ethnic groups and cultures, and there was an opportunity for inter-generational learning. For potential leaders, it was also a chance to understand that the role of a leader is not as glamorous as it is portrayed on television.

No single initiative could be responsible for the transformation of society. Therefore the young leaders who emerged from the program are contributors to the overall objective to decrease the gender imbalance. Every new woman who takes on a leadership role scores a point for equity. Therefore participating in leadership is a good opening to create a more equitable society. The more people; men and women, involved in the development of a country, the more it develops and the better the quality of life for all in the society.

Particular attention should be paid to grooming young women as activists in the women's movement, using the mentorship methodology.

The Commonwealth Ministers at their 1995 meeting “deplored the fact that young women’s participation in society continued to be severely restricted in most countries” (Link in to Gender and Development 1997) It is very important that programmes as the Young Women’s Leadership Project should continue to be supported.

Leadership by women in rural areas and at the grassroots level should be encouraged. The work of leaders in rural areas carries additional burdens, compared to those of their urban centre sisters. “Many factors inhibit their involvement in any social movement, for example, lack of time due to the necessary focus on survival, problems of education and health care, experiences with domestic violence which undermines women’s sense of self-dignity” (Vassell 1999).

The strategy for greater participation by women in decision-making should be two-fold: increasing women’s participation in politics and having institutions to support them. Training to equip women for decision-making positions must include gender sensitivity and social issues, as well as information on institutions, traditions and the law. And if all else fails, women should consider forming their own political parties to give the status quo food for thought.

Governments should develop national gender and development action plans and should implement ministerial recommendations for gender integration in education, finance, health, law, science and youth programs. Consideration should be given to implementing a quota system.

NGOs at the national level should collaborate and lobby to have governments implement their commitments to the Beijing Plan of Action and the strategies as outlined at the meetings of the Commonwealth Secretariat. NGOs should have an on-going relationship with the women who have been elected (i) to have them work in the best interest of women and (ii) to have them as allies to further the goal of reaching the target of 50/50 representation. They should also reach out to gender-sensitive men in leadership positions to facilitate institutional changes.

There is a need for succession planning in the NGO movement. As the pioneers grow tired, there is a need for new and younger soldiers to be brought into the movement. Management standards must also improve to make NGOs more viable, meaning improved remuneration packages to attract the best candidates.

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## CHAPTER 10

# Women in Latin American Politics: Trends and Prospects

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Along with the resurgence of democracy, Latin America is witnessing a visible trend toward the feminization of politics. In 2003, Panama had a democratically elected female president, and Peru had a woman prime minister. Women were also in charge of the armed forces in Chile and Colombia. Women headed scores of other ministries in the region, and their representation in parliaments, while still low, grew sharply. In the last decade, women's participation rose, on average, from 9 to 14 percent in executive (ministerial) positions, 5 to 13 percent in senates, and 8 to 15 percent in the lower houses or unicameral parliaments, representing gains of more than 50 percent in all cases. Why is this so and what does it mean for the future of democracy in Latin America? In this paper, we attempt to answer these questions, based on recent evidence and a public opinion poll on women's political participation. We also discuss the barriers women must overcome to participate proportionally in the political ranks.

### Explaining the Gains

Changes in three basic conditions—women's human capital, cultural mores and the consolidation of democracy—seem to have combined with facilitating factors (legislation and quotas) to explain women's advances in Latin American politics.

#### *Human Capital Gains*

A unique feature of Latin America is the progress women have made in acquiring the capabilities that enable them to lead. Unlike most other developing world regions, in Latin America there are more girls than boys enrolled at all levels of schooling. Close to 60 percent of females are enrolled in secondary schooling and 19 percent in tertiary education; for boys, these percentages are 54 and 17 percent, respectively (IDB, 2000). A historical gap in primary school enrolments benefiting boys was closed with the cohorts born in 1970, reflecting a secular trend towards equality

between the genders in school registrations (Dureya et al. 2001). There is still no compelling explanation for Latin America's good performance in terms of gender equality in school enrolments, but likely factors include: easy access to schools in a highly urbanized region which increases all children's chances to attend school; cultural preferences that value schooling for both sexes and do not restrict girls' social interactions and physical mobility; and higher unemployment rates for adolescent girls than for adolescent boys, which keep girls in schools while boys join the labor market.

Increased schooling for girls has likely helped reduce gender inequalities in employment and politics, through its direct effect on work and earnings, and its strong association with better health for women and lower fertility. A recent world review indicates that education reduces inequalities based on gender more rapidly than inequalities based on race and ethnicity, although its overall effects are often overstated. Reduced gender gaps in education are not always mirrored by reduced gender gaps in employment and income, and education does not change beliefs on racism (Buchmann and Hannum, 2003).

### *Cultural Openings*

Recent decades have witnessed drastic changes in women's place in society and at least two trends have contributed to this major cultural change. First has been the revival of the international women's movement. Re-emerging in the 1970s and culminating in the Fourth UN Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, this movement generated worldwide awareness of women's condition and activism for women's rights. The second trend involves globalization and the communications revolution that have broken down geographical and informational frontiers, and have facilitated the global spread of information about women, their changing roles and their achievements in public life, as well as the formation of international women's rights coalitions. In Latin America these trends have taken hold rapidly, because of women's high educational levels and the region's comparatively high integration in the world economy.

### *Democratization*

After a decade or two of authoritarian regimes in most of Latin America, democracy returned to the region in the 1980s. This new democratic period has coexisted with a loss in power and credibility among traditional political parties. Grassroots and other citizen movements, including women and indigenous peoples, have partly filled the gap. This democratic wave has courted women voters and has enabled them to express their

own (not their husbands') political preferences. Women have flourished in this new democratic scenario as empowered voters, grassroots political organizers and political leaders.

### *Legislation*

The adoption of international human rights treaties and conventions, coupled with domestic legislation on women's rights, has supported

**TABLE 10.1 Women's Bureaus in Latin America**

Country	Year Created	Agency	Location
Argentina	1992	National Women's Council (CONAMU)	Office of the President
Bolivia	1993	General Directorate on Gender Issues	Vice-ministry of Gender, Generations and Family
Brazil	1995	National Council on Women's Rights	Ministry of Justice
Chile	1991	National Women's Service (SERNAM)	Ministry of Planning and Cooperation
Colombia	1999	Presidential Council for Gender Equity	Office of the President
Costa Rica	1998	National Institute of Women	Government Council
Dominican Republic	1982	General Directorate for the Promotion of Women	Presidential Secretariat
Ecuador	1997	National Women's Council (CONAMU)	Office of the President
El Salvador	1996	Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development	Presidential Ministry
Guatemala	1981	National Women's Office (ONAM)	Labor and Social Ministry
Honduras	1999	National Women's Institute (INAM)	Office of the President
Mexico	1998	National Commission of Women (CONMUJER)	Governance Secretariat
Nicaragua	1987	Nicaraguan Institute of Women (INIM)	Family Ministry
Panama	1998	National Women's Office	Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and Family
Paraguay	1992	Women's Secretariat	Office of the President
Peru	1996	Ministry on Women and Human Development	Office of the President
Uruguay	1992	National Institute of Family & Women	Ministry of Education and Culture
Venezuela	1992	National Council of Women (CONAMU)	Office of the President

Source: CEPAL, 1999.

women's ability to enter and remain in politics. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention of Belem do Para, International Labor Organization conventions and many others have been adopted by countries in Latin America. Many have adapted them to national legislation covering rights to non-discrimination, equal opportunity, basic education, basic health care, employment, family planning, property ownership and political participation.

Governments have created special bodies and instruments to propose legislation, and to monitor and implement women-related policies. Most countries have Parliamentary Commissions on Women's Issues. All Latin American countries have created special women's bureaus to monitor and implement public policies, some at the ministerial level (see Table 10.1). Following the agreements reached in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, many countries also adopted national gender action plans that es-

**TABLE 10.2 Quota Laws for Women in Latin America**

Country	Year Approved	Legislative Body	Quota (%)
Argentina	1991	Chamber	30
	2001	Senate	30
Bolivia	1997	Chamber	30
		Senate	25
Brazil	1997	Chamber	30
Costa Rica	1996	Unicameral	40
Dominican Republic	1997	Chamber	25
Ecuador	1997	Unicameral	20
Honduras	2000	Unicameral	30
Mexico	1996	Chamber	30
		Senate	30
Panama	1997	Unicameral	30
Paraguay	1996	Chamber	20
		Senate	20
Peru*	1997	Unicameral	30
Venezuela**	1998	Chamber Senate	30 30

\* In 2001 Peru increased the quota from 25 percent to 30 percent.

\*\* The quota was later rescinded.

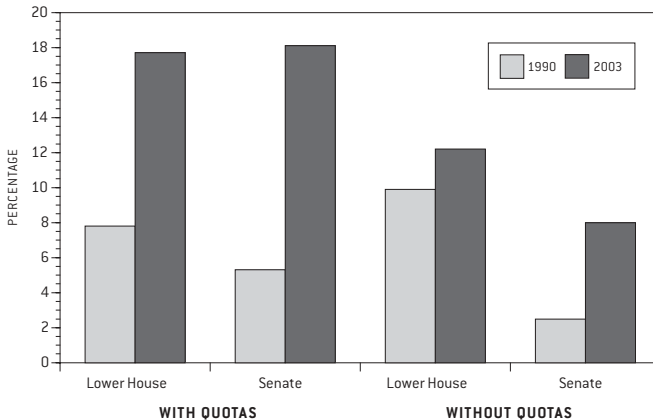
Source: IDEEA, 2003a.

tablish specific measures and programs aimed at women's advancement. This institutionalization of women's issues, and the mechanisms in place to monitor and implement international agreements and national legislation, has helped consolidate women's gains over the last two decades.

### *Affirmative Action*

As a result of direct pressure from the women's movement, 11 countries have instituted minimum quotas for women (20-40 percent) in party lists for legislative elections. (See Table 10.2) Colombia has defined a minimum quota (30 percent) for women's representation in the executive. Quotas have increased women's presence in legislatures by an average of nine percent, demonstrating their effectiveness in increasing women's political representation in the region. (See Figure 10.1) The effect of quotas, however, has varied across countries. They have worked well when they have been tailored to fit the electoral laws of a particular country and when political parties have applied them rigorously (Htun and Jones, 2002). Otherwise, their effect has not been noticeable (for example, in Panama the quota increased the percentage of women in the unicameral parliament by a mere 0.2 points, whereas it rose by 19 points in Costa Rica).

**FIGURE 10.1 Impact of Quotas in Latin America**



Data for 11 countries with quotas, including Dominican Republic and 7 without quotas.  
Source: IDB, 2003.

These quotas for women on party lists and in the executive, have existed for about a decade now, but have elicited little public reaction. Many Latin American parties have voluntarily adopted quota rules in their party lists. The lack of public reaction to women's quotas stands in stark contrast with the recently instituted racial quotas (40 percent representation for Afro-Brazilians) in two Brazilian public universities, which have generated heated controversy (Rohter, 2003).

Quotas for women's political representation have worked well in the region because they have helped to expand a pool of already well-qualified applicants (highly educated women), enhanced opportunities rather than insured entitlements, benefited people across socioeconomic groups, and provided role models that have helped change cultural stereotypes.

### *Looking Ahead*

The trend toward the feminization of Latin America's democracy is here to stay. Four factors fuel and help forecast the continuing growth in women's political leadership: modernizing trends in voter preferences (favorable to women); the demographic transition, with its impact on the former; the commitment of the international community, reflected in the Millennium Development Goal Declaration signed by world leaders in 2000; and the region's political crisis that, paradoxically perhaps, opens space for women in politics.

### *Voter Preferences*

A Gallup poll, conducted in 2000 for the Inter-American Development Bank with a random sample of 2,022 voters in six major cities in Latin America (Bogota, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and San Salvador) showed that the average voter had a positive opinion of women's place and performance in politics. Over 90 percent of all those polled would be willing to vote for a woman presidential candidate. A majority (57 percent) thought that women were better government leaders than men and, contradicting the view of many political analysts, a majority (57 percent) also said that women's issues had a definite weight in voting decisions. Women, educated voters and young voters had a more positive opinion of female political leaders than did men, less educated voters and older voters. More women (62 percent) than men (51 percent) believed that women are better at governing. Fifty-eight percent of highly educated voters, versus 40 percent with little education, said they had voted for a woman candidate. Both educated and young

voters perceived more gender inequalities in labor market and political opportunities, suggesting a progressive “modernization” of views on gender issues. Corroborating these results, a 1998 poll in Lima showed that women, educated voters and young voters were most willing to vote for a female candidate in the 2000 presidential elections (Calandria, 1998) and more women (27 percent) than men (17 percent) did, in fact, vote for the female presidential candidate (Yanez, 2001).

Compared to a 1996 Gallup poll that asked some of the same questions in Mexico City and San Salvador, the proportion of the population that thought that their countries would be better off with women in political leadership positions grew significantly in the four-year interval. Reflecting sharp educational inequalities in Latin America, the 2000 poll showed more differences in voter opinions across educational groups than across genders.<sup>1</sup> However, gender differences can be expected to become more important, as the educational status of the population improves and educational differences diminish over time.

### *Demographic Transition*

Notwithstanding sizable differences among countries, Latin America is aging and this will accelerate between 2025 and 2050. The proportion of those 65 and older should triple to more than 15 percent of the population (IDB, 2000a). The majority of these will be older women, who outlive men in the region, as in rest of the world. By the end of the 1990s, women were 53.9 percent of the population over 60 years of age in Latin America. In Argentina they were 59.6 percent, compared with 56.9 percent in the United States.

Older women should become a significant voting block in elections, influencing the nature and content of democratic politics (Fukuyama, 1998; Norris, 2002). Women will vote more often and, if they continue with current preferences, will vote more often for women candidates and will give more weight to women’s issues in elections. Studies have shown that as democracies become more established, any past tendencies for women to vote less frequently than men disappears (Norris, 2002). Supporting this notion, voter turnout in Chile, a relatively developed nation compared to other Latin American countries, has increased for women and decreased for men, in both parliamentary and presidential elections. By contrast, women have significantly lower voter turnout rates

<sup>1</sup> In contrast, in the 2000 United States elections, gender differences were stronger than educational differences in explaining voting preferences (CNN, 2000).

than men (36.8 percent vs. 63.2 percent) in Guatemala, a less developed country in the region. Preference for women politicians should further be bolstered as the educational level of the overall population, both men and women, rises along with economic development.

### *Political Crisis*

After two decades of democratic regimes, in all but four of the seventeen countries recently polled by *Latinobarometro*, support for democracy in Latin America is lower today than it was in 1996. While this discontent has much to do with Latin America's economic woes, most respondents remain deeply dissatisfied with the way their democracies work and mistrust their political institutions and their leaders (*The Economist*, 2002). The UNDP's recent report on democracy in Latin America observes that the region's political crisis manifests itself not only in the low credibility levels of political parties, but also in the governments' inability to respond to key issues, such as civil and social rights.

The region's political crisis may present a window of opportunity for women, as long as the discontent falls short of overturning democracy. As women have been historically excluded from public office, Reingold (2002: 19) observes that, "by not being part of the problem, women come across as part of the solution."

### *International Commitments*

Scores of governments around the world have signed global agreements that aim to improve the condition of women. Based on the major goals and targets agreed upon at the UN Conferences of the 1990s, a global development agenda emerged in 2000. Known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community and UN member states committed themselves to achieving eight goals related to poverty, illiteracy, hunger, education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, disease and environmental degradation. The third goal, to "promote gender equality and the empowerment of women", includes as one of its indicators the proportion of seats held by women in national legislatures. This represents a significant achievement – the reaffirmation that gender equality and women's participation in politics are a key to development.

Governments and the international community have pledged to meet the objectives by 2015. The use of indicators to measure progress should not only stimulate the collection of much-needed sex disaggregated data but also provide women's organizations with a technical and



political instrument to monitor progress and hold their governments accountable. In addition, fulfilling the commitments should mobilize resources, promote policy and legislative reforms, lend legitimacy to women's rights advocates, and foster collaboration and networking among women and organizations.

### **Implications for Democracy**

As Latin American democracies become more feminized, how will the region's political landscape be affected? Based on studies, current trends and public opinion, we can hypothesize that women will become a more important force for change. In the short to medium term, the female vote should gain increasing importance; women's issues may be better represented; leadership styles may be influenced by women; democratic institutions may achieve greater credibility and women candidates and public officials may acquire greater acceptability and support. In fact, the feminization of political leadership may help contain the growing dissatisfaction with democracy and a possible return to authoritarian regimes.

### *Do Women in Office Support Women's Interests?*

It is often said that the mere presence of women in power will not automatically translate into support and representation of women's issues. Being a woman does not imply having an awareness of or commitment to gender issues. However, a growing body of literature suggests that women in power do indeed make a difference in representing issues that are of greater interest to women. In the United States, several studies have found that female officeholders exhibit more concern about issues pertaining to women, children and families, such as education, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion rights, child support enforcement, and harsher penalties for sexual assault and violence against women. Women are more likely to initiate and introduce such policies and take active roles in securing their passage and implementation (Thomas, 1991, 1994; Tamerius, 1995; Carroll, 2001; O'Regan, 2000; Little, 2001; Swers, 2002).

Research in other parts of the world also shows similar policy-related gender differences. In a study of Argentina's Chamber of Deputies, Jones (1997) found significant gender differences in the policy priorities of women legislators, specifically in the areas of women's rights, children and families. In a 2002 survey of Congressional Women's Caucus members in Brazil, 88 percent of those surveyed stated that women's rights were among their priorities; and of them, 20 percent listed women's rights as

their “top” priority (Htun, 2003). Studies in Finland, Britain and Norway come to similar conclusions (Henig, 2001; Karvonen and Selle, 1995). A study in West Bengal showed that mandated representation of women as leaders of village councils had significant effects on policy decisions, with women investing more in the needs of rural women (drinking water, fuel and road construction). The study also showed that women are more likely to participate in the policy-making process if the leader of their village council is a woman (Chattopadhyay and Dufló, 2001).

Over the last three decades, women have achieved significant gains in policies and legislation dealing with women’s rights, discrimination, domestic violence, reproductive rights, family issues and affirmative action. In 1998, the Chilean Senate approved a law presented by SERNAM, the Women’s Bureau, that put an end to any legal distinctions between “natural,” “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children (ITEM, 2000). In Venezuela, female legislators pushed through an intensely debated maternity-leave law. In Mexico, former mayor Rosario Robles shepherded reforms that expanded the circumstances under which abortion is legal (Htun, 2001a). Under the leadership of then Mexican PRD congresswoman Amalia García, women from all ideological spectrums and parties formed a coalition that ultimately led to the passage of a rape law in the early 1990s (Rodríguez, 1998). In Brazil, the Congressional Women’s Caucus in partnership with feminist lobby groups, achieved passage of numerous laws securing women’s rights in the areas of violence, maternity leave, sexual harassment, and reproductive health (Htun, 2003).

At a conference of Latin American female ministers held in 2003 at the Inter-American Development Bank, several ministers mentioned introducing gender disaggregation and a gender perspective into policies. Guatemala’s Minister of Peace, Ana Catalina Soberanis, successfully pushed for disaggregating homicide rates by sex and Nicaragua’s former Minister of Health, Marta Palacios, mandated having data on morbidity disaggregated by sex. Former Honduran Minister of Finance, Gabriela Nunez, introduced gender budgeting exercises in the government’s annual budget.

### *Do Women Bring Different Leadership Styles to Office?*

Whether women bring different characteristics and values to public office is a matter of debate. Some evidence suggests that women do indeed have distinctive ways of “doing politics.” Women are considered more approachable, cooperative, inclusive and responsive to the needs and demands of their constituents. A study of leadership behavior in the US legislature shows

that women committee chairs exhibit an integrative rather than competitive style of leadership based on participation, shared power, and collaborative problem solving (Rosenthal, 1998). A Costa Rican study (Figueres, 2002) found that women dedicate 70 percent of their time to parliamentary commissions and meetings with their constituents, compared to 26 percent for men (who spend more time on their professions or private business).

Several other studies, however, have found that men and women do not differ in their leadership styles and argue that the characteristics listed above are precisely the stereotypes that have been used to justify women's exclusion from power. In a study of state legislatures in Arizona and California, Reingold (2000) found that women do not spend more time than men in constituent-related activities. Another study of mayors in Milwaukee found that men and women had very similar views regarding the essence of leadership. Both sexes admired qualities that tend to be associated with the stereotypical qualities valued in femininity: motivation, concern for people, vision, commitment, listening and communication (Tolleson-Rinehard, 2001).

Some would further argue that women get ahead by emulating men. In other words, once in power, women adopt a male style of leadership. Interestingly, the majority of people polled by Gallup (2001) agree: 66 percent believed that women become just as aggressive and competitive as men after assuming political office (without saying whether this is good or bad).

### *Do Women in Office Uphold Democracy?*

Public opinion and preliminary studies suggest that women are perceived as more honest and trustworthy than men and less likely to engage in corruption. In a public opinion poll carried out in Lima, Peru, 64 percent felt that women politicians were more honest than men, and a mere 6 percent felt that men were more honest than women (Calandria, 1998). Cross-country statistical analyses (Dollar et al. 1999; Swamy et al. 1999) have substantiated the hypothesis that more women in public office results in lower levels of corruption.

The perception that women are less corrupt, led the cities of Lima, Peru and Mexico City to increase the number of women in the police forces and place them in key police assignments to combat corruption, on the explicit assumption that they would be harder to bribe (Moore, 1999; Treaster, 1999). Presidential candidates and public officials have also gained public support by drawing on the public's perception that women are less corrupt. In Peru, Lourdes Flores Nano drew on her reputa-

tion for integrity in her bid to become the country's first female president in 2001. Her poster slogans included the message "Unimpeachable."

However, a dearth of studies, inconclusive evidence and the provocative nature of such claims make this an extremely controversial issue. In fact, many argue that once women's access to networks and opportunities to engage in corruption increases, their level of corruption will mirror that of men. Others warn against the dangers of holding such stereotyped views regarding the virtues of women. At an Inter-American Development Bank seminar of Latin American feminists, scholars and practitioners, participants warned that if women become the standard-bearers of institutional and political reform, they may find themselves held to a higher ethical standard than their male peers. Women who are labeled as exceptionally honest will be set up for a violent fall as soon as any evidence (or even allegation) of corruption comes their way (IDB, 2000b). Clearly, more research must be carried out before any definitive claims can be confidently made.

Nevertheless, the feminization of politics may be a key factor in moderating people's growing dissatisfaction with the conduct of democracy and, therefore, reducing the risk of a return to undemocratic regimes.

### *Do Women in Office Beget Women in Office?*

As women continue to gain positions of leadership in business, academia, media and civil society organizations, public perception regarding women in positions of power should gain greater acceptability and normalcy. Jewel and Whicker (1993) argue that as more women hold highly visible positions as newscasters and political commentators, public opinion will increasingly associate women with politics. In Latin America, as more women enter the labor market and the longer they are in power, we can expect greater acceptance and support of women in leadership positions.

### **Discussion: What Can Go Wrong?**

Several factors could potentially moderate the further growth and impact of women's political leadership in the region.

#### *Social Exclusion*

The absence of large social sectors from involvement in political life could further destabilize Latin American democracies. Poverty and inequality continue to prevent a majority of citizens from participating in basic social, political, and economic life. Great disparities exist between rich and

poor, rural and urban, Afro-descendent and non-Afro-descendent and indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

Gender interacts with deeply-rooted inequalities based on race and ethnicity leading women in excluded populations to have the lowest levels of well-being. Over half of indigenous girls in Bolivia and Guatemala drop out of school by age 14 (Arias and Duryea, 2003). Indigenous women are most likely to work in low-paid, informal occupations in Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru; the same holds for Afro-descendent women in Brazil (Duryea and Genoni, 2004). Indigenous women have less access to reproductive services, and have the highest maternal mortality and fertility rates in the region (Ruiz, 2003). In the political sphere, only a handful of indigenous and Afro-descendent women are in positions of power.

These large disparities among women could well undermine the gains of the women's movement and democracy itself. To help "level the playing field," race and ethnic discrimination issues should become center-pieces in the gender equality agenda and gender concerns should be put higher on the agendas of socially excluded groups (Buvinic, 2003).

### *Disunity Among Women*

Successfully progressing with a women's agenda will depend on many factors, including women's ability to form coalitions across ideological spectrums, social classes and racial and ethnic groups. It will also require strong ties between women in power and the women's movement. Multi-partisan coalitions, particularly between politicians and feminist interest groups, explain some of the major policy advances attained in the 1990s (Htun 2003a).

### *Barriers to Power*

To achieve and exercise real power women must overcome a multitude of barriers. First, many women continue to bear sole responsibility for housework and childrearing. Until domestic responsibilities are more equitably distributed and more governments institute family-friendly policies, the costs of simultaneously pursuing a political career and fulfilling family responsibilities may be too high for many women, especially poor women.

Second, unless they adapt to or change the "masculine model" of political life, women may find themselves excluded from real power. Males have always dominated the political scene and many institutions have been tailored to fit male standards, lifestyles and political attitudes

(Shvedova, 2002). Upon entering politics, many women lack access to the “old boy’s networks,” hampering their ability to raise campaign funds and participate in the negotiations and informal lobbying that takes place behind the scenes (IDB, 2000b).

Third, women must continue making headway into the powerful committees and ministries concerned with foreign, economic and budgetary policy if they are to influence the economic, social and political development of their countries. While this is rapidly changing, women often are relegated to the so-called “soft” issues, such as health, environment, family, gender and education.

Fourth, some women must overcome psychological and ideological barriers such as the predetermined social roles assigned to women and men, their own perception of politics as a “dirty” game, their low levels of self-esteem and the limited or stereotyped media coverage of women’s contribution and potential (Shvedova, 2002, IDB, 2000b).

Fifth, the stereotypes regarding women’s efficiency, honesty and capacity can be a double-edged sword. Women are often held to higher standards than men and may encounter greater difficulties in proving themselves and being elected.

Finally, the recruitment processes, nomination practices, rules and structures of political parties may also hinder women’s entry into politics. In many cases, when a woman aspires to office, the real gatekeepers to elected office may be the political parties more than the voters.

### *Lack of Government Commitment*

The gains made in legislation and international agreements that favor women will be a hollow victory if governments do not allocate sufficient funds to implement them. Executive action is required (Htun, 2001) and if women are not adequately represented in the executive branch, the advances reflected on paper and in rhetoric may not lead to concrete outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Women’s presence in political decision-making positions, while rising, is low if we consider that women represent 50 percent of the population. Indigenous, Afro-descendent, poor and rural women have even less access to these positions. Moreover, economic, social, cultural and political barriers remain to women’s full and equal participation in politics.

What is most impressive, however, is the surge in the number of women appointed or elected to public office over the last decade in a wide range of

functions, including heading defense and foreign affairs ministries. This is a relatively short period of time, considering the years it took the Scandinavian countries to achieve a critical mass of women in power (Dahlerup, 2003). If current trends continue in Latin America, an increasing number of women will undoubtedly reach the upper echelons of power. Given the structural antecedents mentioned in this report, parity may even be achieved.

More intriguing is the effect women will have on politics and the people they represent. While the benefits generally associated with more women in power may or may not be realized, the ongoing feminization of politics should help consolidate and protect the exercise of democracy in Latin America.

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## CHAPTER 11

# Women's Political Participation and Representation in Brazil

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### Introduction

This text presents the experience of the Feminist Center for Studies and Advisory Services (CFEMEA), in its project entitled *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians*. This initiative received financial support from the Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation (PROLEAD) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It was carried out from May 1999 to April 2000, establishing important alliances and links and triggering new lines of work.

CFEMEA is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, non-governmental organization founded in Brasília, Brazil, in 1989. Its objective is to fight for women's full citizenship, for equitable gender relations, and for a just and democratic society and State. CFEMEA works with the federal legislature, providing advocacy and consulting services on gender issues aimed at passing equitable and affirmative legislation on women's citizenship. Parallel to this, it has fed a network of more than 1,000 Brazilian women's organizations that defend women's rights. The Center has 13 associates and a multidisciplinary staff of 20 people. All its work is done with the support of international cooperation agencies and in partnership with other non-governmental organizations and some government agencies.

CFEMEA promotes the exchange of information and thoughts about women's rights and movements, and about legislative questions and processes. Since 1992, the Center has been publishing a monthly newsletter—*Jornal Fêmea*—and distributing about 13,000 free copies. CFEMEA produces a weekly television program on a community cable channel, *Women at Work*. It also promotes the diffusion of feminist platforms in the national media (newspapers, magazines, TV and radio), and occasionally in the international media.

This paper is divided into four parts: We first present an overview of the Brazilian political scenery to put the *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians* project into context. Then, we present the project and its development. In the third section, we discuss some ideas and

proposals from the women's movements regarding representative politics and feminist platforms; and finally, we conclude by analyzing elected women's contribution to social development, focusing on public policies aimed at building a more democratic and equitable society.

### **The Brazilian Political Scenery**

Brazil is a federal republic whose president is directly elected by voters for a four-year mandate, with the possibility of reelection for one consecutive term. There is a bicameral legislature: the representatives of the Chamber of Deputies ("Deputados") are elected by proportional vote for a four-year term; and the representatives of the Federal Senate are elected by majority vote for an eight-year term.

The country is divided into 26 states and the Federal District, each with an elected governor and state/district deputies. Each municipality elects a mayor and several council members, all for four-year terms. Federal/state and municipal elections alternate every two years.

Voting is compulsory for Brazilians over 18 years old, and is optional for the illiterate, for those over 70 years, and for 16- and 17-year-olds. Voters choose candidates from an open list, with the option to choose to vote a straight party line. Electoral campaigns are privately sponsored and are subject to limitations and inspections.

Individuals can be candidates only through political parties, which receive annual funds according to the number of votes they get. They also have free access to television programs and radio broadcasts for annual party propaganda and for advertising during election periods. Currently, there are 27 political parties registered in the Superior Electoral Court, 16 of which are represented in the National Congress.

Brazilian women received the right to vote in 1932 and in the same decade the first women were elected to office. However, it was only in the 1986 federal elections that a significant number of women (26) were elected to the Chamber of Deputies. These elections were particularly important because they immediately preceded the elaboration of the 1988 Constitution in the process of the country's re-democratization. In 1990, the first woman senator was elected. In 1994, the first woman was elected to govern a state in Brazil.

Although women in Brazil represent 50.8 percent of the population and voters, 41.8 percent of the economically active population and 25 percent of heads of families, there are very few women in positions of power. Women's representation stands at: 8.7 percent in the National Congress (43 deputies and 9 senators); 12.5 percent in the State Assemblies and in

the Legislative Chamber of the Federal District (133 deputies); and 11.6 percent in the local councils (7,001 council members).

In the executive sphere, women constitute: 14 percent of the federal government leadership staff (three ministers and two secretaries of state with ministerial status—Policies for Women and Race Equality); 7.4 percent in the state government (two governors); and 5.7 percent in the town halls (317 mayors). A small number of women have been appointed to the judiciary: one woman among the 11-member Federal Supreme Court; four women to the 33-member High Court of Justice; and one woman among the 17-member High Court of Labor.

Despite changes, there is still strong prejudice and resistance against women's political participation and representation. Social expectations maintain that women should devote themselves to the family and have a private professional life, not a public one. Politics are still considered the territory of males. The electoral system and political parties in Brazil block the entrance of under-represented segments like women. Also, women have more financial difficulties than men, less influence over people in positions of power, and less time available for politics.

### **Project Mapping Women Politics: Federal and State Parliamentarians**

The project *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians* received the support of PROLEAD/IDB in 1999 for a one-year period. The project proposal was motivated by three characteristics of the Brazilian political system: the reduced presence of women in positions of power; the invisibility of women's leadership in representative politics; and the precarious links between female parliamentarians and feminist and women's organizations.

One of the project's priorities was to improve the communication with the *Bancada Feminina*, the female caucus in the National Congress, and to initiate a dialogue with state and district deputies (legislature members). It also set out to enhance communication with feminist and women's movements, groups of women linked to community associations, unions, political parties, gender study centers in universities, and segments of more vulnerable women, such as domestic and rural workers.

### ***Systematic Communication With Elected Women Officials***

An important activity early in the project was to identify all the women elected to federal and state office in October 1998. Through CFEMEA's web site and the newsletter, *Jornal Fêmea*, we made public their address, their jurisdiction and their political party.

In October 1999, CFEMEA started sending the *Jornal Fêmea* to all 106 female state and district representatives. This systematic communication opened a new link with women who occupied positions of power nationwide. We used the newsletter to ask the female parliamentarians to send us material from their campaigns and their legislative work, particularly those that referred to the defense and protection of women's rights. These materials were consolidated in a database that served as a reference for studies carried out by CFEMEA staff. This contact made it possible for us to systematically register all significant legislation already approved or under study, related to the construction of women's citizenship in different states. It was also an opportunity to nourish the relationship between these elected women and women's movements all over the country.

CFEMEA has been contributing to the consolidation of the *Bancada Feminina*, providing advisory services on gender issues and establishing partnerships for the promotion of several events in and outside the Congress. The female caucus in Brazil's parliament dates from the 1986 federal elections. Since then, the caucus has been consolidating its existence. Despite problems, such as competitiveness and differences in ideology, female representatives have made an effort to come together because they know that alliances are more likely to achieve their goals and help improve women's lives in Brazil. At the state level, similar collective action for women's citizenship and empowerment was also put in practice.

#### *"Sex Quotas Policy" Publication*

Brazil's electoral quota system was incorporated in the 1995 electoral law<sup>1</sup> and provided guidelines for the 1996 municipal elections. This law obliges political parties and coalitions to reserve at least 20 percent of their seats for women. The 1997 electoral law<sup>2</sup> broadened the quota system: parties and coalitions must reserve a minimum of 30 percent, and a maximum of 70 percent of seats for each sex. This applies to federal deputies, state/district deputies and council members. Elections to the Senate were not included in the quota system.

In the context of *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians*, CFEMEA carried out and published the study *"Sex Quotas Policy: a study of the first experiences in the Brazilian legislature."* Released in May 2000, this publication had a great repercussion on the national debate

<sup>1</sup> Law 9100, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Law 9504, 1997.

about the quota system. The study analyzed the debates in the parliamentary houses leading to the approval of the quota system, and assessed the two first electoral experiences with the quota system in Brazil (the 1996 municipal elections and the 1998 federal/state elections).

The results show an increasing number of women were elected through the quota system. According to the data adjusted by the Brazilian Municipal Administration Institute (IBAM), 6,533 female local council members were elected in 1996 (11.1 percent of the total), compared to 3,952 (7.4 percent of the total) in the 1992 elections.

The results at the federal level were less impressive. According to the Superior Electoral Court, in the 1998 federal/state elections, the results were:

- 29 female federal deputies (5.6 percent of the total), while in the 1994 elections there were 32 (6.2 percent of the total).
- 106 state and district women legislators (10 percent of the total), while in the 1994 elections there were 82 elected representatives (7.8 percent of the total).

This study (Miguel, 2000) affirmed the importance of adopting quotas because they facilitate the women's entrance into politics. She shows that the quota system raises awareness about women's low participation in positions with power and forces political parties, women themselves, their organizations, and society as a whole to confront the problem.

Miguel suggests several complementary efforts that could strengthen the effectiveness of the quota system: women's political training; the conquest of spaces inside the parties and official bodies; the construction of more equal conjugal relationships; and the public provision of services to facilitate household work.

#### *"Women in Politics, Women in Power" Seminar*

Also in the context of the *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians* project, CFEMEA organized a national seminar entitled *Women in Politics, Women in Power* in the lower chamber of the national legislature in Brasília, May 16-18, 2000. The seminar was carried out in partnership with the *Bancada Feminina* in the National Congress and with the Women's Rights National Council (CNDM), a government body responsible for the formulation of women's public policies. The event was supported by the State Legislative National Union (UNALE), the Brazilian Municipal Administration Institute (IBAM), the Brazilian Women Articulation (AMB), the Feminist Studies Magazine (REF), the

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The event brought together researchers from universities, specialists from women's organizations and articulations, representatives of governmental and international institutions, elected women, women candidates for the next elections, feminist and women's movements, women's rights organizations, and members of political parties and trade unions. There was significant coverage of the event in the media. During the seminar, CFEMEA released its publication on sex quotas, as well as the *Councilor's Primer 2000: technical assistance to women candidates*.

The seminar presented an assessment of the first experiences with the quota system and a discussion of strategies for women's empowerment in politics. The testimonies and reflections of the women politicians were extremely rich because they not only expressed women's difficulties, but also their strength and capacity to perform public functions. Their speeches reinforced the importance of promoting solidarity among women who occupy positions of power.

The seminar also led to the production of a dossier, *Women in Politics, Women in Power (2001)*, published in *Estudios Feministas* (Feminist Studies), which compiles the speeches and texts presented in the seminar and includes articles by other researchers.

### **The Democratization of Representative Politics and the Female Political Agenda**

In the *Mapping Women Politics: federal and state parliamentarians* project, CFEMEA has pursued two specific lines of work: first, efforts to democratize representative politics; and second, efforts to strengthen the connections between female candidates and officials and the political agenda of women and women's movements.

#### *Democratizing Representative Politics*

The feminist and women's movements act in the field of participatory politics. Some of them have strongly criticized representative politics, as have many researchers, who suggest that representative politics in the State sphere reinforces discriminatory, excluding, corrupting practices. Participatory politics, on the other hand, developed in the context of the civil society, tends to promote inclusive, equal, idealist, sympathetic and transparent action.

We believe, however, that representative politics play an important social role, and both representative and participatory politics are expressions



of citizenship. They each incorporate specific kinds of organization and intervention in society; therefore, they complement each other. The more they are connected, the better for the construction and consolidation of democracy. Today's democracies must democratize representative politics and make its mechanisms transparent in order to guarantee the meaningful inclusion and participation of currently excluded segments of society. This involves deep changes in values, mentalities and political practices.

In Brazil, the democratization of representative politics necessarily involves broad political reform. Changes must include the creation of a positive and stimulating space for women's participation, supported by affirmative action, as well as their monitoring and assessment.

#### **Campaign Finance Reform**

A crucial and essential instrument to promote the democratization of representative politics is to make the financing of electoral campaigns exclusively public, because this opens new opportunities for participation, equalizes competitive conditions and contributes to the autonomy and independence of the candidates from economic lobbies. Public financing must establish that a minimum percentage of resources should be assigned to female candidates.

#### **Affirmative Action in Electoral Law**

The starting point of this issue is the presence of women in the electoral processes. In Latin America, women occupy 14 percent of the seats in the parliamentary houses, according to Htun and Mark (2002). Since 1996, following Argentina and Brazil's initiative, eight Latin America countries have adopted a quota system for female representation, ranging from 20 percent (Ecuador) to 40 percent (Costa Rica).

Htun and Mark (2002) classify the first Latin American experiences with electoral quotas into three groups of countries: the more successful cases are in Argentina (Chamber of Deputies) and Paraguay (Senate), characterized by a closed list system and mandates for the placement of women; Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Venezuela (but not Bolivia), presenting a good performance with a closed list system that defines the percentage of women's participation, but not their positions on the list; and Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Peru, showing weak results (except Ecuador) with a simple open list system. In this group of countries, there is a quota for women on the ballots, but no direct correspondence with the number of women actually elected.

The Brazilian case is considered a problematic one. In the 2002 elections, as in the previous ones (1996, 1998 and 2000), the parties did not

fill the minimum 30 percent quota for female candidates, but Brazilian legislation does not stipulate any penalty for this. In 2002, there was a significant rise in the number of women elected: eight senators (plus two incumbents, for a total of ten); 42 federal deputies; and 133 state/district deputies. However, this rise did not represent a considerable change in the political scenery. The women only reached 8.7 percent participation in the National Congress, and 12.5 percent in the state/district assemblies. Of the 186 countries that have legislative institutions in the world, Brazil is in the group with the worst performance in terms of women's political representation in the Lower House: less than 10 percent.<sup>3</sup>

Brazil presents a real paradox. On one hand, as Htun (2002) points out, Brazil has several vibrant feminist movements that have accumulated significant experience in promoting women's political rights and since the 1980s, have made many gains, including women's rights councils, public policies on health and sexuality, violence against women, and sex quotas in proportional elections (or "list elections"). On the other hand, women are largely excluded from the positions of power in the political scenario. Strong, long-term political will is needed to implement public policies focused on affirmative action to change this scenario.

If the Brazilian electoral system continues to be based on the proportional open list system<sup>4</sup>, it will be essential to maintain the sex quotas (minimum and maximum levels for each sex), and to adopt other measures. If the electoral system adopts the closed list system<sup>5</sup>, it will be important to maintain the quotas and guarantee the placement of the women in strategic positions on the list. Consideration might be given to the parity laws that were first implemented in the 2001 French municipal elections, with the presence of an equal number of women and men on alternate positions in the parties' closed lists. Alternatively, detailed

<sup>3</sup> On the opposite end of this spectrum, in only 15 countries do women represent more than 30 percent of elected officials ([www.ipu.org/wmn-e](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e)). This has motivated 75 countries worldwide to adopt some kind of quotas ([www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)).

<sup>4</sup> In "list elections", or proportional elections, voters choose among lists of candidates presented by the different political parties, each voter voting for the list of his or her favored party. Representatives are then elected from the parties' lists, in proportion to the number of votes the list receives. In closed list systems, the party specifies the sequence of the candidates on the list, voters indicate their preference for a specific list. The proportion of votes for each list determine the number of candidates who are elected—in the sequence in which they appear on the list. In an open list system, voters choose individual candidates on the list of the party that they prefer, and the order in which candidates are elected is determined by the number of individual votes they receive. In a closed list system, public financial support would go to the party and to the party's list of candidates as a whole.

<sup>5</sup> Placing the minimum number of women in the bottom slots on a closed list would do little to facilitate their election.

specifications of how the lists of candidates are to be drawn up may be an effective strategy; in Argentina, as of 1991, the closed list system specifies alternation—men and women cannot occupy more than two consecutive places on the list. Either of these alternatives could be effective in guaranteeing women seats in the legislature.

### **Political Party Reform**

Although the adoption of the sex quota system in electoral processes is fundamental to promote women's political participation, it is not enough. Political parties serve as the entryway to political representation and some political parties in Brazil have indeed been making efforts to promote women's political participation. The more progressive ones have women's bureaus or commissions to fight for women's rights. A few have statutes that require the observance of sex quotas in the composition of their leadership. There is also a draft bill now before the National Congress, supported by the *Bancada Feminina*, that proposes that at least 30 percent of the annual funds of political parties and 30 percent of their free advertising time be used to promote women's political participation. It would also regulate exclusive public financial support and proposes the closed list system, including the sex quota, but not placement by sex.

### *Elected Women and the Feminist Agenda*

Women's presence in spaces of power is extremely important and expresses social diversity and equality of rights and opportunities. A political system that is almost totally male threatens democracy. However, women's presence in political spheres does not guarantee the promotion of gender-sensitive policy or of the women's movements' political agendas. According to studies by Malheiros (2002), women's political history has, basically, two different origins: social movements, especially community organizations and unions; and families with a strong political tradition. In the first case, women build their own political heritage; in the second case, they launch themselves into politics through their families, which does not exclude the possibility of affirming themselves through their own performance. In either case, only in rare exceptions do we find women who emerge from the feminist and women's movements.

According to Rodrigues (2002), women parliamentarians welcome and more vigorously support the women's movement and the Action Platform, regardless of their political-ideological positions. There are exceptions on subjects related to concrete moral or religious issues, such as abortion. In national politics, the correlation between elected women

and the defense of women's rights may be explained by the political consciousness developed by the *Bancada Feminina*.

However, it is also clear that women in politics have not necessarily promoted the political agenda of the women's movements. For example, some female parliamentarians do not defend the quota system. They consider that these appointments, which are a prerogative of the president of the country, should be based only on political criteria and the individual's qualifications. The women's movements point to the importance of including the sex criterion in order to affect important political decisions that could contribute to women's empowerment.

The identification of the elected women and of female candidates with the women's movements can only be constructed through men and women's political awareness, which in turn, requires the approval of legislation and the implementation of public policies that include a gender perspective. Accordingly, in addition to the fight for women's presence in politics, it is necessary to affirm and give wide diffusion to feminist platforms, and to establish links between politicians of both sexes and the feminist and women's movements. CFEMEA has extended its communication to the 7,001 female municipal council members and 317 women mayors elected in October 2000. In March 2001, these women started to receive the *Jornal Fêmea*, which is considered a fundamental information source for the councilors; in most cases it is their only systematic source of information on women's citizenship and empowerment.

In 2003, CFEMEA began to use its newsletter to systematically publish all relevant legislation approved in the state and local spheres. An example of important legislation is Law 11667/99, passed in the state of Pernambuco, that regulates the integration of the gender perspective into social development programs in urban and rural areas. Another example is Law 8584/00, passed in the municipality of Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, determining a minimum quota of 30 percent and a maximum of 70 percent for each sex in the composition of collective organisms, commissions, and remunerated posts under municipal administration.

#### **Articulating Women's Presence and Women's Agendas**

The English political scientist Ann Phillips (2001) reflected on the development of a policy of presence and a policy of ideas. Phillips considers that our hopes for the development of a just, representative system rest on connecting presence and ideas. We believe that both—the struggle for women's presence in politics (mainly into representative politics, where women face more obstacles) and the struggle for the affirmation of women's rights—are essential and need to be considered together. These

two challenges are complementary and the more they are connected, the stronger democracy will be.

In Brazil, both struggles are present in the political scenery. The first important campaign for women's political participation, in 1996, resulted in the conquest of quotas in electoral legislation. The *Mulheres Sem Medo do Poder* (*Women Fearless of Power*) campaign was then developed, with the release of political primers and the development of political training courses for municipal council candidates. In 2000, the Women's Rights National Council (CNDM) produced a twenty-minute video entitled *Women in Politics, Women in Power*, in partnership with UNIFEM. The CNDM used the video to promote women's support of female candidates in the 2000 municipal elections.

CFEMEA and CNDM also promoted the radio campaign *Women in Politics, Women in Power*. The campaign's objective was to call voters' attention to the importance of female candidates and the need to include the defense of women's rights in campaign platforms. Currently, the campaign *O Olhar Feminino sobre a Reforma Política* (*The Feminine View of Political Reform*) aims to increase women's political participation. In September 2003, the *Women's Multi-partisan National Committee* was created with the participation of all political forces to support the adoption of legal mechanisms to promote women's political participation.

There is a long history of struggle for women's rights in Brazil. An expressively national campaign was *Constituinte pra valer tem que ter Palavra de Mulher* (*A Reliable Constitution Must Include Women's Words*), launched by CNDM during the elaboration of the Constitution in 1987. Women sent a letter stating their demands (*Carta aos Constituintes*) to parliamentarians. Eighty percent of these demands were included in the new Constitution. Initiatives on feminist electoral platforms were consolidated during the 1990s, reaching their climax with the platform approved at the Brazilian Women's National Conference in 2002.

This *Feminist Political Platform* (2002) was discussed by more than 5,000 Brazilian women in state conferences that preceded the National Conference. It covered political, social, economic and cultural questions, including reflections and proposals on: the construction of democracy in interpersonal relationships; the confrontation of the social inequalities of the Brazilian development model; and the perverse consequences of globalization. It was formulated as a platform for society, though it had been launched some months before the national and state elections, offering many proposals to candidates.

It is fundamental to promote links not only between feminist platforms and women officials, but also between feminist platforms and

women's organizations within political parties. CFEMEA coordinated a meeting of these organizations, in May 2003, with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation/Latin American Institute for Social Economic Development (FES/ILDES), and the female caucus in the National Congress. The event brought together women's groups from 11 political parties to share experiences and discuss women's political participation, affirmative action and political reform. This improved dialogue among them and helped them realize that despite their ideological and political differences, they are jointly able to open spaces in politics and build a common agenda.

Although feminist platforms had their origins in feminist and women's movements, they deal with the world's problems and contribute to the construction of a new society. As women defend equality of rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women in the public and private spheres, they are promoting a more just, equitable and democratic society for everyone.

### **Contribution of Women Officials to Social Development**

Before closing, let us address the question of elected women's contributions to social development, considering: women's presence and participation in the political processes; and their contribution to establishing a specific agenda for social development.

Elected women have been contributing to the democratization of political processes and political institutions by bringing to political practices their experience in problem-solving based on dialogue and negotiation. However, this must not be considered any essentially feminine trait; rather, it has been socially built and gradually consolidated. In this process, women have been stimulated to develop affective, receptive and sympathetic expressions, and not to make use of physical violence.

Elected women's commitments to social development have also made it possible to construct a policy agenda attuned to the needs of several different segments of society. Women are historically committed to people's welfare and happiness—dimensions that have traditionally been relegated to second place on the political agenda. Elected women tend to take a lead in debates about poverty, social exclusion, and how to confront them. They engage with the marginalized and vulnerable segments of society, like children, adolescents, the elderly, the handicapped and the poor. Of course, this does not mean that all women politicians assume this agenda, nor does it mean that this is only a women's prerogative or that male politicians cannot express these concerns.

We conclude that elected women's greatest contribution to social development emerges from their identification and connections with the feminist movements. When they become conscious of the world history of struggle for women's rights and establish a link to the agendas of these movements, they develop a very special view of, and sensitivity to, social issues.

More than establishing an agenda, women may bring a new way of viewing the world—a gender perspective. They can promote gender equality and equity in all social and institutional processes, in practical daily relations, and especially in legislation and public policies. A gender perspective must also be included in the mass media to encourage citizens to deconstruct prejudices, sexism and racism. In Brazil, few companies do politically correct advertising on TV that would promote women's rights and racial and ethnic diversity. The Federal Government has used the media to send messages against domestic violence and in favor of sexual health, but not to promote the sharing of domestic tasks and child care by men and women.

It is also essential to understand that the positions occupied by elected women, whether in the legislative or executive powers, are public positions usually connected with a specific political project. This means that feminist proposals must establish a dialogue with other social proposals, such as human development and ecological sustainability, in order to construct wider projects for society as a whole.

The incorporation and ongoing practice of a gender perspective requires that we continually monitor: men and women's commitment to social development processes; the results of development programs for men and women; female and male perspectives on gender stereotypes; the relations between men and women, and the relations among men and among women.

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## Promoting Women's Participation in Local Electoral Politics in Thailand: A Study of Two Women's Organizations

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### Introduction

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that was never colonized; it is a Buddhist country; and it is a kingdom ruled by a constitutional monarch. In 1932, after 700 years of absolute monarchy, the country shifted to constitutional monarchy and men and women received the right to vote and to stand for election. However, women's participation in the formal political system evolved slowly and remains low. It took 17 years for the first Thai woman to be elected to Parliament in 1949. The percentage of women in Parliament has varied from 3 to 9 percent (Kothom et al, 1997). At the local level, women were not allowed to be village or sub-district heads until 1982, when they began to occupy one to two percent of these positions. A landmark law on decentralization at the sub-district level was passed in 1994, allowing local village women to enter sub-district politics. Some urban-based women's organizations and women academics prepared rural women to run for the first Sub-district Administration Organization (SAO) election held in May 1995. The SAO elections have continued every year since then, and the number of elected women has been slowly increasing.

This study focuses on the training and campaign efforts of two women's organizations. The first was the Consortium of Regional Training to Promote Women's Candidacy (the "Consortium"), aimed at promoting women candidates in local politics. It was formed by a group of women's organizations consisting of female academics and grassroots women leaders. The other group, Gender Watch Network (the "Gender Group"), was led by a woman's organization called Gender and Development Research Institute (GDRI). One of GDRI's main activities has been to increase the representation of village women in politics (Thomson and Thomson, 1993).

The objectives of this study are first to illustrate some strategies that these two women's organizations have used to help grassroots women overcome the obstacles to entering politics; second, to discuss some insti-

tutional mechanisms, such as a quota system, that women's organizations have used to promote an increase in women's representation, and finally, to consider what Thai women might contribute, once elected, to promote a gender-responsive agenda, and transform political culture and the social development agenda.

This text is based on three resources: the author's past experience with Thai women's organizations, especially with the two organizations in this study; secondary written material; and interviews with six key persons, including two well-known female activists and a female politician. All the interviewees have played a pioneering role in promoting female political participation in Thailand.

The paper is arranged in three parts. The first part provides a brief background on Thailand. It describes the changing political system and the history of women's political participation in Thailand. The second part describes the experiences of two women's organizations in mobilizing grassroots women to participate in SAO elections. The third part analyzes the implications and outcomes of these experiences by discussing current debates on quotas for women, constraining and facilitating factors, and the impact of elected women on women and society. Also included are lessons learned from Thai women's experiences in political participation and social development.

## Context and Background

### *Thailand Overview and its Political Structure: A Brief Overview*

The Kingdom of Thailand is situated in the heart of Southeast Asia, roughly equidistant from India and China. The country shares borders with Myanmar to the west and north, Lao P.D.R. to the north and northeast, Cambodia to the east, and Malaysia to the south. Thailand has a population of about 63 million, of which about 10 million live in the capital city of Bangkok. Ninety-five percent of Thais are Buddhist and almost 100 percent speak Thai, the national language. The country is divided into 76 provinces, each of which is sub-divided into districts, sub-districts and villages.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the national administration structure had three levels: central, provincial and local. The 1914 Local Administration Act allowed villagers to elect their village heads, who in turn selected the head of the Sub-district Council (SC). For 80 years the SC had no real authority because it had no independent source of revenue. Although both men and women could vote, only men could be the village heads.

The 1932 Constitution, which created the formal democratic process, was diluted soon afterward when an absolute dictator seized power. Only

in 1973, a significant student uprising promoted true democracy and achieved a turning point in the Thai political system. However, the right-wing government returned in 1976 and urban educated dissenters went underground or fled to the jungle. The government in the 1980s was more responsive to the increasing demands of the growing urban, educated middle class and there was increasing dialogue between civilians and intellectuals. Dissenters were lured back to the mainstream by an amnesty decree. Along with this change, there were debates about upgrading the sub-district councils (SC) to independent entities. The Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administration Organization (SAO) Act upgraded all 6,781 SCs to legal entities and upgraded all SCs that had collected an annual revenue of at least 150,000 baht<sup>1</sup> in the past three consecutive years (1991-93) to SAOs. In the following year, a total of 513 SCs became SAOs and the first SAO election was held. Both SCs and SAOs remain an integral part of the regional/provincial administration under the Ministry of Interior.

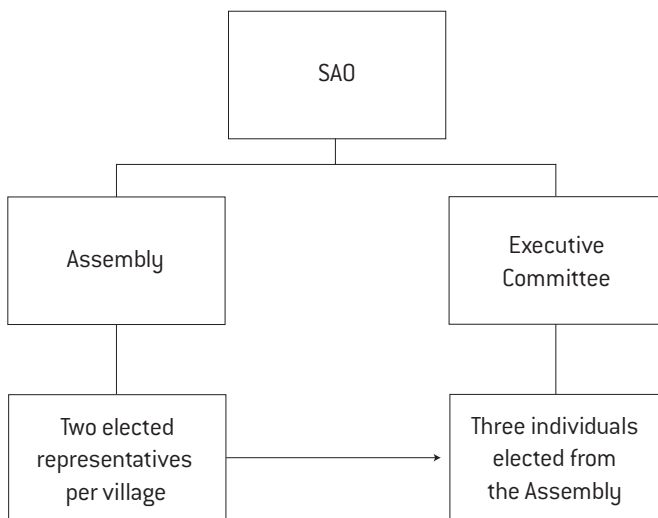
The structure of Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAO) was a replica of the national bicameral system, consisting of a SAO Assembly and a SAO Committee. Initially, the Assembly was made up of elected village representatives and ex-officio members. In 1998, the ex-officio members were eliminated and since then the SAO have elected members only. Any sub-district or village head that wants to be part of the SAO must resign from his or her post (Figure 12.1). By 2003, all but about 200 SCs had become SAOs.

### *Growth of Women's Political Participation in Thailand*

Thai women have participated in political reform from inside and outside the electoral system. Initially, successful women representatives were mostly family members of male politicians. Outside the formal political structure were elite Bangkok women who engaged in politics through professional women's associations or city wives' clubs. Being wealthy and highly educated, their primary concern was women's right to manage their own property and freedom to engage in business after marriage. A small group of elite women<sup>2</sup> launched a campaign in the 1970s to engage male politicians in debate on women's status (Supathra, 1982; Asavaroengchai, 1988). Although scholars and the younger generation of university students did not take them seriously, some male politicians

<sup>1</sup> In 1991, the exchange rate of Thai baht was 26 per U.S. dollar. As such, this figure was equivalent to annual revenue of approximately US\$5770.

<sup>2</sup> They belonged to the National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT) and Association of Women Lawyers of Thailand (AWLT) and were led by Khunying Supathra Singholka, a wealthy business woman and law graduate from Thammasat University.

**Figure 12.1 SAO Structure as of 1999**

were sensitized.<sup>3</sup> In the 1980s, young women in NGOs addressed other women's issues, such as the plight of factory women, slum women and prostitutes (Tantiwiranond and Pandey, 1990). Another success came in 1982 when a woman Member of Parliament<sup>4</sup> submitted an amendment proposal to allow women to be elected as village and subdistrict heads, which Parliament approved in 1988 (Thomson, 1995).

To implement community development programs in 1983, the Ministry of the Interior established a village committee in each village. As women were not likely to be appointed to any of the positions of the village committee, women advocates worked through the national women

<sup>3</sup> After the fall of the military dictatorship in 1973, when the constitution was rewritten, a member of AWLT, Wimolsiri Jamnarvej, was appointed to the drafting committee. She was instrumental in supporting the voice of elite women advocates and negotiating for the insertion of the clause "men and women have equal rights" in the 1974 constitution.

<sup>4</sup> Khunying Kanok Samsenil, daughter of a former MP and younger sister of Khunying Kanitha Wichiancharoen, who was once President of AWLT and later founder of Association for the Promotion of Women's Status (APSW).

machinery, the National Commission of Women's Affairs (NCWA). They lobbied the Ministry of Interior, who agreed to require the district-level officials to set up a women's section within the village committee in 1992. The Ministry of Interior also ordered that every SC must invite village committee members of the women's affairs section to be observers at the SC meetings. These campaigns, from 1987 to 1991, raised female awareness of their rights to public roles. The campaign generated a wave of training to promote grassroots women's participation in community development planning in their village committees (TDRI, 1991).

The continuity of a feudal culture, which included vote buying and nepotism, undermined the voting process in rural areas. To counter the tendency of subdistrict and village heads to appoint their wives or their friends who are not particularly interested in women's development issues, women's organizations and NGOs organized various leadership-training programs for grassroots women. While these women's organizations were unsuccessful in achieving female quotas for the election for SCs or SAOs, they heightened women's awareness and eagerness to participate in these political entities (Nawarat, 1994). The SC and SAO Bill came into effect in March 1995. It allowed the sub-district to collect local taxes, and local people to control the direction of local development processes. With their own revenue, they can be a counterpart to the central government in planning. The new possibility of achieving village-level representation triggered the imagination and enthusiasm of Thai village women, catalyzed by urban women's organizations. They linked their public roles to what they had been doing—managing their home and communities. Elite women and urban educated middle class women began to join hands in promoting their less-advantaged rural sisters into politics. They revised their training curriculum from community development leadership to preparing grassroots women to contest for SAO seats (Pandey and Tantiwiramanond, 1998).

After the 1995 Beijing World Women's Conference, more groups were formed to promote women in politics. NGOs also began to encourage women to participate in politics and housewives' groups formed by the Ministry of Interior at the provincial, district, sub-district and village levels, also helped in this process. They shared a common aim to change women's role in politics from passive observers to active participants in SAO elections. Cross-class interaction among women intensified when the government launched a nationwide public hearing to draft the 1997 constitution. Women's organizations formed the Women Constitution Network (WCN) to more effectively educate women about their right to be included in the new constitution.

The following sections describe two women's organizations: the Consortium of Regional Training to Promote Women Candidacy ("Consortium") and Gender Watch Network ("Gender Group"). The case of Consortium demonstrates a horizontal linkage of university-based training groups initiated by external funding agencies to prepare women for the second SAO election in 1996. The case of Gender Group shows a continued effort by women's organizations to promote women's political rights vertically, at both the national and local levels.

## The Experiences of Two Women's Organizations in Thailand

### Case I: *Consortium of Regional Training to Promote Women's Candidacies*

Realizing that women's participation in politics is low compared to their economic contribution, and that women had a low success rate in the first SAO election in 1995, three women's programs<sup>5</sup> launched a project to train village women to run for the second SAO elections in April, 1996. A team of trainers at each regional university—in North, Northeast and South—was identified to form a Consortium of Regional Training.<sup>6</sup> The project was launched in each region, with a two-phase workshop model: the first phase offered a one- or two-day workshop on the rules and regulations of SAO; the second phase dealt with strengthening the potential of women candidates by offering them training in campaign strategies and techniques.

#### Trainee Selection

The three regions had slightly different procedures for selecting the trainees. In the South, the team went directly to the sub-district and village heads, asking them to nominate suitable trainees and inform the potential trainees of the workshop. However, some sub-district or village heads refused to do this, or ended up sending more men than women. Male dominance created an uneasy environment for women at the Southern workshops.

The Northeast team appointed a group of students to go to each village and ask village women to name four to five potential women participants. A sub-district list was then given to the respective sub-district and village heads so that they could officially invite the selected village women. It worked in most cases, but in others names were either changed or the selected women were not informed.

<sup>5</sup> AusAID (through its Thai-Australian Cooperative Assistance Project or TACAP), the Asia Foundation (TAF) and Fredrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).

<sup>6</sup> They were in the north, the Lanna Women Center, Chiang Mai University; in the northeast, Women's Studies Center, Khon Kaen University; and in the south, Women's Research and Development Center of Songkhla University and Southern Women Leaders' Club, Songkhla.

The North had the benefit of an existing network of grassroots women. They also had good contact with local NGOs, which helped them to identify the right women participants. Whenever a woman did not attend the workshop, they would promptly send a staff member and a van to bring her on the following day. The important matters (especially the budget) were discussed the second day to keep most people in attendance until the end.

### Training Contents

Trainers first attended a group exercise at a national workshop to standardize the curriculum and develop a basic format. Phase One workshops covered the rules, roles and functions of SAO, including how to apply for candidacy and who is eligible. They also covered gender awareness and the need for men to support women. Phase Two workshops included: village problems and alternative solutions (village mapping); and testimonies and experience shared by successful and unsuccessful past candidates or women who served as role models in training on campaign strategies (for example, how to make posters and give public speeches). Everyone was allowed an opportunity to speak, followed by feedback about their performance from the coordinator or sometimes the participants. This opportunity to speak and receive immediate feedback was identified as the highlight of the second phase.

### Project Outcomes: Model and Result

The trained women were very positive about the project. They said that both the workshops were necessary and helpful in building a knowledge base and strengthening capacity for political participation. The interval between the two phases allowed women to reflect and test their new knowledge, or to think about which women to nominate or support. Some women in the South suggested that the phase one workshop should be two or three days long. Contrary to the belief that village women may be too busy, these women were motivated to spend that much time because the contents were useful and they were hungry for knowledge. They also said that it takes time for village women to grasp all the material. According to them, a slower pace and a longer workshop would be more helpful.

As an outcome of this training, women **showed creativity** in campaign publicity. Many men offered support in different ways. Some husbands accompanied their wives during their door-to-door campaign. Some erected stages for their wives to make public speeches or located eligible voters who lived outside their village. Some did the housework to support their wives' political work.

In many cases, trained women appeared to be **more knowledgeable** than many men in their villages and taught them about SAO. They were

not shaky or nervous and could deliver a well-informed and balanced public speech. They were confident and proud of their performance.

Women **practiced what they learned**—visiting people in the community, sharing knowledge and participating in the community affairs, such as marriages or funerals. Many trainees visited and gave each other support. Since many villages' demarcations are recent, and relatives tend to be distributed in nearby villages, some women worked out a strategy to exchange votes: "You vote for my cousin in your village, and I'll vote for your cousin in my village."

### **Election Outcome**

In Phase One, in all three regions combined, about 2,000 people from 39 sub-districts (about 55 from each sub-district, and twice as many women as men) were educated in the role, function and opportunities of the SAO. In Phase Two, about 170 women candidates were prepared for the election. The result was that almost half the trainees in the North and Northeast were elected to SAO. Almost all the elected women in those subdistricts had participated in training. Even though the percentage of elected women in each area was lower than the target of 10 percent, it was still about twice the regional average. The national average of elected women was 7.9 percent of the total elected from 71 provinces (Election Division, 1996).<sup>7</sup> The rate of success among trained women was high (50 to 70 percent), while the national average was 35 percent.

Among those women who were not elected, many were motivated to remain politically active, either wanting to stand for the next election, to support other women, or to remain active in the community. A woman candidate in Phayao who just lost an election said, "I will now start a citizen's group." The side effect of the training was familiarizing the public with the new political processes and making men more aware of women's potential. Seeds were sown and the germinating process had begun.

### **Impact of training**

Political training was helpful both at the societal and the individual level. Rural Thai people are still uneasy about women's political participation. They insist women know little and that their place is at home, caring

<sup>7</sup> The election results cannot be totally attributed to training. They may be explained by the practices of traditional rural areas where women's participation is still resented (some villages do not have any woman candidate) and where electoral success depends largely on kinship groups or the service record of individuals. The real value and success of the training workshops was to increase gender sensitivity, the confidence of the women participants, and the political socialization of village people.



for family members. But with the help of a project like this, women are proving that they are capable of public work. Projects such as this are beginning to help initiate a transition in the perception of men about the political role of women. Training is essential for building the capacity of village women. The consortium project made an important impact on their empowerment, increasing their knowledge, improving their attitude and confidence, and developing their skills.

***Case II: Gender Group (Gender Watch Network)***

Gender Group consists of a small group of women NGO workers based in Bangkok and a network of grassroots women leaders in different regions of Thailand. Its primary mandate is to monitor the gender policies adopted by governmental agencies and political parties. The Gender Development Research Institute (GDRI) serves as the secretariat of the network.<sup>8</sup> GDRI was a pioneer in promoting women in political participation in the 1990s and was a major driving force in sensitizing policy makers as well as building the capacity of grassroots women. Its objectives and activities have enabled more women to get involved in politics. GDRI has five objectives (GDRI, 1996):

- to carry out action research on policy issues that address the strategic needs of women to advance toward a more equitable society;
- to promote the democratization of political development by broadening the base of women's participation in public life;
- to support the full and equal participation of women in power structures and decision making at all levels;
- to promote positive images of women to influence the creation and the transformation of policies affecting women;
- to eliminate gender bias in laws, policies and practices.

Compared to other women's organizations that assist women as victims, GDRI took a positive approach that women are "doers" and "achievers" who only need encouragement and support from outsiders. GDRI's primary focus has been on disseminating information on women's contribution to national development and to the understanding of factors that influence gender roles. During the first six years, its priority was

<sup>8</sup> During the first six years, three major funding sources were UNIFEM, The Asia Foundation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

mainstreaming gender issues in national development policy. Instead of portraying women as the victims of social vices, GDRI introduced positive images of Thai women to change the prevailing social attitude through two annual programs: a photo contest on "Women at Work" and the selection of "Outstanding Women". Winners of both initiatives are given awards on International Women's Day. A directory of outstanding women in different professions, not just the winners, was published to counter the claims often made by male decision makers that "there are not enough capable women."

#### **Activities at the National Level**

To mainstream women's concerns into the policy agenda, GDRI campaigned with political party leaders, election candidates and voters to get its message across to different target audiences. GDRI, in collaboration with other women's organizations, pushed to include a guarantee of women's rights in the 1997 Constitution. It campaigned (unsuccessfully) for a quota (one man and one woman per village) in SAO elections in 1999 and to revise regulations for the Village Fund.

In June 2001, GDRI and other women's organizations submitted an open letter to the Prime Minister, urging him to revise the Rules for Village (and Urban Community) Fund, explaining how the existing rules marginalize women. According to the rules, the selection procedure requires the village head (98 percent are men) to call for a meeting of all household heads (75 percent are men) to select the committee members among those who attend the meeting. Such a meeting would have low attendance of women, who would not likely be selected. Consequently, the Prime Minister ordered a change in Clause 16 that requires an equal number of women and men among the 9-15 committee members.

To bring about changes in policy mechanisms, GDRI focuses on political parties and the government. Before the 1991 elections, GDRI invited leaders of political parties to present their positions on women's issues at meetings attended by local women leaders in ten provinces in the four regions of Thailand. This practice has been repeated whenever there is a general election. Since 1992, GDRI, in cooperation with other women's organizations, has also invited newly-formed governments to respond to issues raised by women's organizations.

#### **Activities at the Local Level**

Recognizing that a gender aspect was missing in the draft SAO bill, GDRI launched a three-year project (November 1992 to May 1994) to raise women's awareness of the importance of active participation in

the local administration and to propose a quota system for members in SAO Assembly. Activities included several educational and consciousness-raising meetings<sup>9</sup> that gave participants a clearer understanding of the new legislation on SC and SAO. They also formed a Gender Watch Network to strengthen women's capacity to participate effectively in local administration.

From January 1994 to May 1995, GDRI carried out a project (funded by Fredric Ebert Stiftung—FES) to raise awareness of the importance of women in local administration and to increase their leadership skills and confidence in running for the SAO. The target areas included three provinces: Khon Kaen, Phitsanuloke and Songkhla (village head elections—118 participants), and four provinces: Pathumthani, Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Nayok and Kanchanaburi (SAO elections). Activities included carrying out surveys on the needs and constraints of women's participation in local politics and producing training modules for women candidates in local elections (Thomson, 1994; Thomson, 1995).

After the failure to persuade the legislatures to impose the quota of one man/one woman per village for the SAO election in 1994, GDRI focused on increasing the skills of local women leaders to run for SAO election. Subsequently, elected women found that they lacked confidence in their role, partly because of the lack of understanding of official routine related to rules and regulations, and partly because of the male-dominated work environment. In 1996-1997, GDRI held four training sessions in different provinces in the central plains for female members of SAO, followed by training that also included male members. The training integrated gender issues, but emphasized efficient work, while promoting cooperation between women and men in community development.

#### **Outcome, Products and Results**

During its first six years, GDRI contributed to a number of positive changes at the national level. Specifically, it collaborated with other NGOs to

<sup>9</sup> Meeting: "SC and the Establishment of Democracy: Gender issues to be considered", 30 November 1992 (150 participants attended to exchange views and give consensus on proposing quota for women in the SAO Assembly); Meeting: "Draft Legislatures on SC and SAO: Decentralization of administrative power", 27 June 1993 (collaborating with Parliamentary Committee on Administration and Pro-democracy Group, 200 participants attended to deliberate the draft); Meeting: "Gender Issues in Local Administration" (50 activists from NGOs, academics and women's organizations participated in this brainstorming session on strategies and actions to be taken by all the relevant organizations, after the promulgation of SAO Bill that ignored the proposed quota for women); Meeting to mobilize local women leaders to be involved in the SAO election (collaborated with Women Study Center of Khon Kaen University), on 15 May 1994 (120 participants).

have Article 24 included in the 1997 Constitution, guaranteeing women's rights. 126 of GDRI's women trainees decided to run for SAO election and 64 were elected. They also formed a network where 45-60 percent of the women who won the election began to develop their own training programs for other women. The annual photo contest on the theme of working women increases the visibility of women's potential and ability. GDRI's Directories on outstanding women in eleven occupations serve as collections of new role models for younger women. The sex disaggregated statistics on the contribution and participation of women in economic and political spheres and the annual pamphlets are handy for students, policy makers and other interested parties.

### **Constraining Factors**

Two obstacles GDRI faced were the lack of human resources and funds. It is difficult to secure local funding for research work because most Thai philanthropists do not identify with the issue of gender inequality. Thus, GDRI has tried to establish a foundation for women's empowerment by seeking support from the business sector (GDRI, 1996). Dependence on external financial support also disrupts the continuity of the programs.

In order to be a driving force to sustainable change, women's organizations must be able to influence the decision of policy makers and national leaders, and must have a clear mission that is well recognized and accepted by the national administration body. The latter characteristic is important as it facilitates the implementation of projects as well as creating an entitlement for national budget allocation. In this context, GDRI is still far from being a driving force to create a movement toward gender equality.

### **Facilitating Factors**

Factors contributing to the success of GDRI are the social capital of the director and its patron—APSW—and her professional links to institutions. The most important ingredients for GDRI's success are the ability to compile and use official gender statistics (to present a factual and clear picture to policy makers) and to carry out action research (to immediately present specific findings within a time frame). Through its positive problem-solving approach, GDRI has been able to identify the common ground for the stakeholders and to involve more partners. By networking with different women's and men's groups, GDRI increases its bargaining power in campaigns for women's advancement and gender equality.

In spite of many difficulties, various small achievements amount to a leap forward for Thai society: successfully including a clause in the Constitution to guarantee the equal rights of women and men; enabling

state policy makers to see women's issues more clearly; pushing for women-friendly rules and regulations; and changing social attitudes about women's and men's roles and capacity for gender equality in society.

## Analysis

### *Quota System*

According to the new decentralization regulations in Thailand, each village elects two representatives to the SAO. Women academics and activists have supported a quota of one man and one woman from each village. They feel that the quota will increase the number of women and their confidence. However, there is still a large group of women, especially the middle class and those who are not involved in the SAO, who are skeptical about the quota system. Following are some of the "pros" and "cons" presented in the ongoing debates on the quota system:

**Con:** *A quota contradicts the principle of equality. If everyone is equal then why privilege one over the other? It is undemocratic.*

**Pro:** Democracy is based on the principle of equality, but not all people are born equal. There are various fundamental factors in Thai society and culture, such as gender and family status, which make Thai people unequal in terms of access to opportunities for self-development or readiness to serve as people's representatives in politics. Gender inequality is deeply rooted in historically and culturally biased attitudes. Therefore, there is a need to create a special system to level the playing field. Also, democracy requires that the composition of public decision makers must be proportional to the composition of different groups in society so that each group can be fairly represented in the decision-making process. Since women are half of society, half of representatives should be women.

In Thailand, the principle of quotas has, in effect, already been applied. For example, in national elections the areas are divided into provinces. Or in the SAO election, the areas are divided into villages so that the representatives can come from each village. So, a zone-based quota has been applied. Sex should be another parameter to ensure equal representation.

**Con:** *A quota may lead to the election of women who lack ability.*

**Pro:** Women are as capable as men to be politicians. People tend to overlook qualifications such as interest in health, society, environment and small business, regarding these qualifications as simply being female and,

therefore, less important. In fact these qualifications, found in many men and women, are significant to improving our daily lives. People also tend to scrutinize the qualifications of female politicians, but do not question male politicians who may have lower qualifications, particularly in terms of education or accountability.

**Con:** *There are not enough qualified women to fill the positions if the quota for women is imposed.*

**Pro:** In countries that use quotas in local government, such as India and Pakistan, there proved to be enough women candidates to run for the elections. Thai women are ready to participate in development for the common good. In fact, women are the main contributors to the success of various community development projects, such as occupational groups and public health groups.

**Con:** *A quota is a Western concept, not appropriate to Thai society.*

**Pro:** Quotas have been adopted in many countries around the world. A good concept is universal. For example, the basic idea of democracy has its origin in the West, but has been adopted throughout the world.

**Con:** *Women may become puppets of their husbands or families.*

**Pro:** Both women and men may be used initially as puppets. But people have their own mind and conscience. They can develop and mature as independent persons if given the chance.

**Con:** *The use of quotas may create conflict in society ("sex war" or disharmony between men and women).*

**Pro:** Some groups may resist or oppose, but this has tended to be temporary. In France, voters support men and women equally. In a Muslim society such as Pakistan, men support women to run for election in the local government. Thai people in rural areas recognize women's role in the community. For example, quotas have been applied in setting up committees for the Village Fund.

**Con:** *If a quota is reserved for women, then other groups will also demand it.*

**Pro:** If any group has a large constituency that has suffered discrimination, such as women, then that group should be entitled to a quota, to ensure that the people in that group are fairly represented in national politics.

A male academic explains that instead of imposing a quota, more training is needed to prepare women.

*"I believe that if we can prepare women better, then women can get in the SAO more...maybe 100 percent... The training effort should help women demonstrate their abilities. Once women have a chance to demonstrate their capacity, the results can change men's ideas". (Kowitz interview, 2003).*

Another female academic activist, now a senator, strongly supports the quota system:

*"There is a marked difference between a group discussion that has only men and one that has an equal number of men and women. In the Environmental Committee, which has an equal number of women and men, I found that they talked sensibly, more rationally. Their debates are not personal bashing but rather for the common good of the bill." (Pusadee interview 2003)*

During the drafting of the constitution in 1996, women pushed for a one-third quota for women in the Parliament, but failed. The law, however, stipulates that any working committees on bills that relate to women, elderly and children must have women as one-third of the experts. Based on this provision, women mobilized the media and public pressure to push for five women of the total 11 members sitting in the Human Rights Commission.

In another initiative, women strategically approached Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, asking him to consider using a quota to establish the Village Fund committee.

*"We wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, and I, as the most senior person, handed it to him. The letter asked two questions: Does government have a policy of discriminating against women? If not, then it should review Article 16 of the regulation. We submitted the letter at 11 o'clock, before he went out to give a speech at the stadium where 4,500 people gathered from across the country. After speaking for 15 minutes, he said, 'a group of ladies asked me...' He admitted that there is a mistake in the regulation and that the head of the national commission, Deputy Prime Minister Suwit Khunkitti must revise it immediately. We thought that was just a talk, and nothing would happen because 50,000 copies of regulation had already been distributed. Then Suwit gave a press conference that he wanted to amend the regulation so that the composition of the committee (of 9-15 persons) must have 50 percent women". (Thomson interview, 2003).*

### ***Barriers against Women's Political Participation and Efforts to Overcome Them***

The barriers against Thai women are both structural and cultural. Existing official rules and regulations as well as some laws have deprived women of the right to participate in public decision-making. The lack of political networks, and the long-held perception that politics is a male domain keeps women out. Meanwhile, heavy responsibilities as wives and mothers, as well as other economic and community obligations restrict women's opportunities for self-development or improving their knowledge of wider issues.

#### **At the Individual Level: Knowledge and Courage**

Lack of skill, confidence and socialization, combined with family obligations discourage women from participating in political elections and activities. If a woman is the sole elected female in a group, she faces practical problems; for example, sometimes the male members will not inform the woman about the time and the date of meetings. Or sometimes they will try to exclude her from the meeting by holding it at an inconvenient place or at an inconvenient time.

*"One woman member of SAO knew that the male members tried to exclude her from decision-making by arranging the meeting at a difficult place and time, such as holding it at a high mountain area, or at night time. She rode her motorbike to attend the meeting in spite of the difficult terrain. In this case, the woman ... had to jeopardize her safety." (Thomson interview, 2003).*

Some women are also limited by unwillingness or inability to take risks or spend money:

*"They lack resources, lack interest, lack confidence, and lack networks. ... Most women from well-to-do families are victimized by the "nurturing culture"; they are preoccupied with clothing and beautifying themselves. Those who have to struggle for family survival, their hands are tied economically. It takes a lot from a woman to become a public figure. Most importantly, men always have their networks." (Pusadee interview, 2003)*

#### **At the Institutional Level: Rules and Practices**

Women's participation also depends on the maturity of democracy and legal provisions. In spite of the legal amendment in 1982 to open opportunities for women, old laws prevent greater participation. The 1988 amendment limited the terms of village or sub-district heads to five years and a



maximum of two consecutive terms. But applies only to those elected after 1988, so some women have to wait until incumbents reach the age of 60.

**At the Societal Level: Values and Attitudes**

A more substantial obstacle for women's participation is the social stereotype that men are natural leaders and women are natural wives and mothers, who must occupy themselves with housework and caring for others. Women often feel inadequate as mothers and wives if they dedicate too much time to public work. Some also perceive the tasks of peace keeping, crime suppression and robbery as men's business. Thus, even if political space is opened, they are not interested in running for the post of village head.

*"A study finds that people from both the upper and lower classes support these stereotypes about women, and those with more education tend to cling onto these stereotypes more than grassroots people. Another study finds that high-level authorities don't trust women. They say women work with their hearts and not with their heads. Both attitudes and stereotypes affect the appointment and promotion of women to higher position." (Vichit-Vadakan interview, 2003)*

Urban women may have more choices because of education and greater exposure, while rural women are still largely influenced by traditional patriarchal norms.

*"Rural women are willing to be the followers. Value and norms encourage women to be the followers rather than leaders." (Kowit interview, 2003)*

**Impact of Elected Women on Women and Society**

It is expected that once women are in positions of power, they will contribute to social development, both quantitatively and qualitatively. They should enter politics on behalf of women in order to transform and "cleanse" the political culture.

Women advocates like Pusadee feel that women must be inside the political structure to at least ensure that laws are not discriminatory against women:

*"For example, you can implement good policy such as day care in every factory, a one-stop service center in different regions to look after the issue of VAW, and enforce occupational safety, especially in the informal sector where 80 percent of workers are women." (Pusadee interview, 2003)*

A study carried out by Ministry of Interior a few years after decentralization began in 1995 compared the performance of SAOs with women in executive positions to those without. The study found that SAOs with women executives allocated a greater portion of the budget to livelihood issues: 30 percent went to social projects such as caring for the elderly, providing additional occupation or day care centers. For those without women executives, 100 percent of the budget went to building infrastructure, such as roads. (Pusadee interview, 2003)

Another study found that the performance of elected women is hampered mainly because they are the minority in SAOs. Suwanna Manarojanan studied the impact of women elected to SAOs<sup>10</sup> in 2000 in terms of number and performance, such as participation in decision-making. She found that the number of women in executive positions was low—about three percent of the committee. Women’s performance was also low because as the minority, they rarely engaged in debates while men still dominated the floor. (Kowit interview, 2003)

The impact of women in local politics may differ from their impact at the national level. Women at the national level tend to come from upper-class, privileged families. Their priority is to follow party lines for personal survival rather than rocking the boat. Their life experiences are also far removed from the harsher reality of the majority of Thai women. As a result, their perceptions are similar to men and they are unlikely to promote a female agenda.

Simply getting elected into the formal political structure is not enough for women to address social development issues, as the platform is still male-dominated. In addition, elected women without gender training are not necessarily interested in social development, let alone women’s issues, because they are likely to enter via family or monetary connection. Thus, both trained and untrained women inside the political structure need a new platform to continue developing consciousness and understanding of the scope and complexity of women’s and social issues as well as how to address them.

Elected women need more knowledge of laws and bureaucratic procedures. They also need continuing coaching so that they will not be used as vote banks for national elections... There should be a conference for these women to share their experience, like a caucus, so they can empower each other and make an impact on the younger generation (Pusadee interview, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> The study was carried out in five provinces of Greater Bangkok—Pathumthani. There are 200 SAOs. The findings may be true for the north also.

### *Remaining Challenges*

Women's advocates perceive the promotion of female community leaders to be a promising route to effective participation of women in Thai politics. However, grassroots women need substantial training and support. Training should emphasize the political and government-related issues involved in state-run projects. Women should learn about the political processes and approaches at the grassroots level to tackle problems women are facing. Campaign techniques are essential for women candidates to gain support from both sexes.

The training projects described in the case study section had positive impacts, compared to cases in which no training was available. Women in the trained areas became more aware and were enthusiastic to become candidates. More women were elected. Elected women who received training played executive roles more than those in other areas. To widen the impact there is a need to expand the training and to improve its contents:

*"NGOs and academics should work together to produce training materials that have practical information or knowledge. These materials can be useful references for women aspiring to political participation. I think Ratchapak Institutes that are all over the country can be trained or encouraged to work on this issue...to build capacity of local women. But so far nobody is doing that."* (Kowit interview, 2003)

Rural women leaders could benefit substantially from participatory training that allows more participation in group discussion and mutual learning (two-way communication), rather than classroom or top-down lecturing. Some of the training would be targeted to potential candidates, to encourage them to be involved in politics and to provide them with essential knowledge. Complementary training efforts could be targeted to both sexes, in order to discuss the benefit to have women in politics and the potential support that communities can give to their female candidates and elected officials.

Of course, training resources have become scarce. The campaign for women's political participation was at its peak in the mid-1990s, and then subsided after the economic crisis in 1997, when international donors also began to withdraw their support from Thai women's NGOs. As funds are depleting, women's organizations are becoming less active.

Training initiatives could be linked to academic work. University faculty could carry out training on specific issues, since they already have the facilities for teaching, and graduating students need thesis topics. Grants could be provided by different government agencies, such as the Thailand

**Figure 12.2 Women in Thai Politics, 2000-2001**

Positions	Total number	Percentage*	
		Female	Male
<b>NATIONAL GOVERNMENT</b>			
Member of Parliament	500	9.2	90.8
Senator	200	10.0	90.0
Cabinet Members	36	8.0	91.7
<b>ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>			
Provincial Council Member	2,230	6.3	93.7
Municipality Council Member			
Sub-district Head	1,896	6.0	94.0
Village Head			
SAO Members	7,145	1.8	98.2
	61,564	2.4	97.6
	61,234	8.5	91.5
<b>CIVIL SERVICE OFFICERS</b>			
Level 11	22	9.1	90.9
Level 10	185	8.1	91.9
Level 9	311	19.0	81.0
Total	518	14.7	85.3

\*Data for National Government Positions is from 2001. Elected local government data from 2000.

Source: Ministry of Interior and Office of the Civil Service Commission; Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior, Bangkok.  
Source: Office of the Civil Service Commission

Research Fund or universities. The Consortium project experience may provide useful lessons to support the design and development of such a fund.

### Summary and Conclusions

Thai politics are still dominated by men, as Figure 12.2 indicates. Prior to 1995, political participation was a privilege of wealthy women belonging to political clans. The passing of the SC and SAO Bill in 1994 encouraged women to interact across class and region to share their knowledge and experience in political participation with less-advantaged village women (Wongruang 2001). Thanks to the influx of financial support from international funding agencies, various women's organizations and academics were able to create training curriculum to raise their gender consciousness and stimulate their desire to actively engage in politics.

The two cases presented in this paper demonstrate that there are different approaches to promoting grassroots women to stand for local election. The three-month Consortium program was initiated by external funding agencies. The aim was to mobilize the analytical and theoretical resources of female faculty of various provincial universities outside Bangkok to prepare village women to run for the SAO election. The advantage was that these women had closer relationships with village women in their provinces, sharing similar culture and reality. The Gender Group, in contrast, was an evolving process in which the key agency has been GDRI, with the help of experts and resource persons from the NGO sector and governmental departments. Training by both groups has proven fruitful. Women were more likely to be elected to SAOs in geographical areas where they received training. The success was also satisfying because many defeated women candidates remained active even after the election.

Increased women's participation in politics is a means as well as an end. Participation is a means for women to gain access to resources and power; it is also a basic human right that women should enjoy equally. Up until now, women have lived in a world where men set their agenda and priorities. With increased political participation, women would have a voice in shaping their own as well as society's future. In a country like Thailand, where gender discourse is often neutralized by the answer that women are everywhere and that there is no gender issue in Thailand, women's efforts are growing, and they are mobilizing and challenging social attitudes. These need to be encouraged. Women's organizations need linkages and resources. Building on and enlarging these experiences may be the most effective strategy for promoting not only women's political participation but also overall social development.

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## Hard Lessons: Advocacy, Education and Institutional Strengthening of the Women's Parliamentary Forum in Suriname

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### Suriname: An Introduction

Suriname, located on the north coast of South America, poses an interesting question when it comes to national identity, regionalization and globalization. It is the only Dutch-speaking country on the mainland of the Americas, the only former Dutch colony and the last country on the continent to become independent—in 1975—(not counting the French overseas department French Guyana). It has more links with the Caribbean than with the rest of South America and is a member of Caricom, the Caribbean Community.

Suriname's economy is strongly dependent on traditional economic activities, primarily mining and agriculture. Sixty percent of the economically active population is employed in the tertiary sector and 60 percent of all employees are contracted by the government. The GNP has seen negative growth in recent years. Poverty has been on the rise for the past two decades and according to official statistics, 60 percent of the population lives below the official poverty line.

Suriname is often viewed as exemplary when it comes to peaceful ethnic coexistence.

More than ten ethnic groups make up the population of about 400,000 and more than ten languages are spoken, Dutch being the official language. While this ethnic diversity is certainly colorful and cause for celebration, it also poses one of the greatest obstacles to political issues, especially women's participation.

The political history of post-war Suriname has been closely linked to its ethnic diversity. Except for 1980-87, when the country was under military rule, elections were largely contested by parties based on ethnic origins. It was only in the four elections after the military period that a minority of parties not primarily based on ethnicity came into existence. The largest such party was founded by the former military rulers.

In order to analyze the role of women in decision-making and politics in present-day Suriname, we must understand the country's political



culture. This is especially crucial in Caribbean countries, where the history of colonialism brought together people from several continents and countries. The historical development of immigrants and their culture in the Diaspora has had a significant impact on the place of women and their organizations in the political life of countries such as Suriname. This paper will, however, only briefly address this, and will focus primarily on the evaluation of one program in Suriname aimed at strengthening women's participation in politics.

### Women in Suriname

Suriname has signed most international treaties concerning human rights and women's rights. The government is party to CEDAW and The Beijing Platform for Action, among other treaties. As such, it has acknowledged the importance of gender equity and equality in all spheres of society, and the role of women in sustainable (social) development processes.

Still, women in Suriname are highly underprivileged, and gender balance in most sectors is still a distant goal. Some figures illustrate this situation of women:

- Only 1 percent of people who apply for state-owned land are female.
- In 1996 and 1997, the female unemployment rate was twice as high as that of men.
- 71 percent of low-level civil servants are female.
- Many economic statistics simply do not take into account women's contribution in agriculture, the informal sector and other productive sectors. (Ketwaru, 2000).

Inequality between men and women is evident in all sectors of society—even in sectors such as education, where women have gained ground in recent years.

Although the majority of students in higher-level educational institutions is female, this is not reflected in policy-making positions: only one of the seven members on the Board of the University is female. Within the Ministry of Education, none of the top management and policy-making positions is occupied by a woman.

To promote gender equity in all sectors and policies, the government of Suriname, together with NGOs and Unifem, designed a National Gender Action Plan in 2000 as part of their Gender Mainstreaming Plan. In 1998, the government established the National Gender Bureau, to pro-



mote gender equity<sup>1</sup> and to monitor and implement the mainstreaming of gender in the policies of all the ministries. Sadly, the Gender Bureau has been lacking operational and implementing capacity for the past two years. In the meantime, the NGOs, especially those with gender and women on their agenda, have moved forward in implementing parts of the national gender plan.

Projekta, established in 1993, focuses on issues of integrated sustainable development and the promotion of gender equity through capacity-building programs for rural and urban grassroots organizations. It also works on capacity building for gender trainers; youth leadership and gender; and civic participation/education with a strong emphasis on gender equity.

### **Evolution of Women's Organizations in Suriname**

Over the years, women's organizations have taken upon themselves to enhance the quality of life for women and children, and to bridge the gender gap in various areas of social development. Their activities have evolved from classes on sewing and flower arrangement to a large variety of interventions in every aspect of social development. Over the past 10-15 years, they have firmly established themselves as partners in the overall development process of the country. This acceptance is closely linked to the rising national and international acknowledgement of the indispensable role of NGOs in bringing development closer to "real" people. Historically, national governments such as ours have proven unable to adequately meet the day-to-day needs of persons in disadvantaged positions. Development programs tend to be designed in terms of overreaching goals and objectives. In Suriname, more often than not, they suffer from a lack of tangible goals or an operational base for implementing strategies.

In the late 1980s, as international acknowledgment of the role of NGOs grew, women's organizations in Suriname began to mature. Nevertheless, the process of professionalizing them took several years to accomplish. The organizations struggled with their transformation from charity and volunteer organizations to NGOs with staff, programs and donors. Indeed, professionalization became one of the major accomplishments of the women's organizations in Suriname, as they evolved from a "women in development" perspective to poverty alleviation and empowerment-related strategies; from solely addressing so-called practical gender needs to incorporating strategic needs in their activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Gender Bureau was the follow-up to the National Women's Bureau, established in 1975.

Through media exposure, public awareness campaigns, and most importantly, advocacy on women and development issues, women's NGOs firmly established themselves in the public domain.

Also at the strategic level, by being present at all major international conferences, women's organizations became national advocates on a number of treaties and issues such as reproductive rights, violence against women, and women and labor. Backed by international agreements, and acting as spokespersons for causes that the government had signed in favor of, women's NGOs could no longer be ignored by national governments. They had firmly established themselves as partners in national development.

### *An Example of Action by Women's Organizations in Suriname:*

#### *Violence against Women*

Violence against women has always been present in Suriname, and has been ignored by national laws, policymakers and the general public. In 1992, a historical lawsuit drew attention to the issue: a female teacher of the Academy of Arts and Culture was sued by the Academy after she made public accusations that she had suffered sexual harassment by the staff. For the first time in the country's history, sexual harassment and violence against women were on the public agenda in a major way. A never-before-seen movement of women, in organized groups and as individuals, emerged overnight. Protests were organized in front of the courthouse, signatures were gathered, theatre productions staged, and an impromptu action committee came to life organizing a one-day seminar on women and violence. At this seminar, victims of violence took the stage and told their stories for the first time. One of the recommendations of this seminar was to establish an organization that would dedicate itself to combating violence against women on a structural level. Public opinion was not always favorable: one male parliamentarian famously objected to any mention of violence within marriage as part of the issue of violence against women: "Women have to be willing to do their marital duty," he said.

By immediately putting their campaign in the context of international women's rights treaties, the movement gained credibility and validity. By maintaining public education on the issue, violence against women was firmly established as one of the major women's rights issues in Suriname and policymakers could no longer ignore it. Lobbying and advocacy have increased in recent years as women's organizations successfully lobbied Parliament to ratify the Belem do Para Convention just under a year ago.

Today, violence against women and sexual harassment are no longer taboo subjects. Public opinion has shifted from ignorance to fiery protests against what used to be accepted as “culture”. Two ministers have, in the past four years, been forced to step down due to public pressure brought on by sexual harassment cases, something unthinkable ten years ago.

In much the same way, by creating broad support through public education and constant lobbying, women’s organizations have successfully advocated changes in law on the lawful status of children born out of wedlock, common law marriage, and a marriage law that discriminated against Asian women. These successes can be at least partially attributed to the work of the National Women’s Movement.

Women and development NGOs are also currently active in activities related to rural development; entrepreneurship; poverty alleviation; health services; gender education and gender and development; civic education and participation; organization of tribal women; land rights and housing.

However, Monique Essed, one of the founders of both Projekta and the Women’s Parliamentary Forum, suggests that the victories are not yet won. She says:

*“Changes in policy with regard to women’s issues are only put in place when the edge is already taken off the issue, when it has become acceptable by society as a whole and is no longer controversial. Overall, we have not been able to effectively change laws or systems, such as education, health and politics. Changes in policy are more often than not brought about by international pressure of treaties such as CSW and CEDAW, which urge governments to comply with international rules.”<sup>2</sup>*

## Women and Political Participation

One of the principal ways to assess the status of women in society is to analyze their participation in decision-making and politics.

### *The History of Women’s Political Participation in Suriname*

Women’s participation in politics and decision-making has developed in Suriname like in other countries: The first woman was voted into parliament some fifteen years before women actually had the right to vote. She was not part of any political party, but was an independent candidate—an opportunity that no longer exists.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with the author, September 2003

Curiously enough, the issue of universal voting has never been on the political or public agenda in Suriname. There is no record of any women's movement towards that end.

During the Second World War, Suriname was renegotiating its relationship with its colonizer, Holland. One of the measures on the agenda was a reform of the electoral system, as well as greater national independence in domestic affairs. One of the outcomes of this reform was the universal right to vote, which was not advocated primarily by the Surinamese politicians, but by Dutch parliamentarians. In a publication of one of the oldest parties in Suriname, the VHP, this process is described:

*"As a result of intensive political action [in Suriname] the universal vote for men was approved. After an intervention by the [Dutch] parliamentarian Tenderloin in the Dutch parliament an amendment was made in the State law (1948) by which women were also granted universal vote. When Lachmon was asked for advice whether or not the Surinamese women, especially the rural women, were capable enough to participate in parliamentary elections, the party president not only gave a positive advice, but also pleaded in its favor." (VHP, 1999)*

Popular opinion, however, believes that Mr. Lachmon, the leader of the VHP, the Indian party, advocated the issue because he foresaw an instant doubling of his votes. Indian women would always vote as their husbands told them, and their husbands, of course, would always vote as their ethnic leaders told them.

Politics in Suriname remains established mainly along ethnic lines, though recent years have seen a military-based party, a party arising from the poor farmers union, and others. Forty political parties are now registered in Suriname, of which 17 participated in the last election. This, of course, has led to a very fragmented political landscape in which no party can truly be sure of the outcome of an election. Because Suriname has a hybrid parliamentary / presidential system, the voters choose parliamentarians, who in turn choose the president. As this president has to be elected by 2/3 of the parliament, a coalition of several parties has become more or less inevitable. It is in this context that women politicians have to operate.

### *Women and Participation in Recent Times*

While women are active propagandists and members of all kinds of political committees, participation at decision-making levels remains the privilege of men:

- Women accounted for only 14 percent of the management boards of political parties between 1995 and 2000. (Ganga, Gooding and Bakker, 2001)
- Some 25 percent of parties have no women at decision-making levels.
- The number of women in parliament decreased from 8 percent in 1988 to 6 percent in 1991, then doubled to 15 percent in 1996, and increased to 17 percent in the last election in 2000. At this rate, we will need approximately 50 years to reach a gender balance in parliament.
- Women were appointed to 6 percent of the total posts available for Ministers in 1988, 0 percent in 1991, 5 percent in 1996 and since 2000, 12 percent.
- 20 percent of the district commissioners are women.

A study done by Projekta in 2001 offered some insight into the day-to-day participation of women:

- The number of women who voted in the last elections was significantly higher than the number of men: 87 percent of the women interviewed used their right to vote, while only 72 percent of men did so.
- Twice as many men are active members of community and other organizations (20 percent of male respondents vs. 7 percent of women)
- There is only a slight difference in party membership: 15 percent of women are registered members of a political party, vs. 20 percent of men.
- Twice as many men had at least once officially protested against government policy.
- Twice as many men had at least once been part of organized protests by unions or other organizations. (Ketwaru, 2000)

### **Women Organizing for Political Participation**

To effectively change policy agendas and give women a voice, it had become increasingly clear that female political power was essential. Policy and decision-making was overwhelmingly organized around very narrow party lines, and those party lines needed to be infiltrated in order to bring about changes from within.

In 1994, the Women's Parliamentary Forum, WPF, the first organization to solely devote itself to promoting women's political leadership, was established by a group of women active in NGOs and political parties.

Women from all political parties, as well as those not attached to parties, joined forces to consolidate the WPF. From 1994–2000, when the WPF was registered as an independent NGO, Projekta acted on its behalf and organized all its activities. In the beginning, the goals of the Women's Parliamentary Forum were straightforward: to get as many women elected as possible.

Towards that end, Projekta, on behalf of the WPF, engaged in several strategies, such as public awareness campaigns and training women in politics and leadership, holding meetings with all women candidates across party lines. The result was immediate: the number of women elected in 1996 nearly doubled, from four to seven.

The impact of the political upheaval caused by this election would resonate for years, as one of the women leaders, also active in WPF, Indra Marijke Djwalapersad, made history. She had been elected by preferential vote in 1991, but left her party (VHP) in 1996 and became co-founder and vice-chair of the BVD, where she stayed until 1999. In September of that year she founded another party, Naya Kadam (NK), and became its chairperson. In her four-year political career, she was the first female Speaker of the House, the first female Vice-President of a party and the first female President of a party. She is a rural woman and a schoolteacher by profession, and was the chairperson of the Surinamese Women's Foundation (SVS), which worked among rural women. Her party therefore, strongly relied on the support of rural women. (Ketwaru, 2000)

Djwalapersad was accused of treason by other political parties as well as by a big part of her initial supporters. She was elected to parliament a second time in 1996 through the VHP. However, she joined forces with the opposition and helped them gain a majority vote in parliament for their presidential candidate, thereby effectively changing the numerical outcome of the elections. By defecting to the other side and establishing her own party, she was instrumental in the change of government that year. As a result of her actions, she was made Speaker of the house.

Monique Essed-Fernandes finds: "Djwalapersad's actions were significant for the WPF's strategies; the backlash against them was felt inside the WPF too, as the members became cautious in letting themselves be known as too militant, too ambitious, too controversial."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the author, September 2003.

## **Advocacy, Education and Institutional Strengthening**

In the time between the elections of 1996 and 2000, the WPF focused on training programs for women with political ambitions.

It was in this period that the program "Advocacy, Education and Institutional Strengthening of the WPF" was designed and carried out by Projekta, from June 1999 to December 2000, with funding from Prolead of the Inter-American Development Bank. The program was aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of the WPF in order to establish it as an organization independent of Projekta. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to work on further capacity-building for future women leaders and increasing public awareness.

### *Advocacy and Public awareness*

The WPF has always strongly relied on public awareness-raising as a tool to reach its goals. In 1996, the "Vote for a Woman" campaign proved to be effective, significantly increasing the number of women voted into parliament. For the 2000 elections, the slogan was "Make Women Visible".

The public awareness campaign focused on greater recognition of all women candidates on the ballots of all parties and greater acceptance of women as political leaders. Towards this end, two TV advertisements were made, one in which women candidates of all parties participated (as well as a number of male candidates), and another that used images of famous women to stress the fact that numerous women throughout the years have been world leaders.

There were also radio programs and newsletters, as well as workshops and debates, to present all women candidates to the public.

The WPF also consistently advocated the issue of good governance and demanded a 30 percent quota of women candidates on the ballots.

### **Education**

To strengthen the capacity for leadership and to build practical political skills, a range of activities were carried out (one training weekend, a workshop, and a debate) to raise awareness of women's rights, leadership and good governance and media and communication skills. There was also a mock parliamentary debate in the National Assembly among women candidates of all parties. This served two purposes: a great opportunity for regular media coverage, and giving women candidates an initial feel for the surroundings and workings of the Assembly.

### **Institutional Strengthening**

Institutional strengthening was aimed at establishing the WPF as an independent legal entity with its own secretariat and a volunteer board of directors.

### **Results of the Program**

The program as carried out had the following major immediate results:

- More media attention to women's issues and women candidates during the election period. However, buying airtime provided most of the coverage.
- Half of the parties in the election had at least 30 percent women on their lists for the largest electoral district. However, these women were not all in favorable, that is to say, electable positions on the ballot. Furthermore, this target number did not hold up for the other electoral districts, except Paramaribo, while the majority of parties that complied with the 30 percent rule were small ones.
- Three parties had women leading the electoral ballot in the largest district. Again these were all small parties, and none of these women was elected.
- For the first time, two of the parties had women as presidents of their boards. Again, these were small parties and none of them were elected.
- All of the elected women parliamentarians have participated in at least one WFP activity.
- The training program reached approximately 125 women in several districts, and of these, 39 were allotted a place on the ballot list of their respective parties.

Three years after the conclusion of the program, what are the sustained results?

An unbiased look at the WPF shows:

- The WPF is undoubtedly still one of the major players when it comes to leading the discussion on good governance, but in recent years it has been focusing on gender budgeting as one of the main tools for equitable social development. Its pioneering role as an advocate of political power for women has been moved to the background.
- The level of activity has dropped steeply, probably due to a lack of internal capacity and financial resources.



- Training of potential women leaders and candidates has been scattered.
- The newsletter and radio programs have been suspended due to financial difficulties.
- It is still not possible to organize women parliamentarians around common women's agenda.

The question then is: What should have been done differently in order to achieve more sustained project results?

## Evaluation

### *Program Impact*

In evaluating the program impact three years after its completion, I found the WPF to be suffering from certain weaknesses:

- Lack of clear strategies and activities for increased women's political participation
- Lack of a clear direction as an organization
- Lack of further institutional strengthening after the end of the project, and loss of visibility and impact.

These weaknesses, all of which are more or less related to the objectives of the program "Advocacy, Education and Institutional Strengthening" have, in my opinion, to do with:

- The theoretical framework within which the WPF operated initially
- The internal organizational strategic planning and thinking
- Organizational capacity and organizational culture

### *WFP's Theoretical Framework*

Since its inception, the WPF has focused on preparing women for parliament through short training sessions to provide them with the skills and tools they need to get elected, and once elected, to be able to function within the system. At the same time, public opinion was targeted.

However, a more thorough targeting of the problem (lack of gender balance in politics) should address the constraints to women's political participation on four levels: personal; organizational; systemic and societal.

**Personal Constraints**

Personal constraints are brought on primarily by internalized gender ideology and the social roles assigned to women and men. Power is always seen as part of the male domain. Women—even those with clear political talents and ambitions—are far less likely than men to profile themselves as political leaders, so as not to be labeled as power hungry. Men have far fewer psychological problems with this. Personal constraints also include the burden of the triple role women have to fulfill: the domestic, professional and in this case, the political role.

**Organizational Constraints**

A political party is like any other organization. In order for every member to have equal access to decision-making levels, there needs to be transparent and democratic organizational structure, rules and regulations. However, in order to achieve an electable place on the ballot, women face constraints within their own parties. In Suriname most political parties have a “women’s wing”, which operates separately from the main structure. Gender discrimination and attitudes towards women within parties need to be addressed.

Political party culture needs to move towards more transparent leadership and more internal democracy. This also means that the whole idea of democracy needs to be addressed: party loyalty dictates too often that any discontent has to be kept silent in order to not disturb the public image of the party and the fragile political equilibrium. Discontented, outspoken and thus “disloyal” members are frequently labeled and side-tracked within parties. Accordingly, once elected, women parliamentarians have to abide by party decisions, in order to guarantee their place on the next ballot.

In Suriname, ethnic diversity puts an additional burden on women politicians. Since gender relations are culturally determined and most of the political parties are based on ethnic origins, strategies to change party systems will have to be tailor-made for each one.

**Systemic Constraints**

Systemic constraints have to do with the political and electoral system as a whole. In Suriname, parties can register for the ballot only if 1 percent of voters have registered with the party. This means that any party first needs to have at least 1,800 members. As little as this seems, it is a big burden in an overcrowded political landscape with 40 parties competing for 180,000 voters, and given the small percentage of population that is generally inclined to be an active member of any political party.

We do not foresee in the very near future the founding of a strictly women's political party, nor do women have the opportunity to register as independent candidates. This is unfortunate, since talented many women are uncomfortable with the ruling masculine party culture and feel they will never get the same chances as men with equal talents within parties.

One small window of opportunity is the preferential vote (as used by Djwalapersad). However, in order to effectively use this, candidates must face internal party repercussions and have the financial and organizational means to implement their own campaign.

### **Societal Constraints**

Socialization mechanisms, such as education systems and the media, are major constraints.

Educational systems are more often than not gender-biased institutions that instill traditional perceptions of male and female roles in students. The media and popular culture tend not to portray women as opinion leaders on policy issues and this also helps to keep the bias intact. In general, as long as all gender socialization mechanisms are not addressed, the biggest constraint for women in politics will be their own societies' and thus, their voters' attitudes.

### ***Internal Organizational Strategic Planning and Thinking***

During the process of obtaining legal independence as an organization, the WPF faced a major crisis that resulted in the departure of a significant number of members, including the acting chair of the board.

The breaking point was the discussion of the bylaws, and the criteria for eligibility for Board membership. The question raised was: Is the board to be comprised of persons with Surinamese nationality exclusively, or is it open to people holding another passport?

A small majority of the members agreed that as the WPF was an organization for the advancement of female politicians, only those that were theoretically eligible for a seat in parliament could be on the Board.

One must keep in mind that in Suriname, with close links to its former colonizer, a significant part of the population, holds a Dutch (EU) passport. So did the acting Chair, and a significant number of active WPF members, and they understood the outcome of the vote as a sign that there was no place for them in the organization. The discussions leading to this discussion were heated and ugly, and damaged the public image of the WPF and of women in politics in general, as much media attention was given to the issue.

In retrospect, however, one thing becomes clear: the discussion was not simply a discussion on nationality, but brought to light a major weakness of the organization, one which had not been addressed at all: the lack of a clear WFP mission statement. The discussion on nationality made clear that there were two paradigms at work: one that saw the WFP as an advocacy organization for the advancement of political power of women and another that defined the WFP as an organization for the advancement of individual women politicians; thus making it imperative that active members and especially those on the board, should be eligible for national elections.

### *Organizational Capacity and Organizational Culture*

One part of the program was aimed at the institutional strengthening of the WFP. This was done by obtaining legal status as an organization and some training for Board members. However, an independent organization cannot be transformed into a vital organization in one year.

One major obstacle is that the WFP has relied heavily since its inception on Projekta's professional staff. Volunteers of the WFP have always been involved, but the WFP has not been able to establish itself as a professional NGO with a paid staff and a secretariat. It remains a volunteer organization of professional women who have very little time. The WFP needs seed money to establish some measure of professionalization, but searching for this seed money requires professional staff.

Even more basic, however, is the question of how the Board and members of the WFP view themselves: as professionals or as volunteers. Even if the WFP is not a "professional" organization, there are more than enough opportunities to circumvent that obstacle. But a less conservative organizational strategy is needed—one in which the WFP sells its expertise. This of course brings us back to the psychological barriers facing women in leadership positions.

Another aspect of organizational culture is also clear: the intertwining of "professional" and "personal" relationships. Women are far more inclined than men to "make friends" with those they work with, or to bring their friends into the organization. This was very clear during the hard discussions discussed above, as personal loyalty towards friends became a far bigger issue than loyalty towards the cause and the WFP.

### **Overall Conclusions**

**Analyzing the root problem:** Women have to face a convergence of sociological, psychological, cultural, economic and political obstacles when

entering the political arena. To achieve any sustained results in terms of more equitable representation, all constraints have to be addressed in an integrated manner. Simply training women and providing them with basic skills to enter the political arena will not change the environment within which they have to operate.

Women should be more empowered to step into the political arena, to challenge party systems in which they are tolerated only if they comply with the male model of politicians, to address the political and voting system, and to change public opinion towards women and leadership.

Women's organizations, whether working in politics, poverty alleviation, or health, need to broaden the scope of their analysis. To change existing inequalities, all levels of society and all social relations need to be taken into account in order to design comprehensive programs to tackle the issue.

**Clear missions:** The case of the WPF illustrates a recurrent weakness of women's organizations: the lack of clear organizational strategic thinking and planning. They start with a basic concept and are then overwhelmed by all the issues they have to tackle in order to achieve their (minimally outlined and much too broad) objectives. Women's organizations are no different from any other organization: enough time and energy must be spent at the beginning, and at intervals, for the establishment of clear mission and vision statements, goals and strategies.

**Institutional strengthening does not equal capacity building:** Projekta's biggest mistake in the program may have been to pursue institutional strengthening solely in terms of legal independence and housing of the secretariat, without paying enough attention to the intrinsic operational capacity of the organization. Institutional strengthening should have included capacity building, not only of the board, and of individual women who had aspirations to enter the political arena, but of the organization itself: how to develop programs, how to look for funding, basic program and project design and implementation.

### A Way Forward?

The way forward, towards truly sustainable results will be an integrated approach that addresses all constraints facing women in politics simultaneously. This, of course, can never be laid in the hands of just one NGO, or the government. We will need to partner with all sectors of society: the government, the political parties, labor unions, grass roots organizations, and the private sector.

Women's organizations will need to bring together scarce resources by integrating existing women/gender and development programs and

infuse each and every one of them with some aspect of women and leadership/ politics. It is only through an integrated effort and by working together that we can address gender inequality issues in our societies.

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# PART 4

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*Women and Women's Organizations in Policy  
Dialogues and Decision-Making Processes*

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# Towards a Gender-Equal Social Policy in Vietnam: The Role of the Vietnamese Women's Union

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## Introduction

This paper offers some reflections on the role of the Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU) in promoting gender equality and forging a new social policy in an era of globalization. The paper considers women's participation in claiming social citizenship through social development as a two-tiered process. One tier addresses the negotiation and bargaining over women's gender interests in agenda setting, which has significant bearing on the demarcation of the boundaries of social policy. The second tier addresses the mobilization and allocation of resources for a social policy agenda, which has implications on burden-sharing among women, the State, the family and community.

From this perspective, the intersection between social policy, gender relations and women's political agency may be analyzed as the institutionalization of a gender contract. We propose two main models of gender contracts for discussion:

- a male-breadwinner gender contract, characteristic of the model of social policy based on the notion of a family wage and the view that women's earning is supplementary to male earning. This model compromises a woman's economic position in favor of the needs, interests, and authority of the husband as the sole earner and decision maker for allocation of household resources
- 'working mother' gender contract is characteristic of social policy that is built on a double-income model, which considers women's earnings as equally important to family welfare. It supports women's gender interests in motherhood and childrearing by enlarging the public base for childcare services, and uses an array of other measures to change gender norms and values to balance the sharing of social burdens in the areas of health, education, family, and community relations.

Historically, the ‘male-bread-winner’ gender contract has been predominant in many variants of the capitalist system of production—such as some welfare states and the East Asian developmental states (Marshall and Butzbach, 2003). The ‘working mother’ gender contract was characteristic of former socialist countries and the welfare state in Europe. Notwithstanding their limitations in terms of coverage in low-income countries, the two models are nevertheless useful to delineate the main gender dimensions of social policy and to contrast formal commitment with the actual outcome. This paper will illustrate how the social construction of the working mother gender contract in Vietnam has been an outcome of the interplay between politico-cultural dynamics and economic concerns. Prospects for the full implementation of this contract will depend on women’s bargaining power at many levels, including the household, the community, the political party and state administration.

### **Gender Issues in Vietnam: A Background**

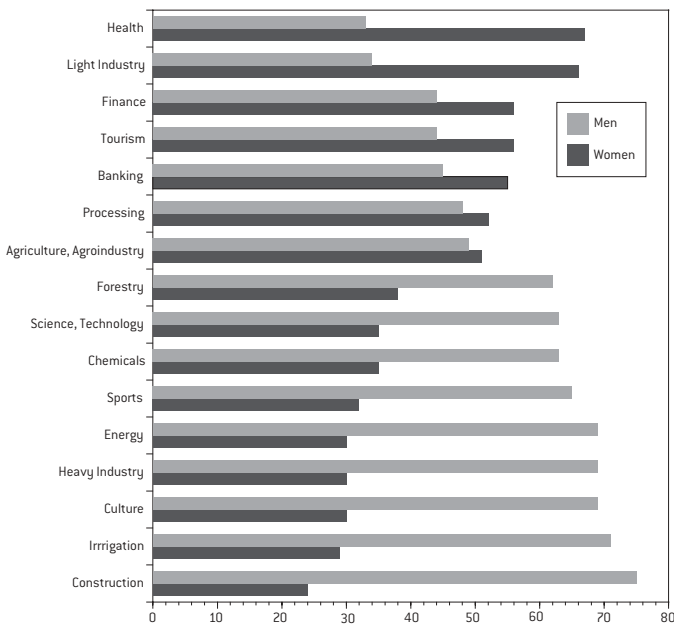
Historians have confirmed that Vietnam has enjoyed relative gender equality in formal politics, the economy and family life (Mai and Le, 1978; Ta, 1981; Truong, 1984). Respect for gender equality in Vietnam appears stronger than in the countries defined by Kandiyoti (1988) as the belt of ‘classic patriarchy’—North Africa, Muslim Middle East, continental South Asia and East Asia. Half a century of cultural reforms under the socialist revolution has produced a modern state permeated by an ideology with a gender contract that formally recognized women’s role in public life and in the family as equally significant. State commitment to a ‘working mother’ gender contract is clearly expressed in various constitutional rules, laws and ordinances since independence. Since Vietnam’s reform program was introduced in 1986, seeking to transform a centrally planned economy into a market-led and multiple-tiered economy, this commitment has been confirmed and reconfirmed at the political level.

Two decades of reforms reveal that the development of the private sector has been crucial in boosting production and generating employment for many households (Vietnam National Human Development Report, 2001). The government has also acknowledged the significant contribution of women in the reduction of poverty, the promotion of the private sector and the assurance of social stability. However, the gradual adjustment of the economic structures has not yet succeeded in creating a level playing field for all economic actors or in ensuring eq-

uity between different social groups. The next step in the policy process is to develop an understanding of the economy as a gendered structure and to further address areas with structural imbalances. This may foster a more effective policy environment for private sector growth with social development.

A key feature of structural imbalance is the role of households as productive units, as compared to other units in different tiers of the economy. Statistics show that in 1996-1999 the private sector employed more than 90 percent of the working population. Of that, the household sector was 89 percent (Truong 2002). The contribution to GDP by the private sector (including households and private companies) grew by 5.1 percent

**FIGURE 14.1 Percentage of Women and Men in Economic Sectors, 1997-98**



Source: Canadian International Development Agency (2001)

in this period. Its share of GDP in 1999 was 40.5 percent as compared to the public sector share of 49.4 percent. It is clear that the private sector, particularly the household sector, constitutes an important source of employment and income generation for the economy as a whole, but private enterprises have not received the support extended to enterprises owned by the state (land, tax incentives, finance, technology and human resources, market access).

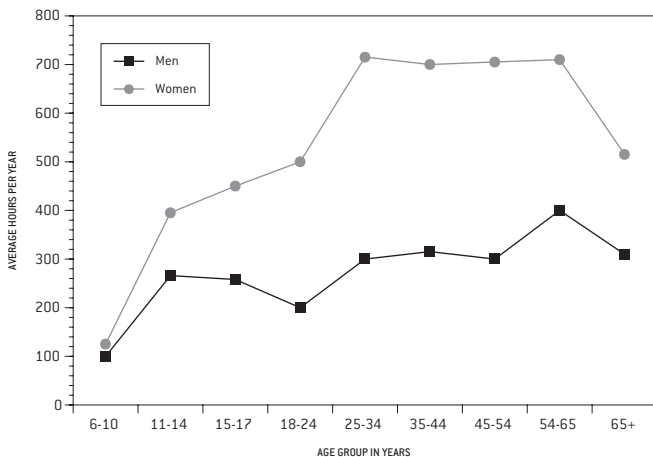
From a gender perspective, as Figure 14.1 shows, labor force participation rates display patterns of gender-segregation that reflect conventional gender norms. Women are concentrated in the service sector (health, finance, banking, and tourism), light industry and processing activities, agricultural and food production. Men dominate the sectors of construction, irrigation, energy, heavy industry, culture, science and technology, chemistry and forestry. In labor-intensive light industry such as textiles and food processing, women workers outnumber men in export-oriented firms (Truong 2002). In firms run by foreign investment capital, women enjoy higher wages than in other sectors, although the gender wage gap persists. On average, women receive only 78 percent of the hourly wage earned by men for the same type of work (UNDP, 2002). In rural areas, women dominate the rural household sector in agro-production, processing, producing and selling food, handicrafts, and are involved non-wage and wage work; men are concentrated mostly in wage work involving transportation and construction (FAO, 1997).

At every level of education, women receive lower wages than men, although the discrepancy is less stark in rural areas than urban areas—where the gap is widest among workers with college and university education (UNDP, 2002: 12-1; Truong, 2002).

Initially, the decline of the subsidized system of socialized care services for children and the elderly occurred in parallel to the introduction of market mechanisms through the household contract system. This eventually stimulated the growth of domestic private enterprises. These new economic entities provided more incentives for women to withdraw from the poorly paid jobs in care centers for children and elderly and primary schools, and devote their energy to household production for higher income (Truong 1997).

In addition to market forces, the state also played a significant role in glorifying motherhood as women's "noble and natural role." State discourses on the 'household economy' emphasize its suitability to women since it allows them to combine productive and reproductive duties (Truong 1997). The Politburo redefined women's gender roles as follows:

**FIGURE 14.2 Men and Women's Average Hours Spent on Housework, 1997-1998**



Source: UNDP [2002]

*'Women are simultaneously workers and producers, mothers, the first teachers of humanity. Women's potentials, their working conditions, level of education and cultural awareness, their social and economic status and physical and mental health have deep impacts on the development of the future generation' (Vietnamese Women's Union 1998: 4).*

The promotion of the household economy had been the main policy mechanism to dismantle the malfunctioning collectivized production system in the rural areas and to redirect livelihood options for retrenched workers from state-owned enterprises in urban areas. At best, this promotion has taken for granted intra-household gender dynamics. At worst, it has actively used such dynamics for reason of efficiency. Over time, the gender norms regulating intra-household allocation of time and resources were reinforced rather than challenged, and new forms of gender configuration in the private sector have emerged showing women's disadvantaged position. As shown in Figure 14.2, in spite of women's equal

burdens in paid work, they continue to assume a disproportionate share of housework as compared to men.

Since the mid-1990s, the government has introduced new measures to re-affirm the 'working mother' gender contract for women employees. Rather than pursuing a subsidized approach to the socialization of childcare to uphold this contract, the State has instead adopted a new approach based on economic incentives to enterprises to remove gender barriers (e.g. tax concessions, favorable credit access), as stipulated in Chapter 10 of the Labor Codes. The Codes also clearly stipulate gender-specific labor standards applicable to women, such as maternity benefits and young childcare, labor safety, sanitation facility and access to training. In particular, article 117 gives women workers who have adopted infants the benefits of young childcare, thus providing the recognition of social motherhood (Truong, 1997). The self-employed are not covered by these new measures and are left to their own means.

Findings by the International Development Research Centre and Research Centre for Female Labor (2002) reveal the low number of firms in the garment and textile sector accredited with employing a high percentage of women workers, in spite of the fact that 80 percent of the labor force in this sector is female. Nearly half of those accredited in this sector are state-owned enterprises; many non-accredited firms are not aware of the law and the economic incentives available. The Centers' report also refers to the impracticality of gender-specific regulations<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, women workers in many domestic private enterprises have no written contract, or only a vague verbal contract, and therefore cannot benefit from labor regulations (Pham and Pham 2001).

With regards to childcare support, a 1997 survey conducted in three provinces on the effects of social policy on women's well-being (covering both the state and private sector), reveals that users of childcare services are primarily women workers in the state sector. Women workers in the private sector are more inclined to rely on private means (paid services, grandparents, and/or elder siblings), given the absence of childcare services. Other major considerations are high fees compared with level of income, distance between home and childcare centre, and the low quality of services (VWU 1997: 14). It appears that childcare services are more accessible and affordable to women workers in the public sector.

<sup>1</sup> For example, if many women workers claim gender-specific benefits at the same time, production lines can be disrupted. Therefore firms must find a balance between the benefits of increasing the hiring of women workers and the costs of observing gender-specific regulations.

To sum up, the principle of gender equality permeates Vietnam's legal structures in significant ways. However, in the reform process, there has been a clear tension between the principle of efficiency and that of gender equality. The burden of efficiency appears to have fallen disproportionately on women. To resolve gender tension and to vitalize future growth, the State must identify significant forms of institutionalized gender bias and find ways to address them, in order to foster social policy that distributes burdens and benefits more equally in society.

## **A Gender-Equal Social Policy: Sisters, What Is to Be Done?**

### *The Vietnamese Women's Union*

Historically, the Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU) has played a central role in negotiating the terms of the gender contract discussed above (Truong, 1997). Founded in 1930 during the anti-colonial resistance, the organization changed its name and structure of operation several times before becoming the actual Vietnam Women's Union in 1976. Today, the organization, with more than 11 million voluntary members—women over 18 years of age, is the largest mass organization in the country. Members are predominantly rural women between the ages of 30 and 50. A symbolic fee of 2000 Dong (about US\$0.12) is required, but often waived for women without adequate income. It has a staff of 4000 full-time workers, including about 300 men and women at its national central office in Hanoi. In addition, it has 12,000 grassroots units (women's unions at the commune levels) to implement government policy on women.

VWU inherited a hierarchical structure of decision-making from the state-led socialist era. It works closely with the government policy agenda and sets priority areas for its action programs through consultation with the government and its members. These are similar to the structure of government administration: i) central; ii) provincial/municipal; iii) district/town/quarter; and iv) commune/ward. Elected members represent the organization on people's committees at all levels of government. A National Women's Congress meets once every five years, bringing together elected delegates based on proportional representation (CIDA, 2001).

In the reform process, two new elements in decision-making on women's and gender issues have emerged. First, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) was created in 1985 to advise the government and to monitor policy implementation. This reflects a concerted effort to adjust bureaucratic procedures to the goals of gender mainstreaming in the action plan for 2001-2010<sup>2</sup>. By the year 2000, all

61 provinces and cities under central management and 50 central ministries and branches had established Committees for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) (Prime Minister's Office, 2001). The elected president of VWU is also the president of NCFAW.

Second, as an organization, VWU is no longer an instrument used by the government and the party to mobilize national defense, and is becoming a service provider that acts as a bridge between women's grassroots organizations and the government. VWU has adopted new principles of consultation and decentralization in decision-making, and is becoming more demand-driven. The identities of NCFAW and VWU still overlap, but over time, NCFAW will likely become more rooted in government structures and VWU in civil society. Whether both organizations will continue to be represented by the same elected authority remains to be seen.

As an organization traditionally concerned with women's position in society and their welfare in the family, VWU has faced challenges to develop programs and actions that can provide a balance between the competitive labor and business market and the domain of care and affective services in the family and community. Building on its experiences, VWU is now able to fashion its policy agenda according to well-evidenced links. One such link clearly exists between women's human development (education and health) and their economic empowerment. Another link concerns the relationship between their economic empowerment and the acceleration of industrialization and 'modernization'. In terms of target groups, the organization is also moving beyond special groups living in problematic conditions to promote alliances between women in all strata, including women entrepreneurs, professional women and those of ethnic minorities, with a diversified structure of incentives for memberships and cooperation.

An important feature of these alliances is the formation of women's groups in the private sector. In 1994, the 'Women's Mutual Help in the Household Economy' campaign mobilized women to engage in mutual assistance in cultivation and animal husbandry, the acquisition of capital for production and the mutual exchange of free labor. Cross-class support is also fostered through a yearly campaign on International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) as a 'Day of Savings for Women Living in Poverty' to mobilize successful women entrepreneurs, professionals and civil servants to direct some of their savings to create and sustain a special fund for poor women

<sup>2</sup> This plan covers six key areas: 1) employment and economic security, 2) equal access to education, 3) health, 4) enhanced position and participation in leadership and decision making, 5) effective legal protection, 6) effective national machinery.



living without family (Phan, 2000). The organization is also improving the skills of its own staff, as more attention is being given to training for effective advocacy and the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of a gender-equal social policy. Its gender-based social policy can be mapped out as follows:

Family Policy	Employment and Labor policy	Women's Education & Training Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Property Rights</li> <li>• Adult literacy</li> <li>• Reproductive Health</li> <li>• Nutrition, Sanitation and Family well being</li> <li>• Maternity and (young) child care</li> <li>• Special treatment for women of ethnic minorities in distant provinces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Working Mother' gender contract</li> <li>• Household enterprise development</li> <li>• Removal of Gender barriers to enterprise development (labor, finance, technology, networks of supply and distribution of products)</li> <li>• Rural home-based Day Care Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic empowerment through the training of women owners of enterprises</li> <li>• Education and Leadership Training</li> <li>• Training for participation in social activities</li> <li>• Special attention to women of ethnic minorities</li> </ul>

### *Poverty and Family Wellbeing: The Functional Role of Micro-credit*

The VWU policy approach has evolved historically from an income-generating emphasis in response to forces of transition, to one that seeks also to influence the State to change policy and regulations regarding privatization and to support the goals of self-sufficiency and well-being of its members. When the reform process was initiated, VWU—like many other state and semi-state organs—was forced to take initiatives to serve the needs of its members (demobilized female soldiers, widows, and single middle-age women). The fiscal crisis of the State also seriously curtailed funding, which led to a decline of membership and cadres.

In 1987, a pilot project was initiated in Hai Phong in the northern part of the country, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the United Nations Funds for Women. This project supported members of VWU in the cultivation and local marketing of shrimp and other aqua products. The success of this program led to a greater commitment by SIDA in the early 1990s to train women in garment production and to advance credit for sewing machines. However, in view of the new opportunities created by liberalization in the information technology and communications and the service sector—particularly local transport and tourism—the VWU chapter in Ho Chi Minh City uni-

laterally used a portion of SIDA funds intended for sewing machines to buy a number of mini-buses to set up a small transport company<sup>3</sup>. The company started by bringing passengers from the airport to the centre of Ho Chi Minh City. In less than four years the re-invested gains helped the company grow into a full-fledged national tourist company (Peace Tour). In 1993, the company contributed up to 19 percent of the central budget of VWU (Truong 1994).

In some areas, the organization also invested in garment factories, acted as local agents for a number of international firms (computer technology), and turned its public assets—such as buildings allocated to the organization by the State—into multi-functional, income-earning entities. Income generation for the organization—not just for individual members—gradually became an operating principle that helped reduce VWU financial dependency on the State, and earned it respect as a socially committed, innovative organization.

At the local level, VWU forms women's savings groups (WSG) to ensure productivity and family welfare. In December 1999, there were 129,024 WSGs operating at the community level (Phan, 2000). Three models of credit drawn from the South Asian experience have been adopted and modified. Model 1 maintains a relationship with state banks through a guarantee fund—the Vietnam Bank for Agriculture, Bank for the Poor and National Fund for Poverty Alleviation Program. Model 2, *Quy Tinh Thuong* or Affection Fund (QTT), is an adaptation of the Bangladesh Grameen Bank. Capital resources are derived from a fund owned by VWU, a loan portfolio from an international non-governmental organization and participants' savings. QTT saving schemes include a component of micro insurance for education and emergencies. Model 3 is based on a combination of financial and non-financial intervention—using credit and savings groups as an entry point for other policy objectives such as mother and child health, family planning, water and sanitation, female adult illiteracy eradication, early childhood development, and environmental protection. Model 3 is mainly operational within the context of multilateral and bilateral development cooperation addressing community and child interests, with women as the main mediators.

Using repayment as the sole indicator of success, VWU credit programs have been acknowledged as successful. The repayment rate under Model 1 is between 99 and 98 percent. Under Model 2 the rate is 99.5 percent. Under Model 3 the rate is 98 percent (Dang 1996). Joint liability groups and joint borrowing groups have significantly eased the problem of information asymmetry for lenders and enhanced the effectiveness of

credit delivery (Pham and Izumida 2002). By the end of 1999, VWU coverage included six million women, 51 percent of whom are identified as poor (Phan, 2000: 3; Dang, 1996).<sup>4</sup>

An interesting point that emerged is the use of Model 3 to combine income generation with literacy education and early childhood development, through cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Training and VWU. This model uses the credit/saving mechanism as an entry point to mobilize women and to choose project sites for literacy and childcare provision. After group formation, credit is provided for production, literacy and technical improvement of the traditional family-based production system *Vuon-Ao-Chuong* (VAC), a system of nutritional self-sufficiency that combines a vegetables plot, a fishpond and a livestock area. The information is disseminated in conjunction with information on health and nutrition developed by the Ministry of Education. Home-based day care centers are established in the homes of qualified community members selected by VWU. These members care for between four and 10 children from 7-11 a.m. and 2-5 p.m. Parents contribute cooked food for their children, and 20 kilograms of paddy per year; and the community pays child minders about \$US 35 a year to run the centers (Albee, 1996). Although modest, these initiatives constitute a significant attempt to extend the 'working mother' gender contract to rural areas.

A review of various project evaluation reports shows a number of points regarding access that are worth pursuing. First, although explicit criteria were developed to define beneficiaries in poverty reduction credit schemes, unstated exclusionary criteria based on family planning standards may also be applied—excluding women who may fulfill all criteria for access to credit but have more than two children, i.e. who exceed population control norms (Dang 1996: 39). The value of the project may be obliterated if the preoccupation with achieving family planning objectives fosters exclusionary practices that defy the poverty reduction goals. Second, QTT does not have the status of a formal social credit organization and hence cannot enlarge its micro-insurance coverage. Furthermore, it is facing a problem of losing well-trained technicians to more lucrative financial institutions (Dang 1996: 29). To extend coverage for micro-insurance purposes, QTT would need new working methods and institutional links.

<sup>3</sup> Unilateral decisions are generally considered as undesirable behaviour by agencies for international cooperation. However, the funding agency took into account the usefulness of a-priori conditionality in a rapidly changing environment.

Our analysis suggests that community-based activities initiated by VWU in the last 15 years have put fragments of a gender-balanced social policy into place. However, these are still fragile and cannot be considered sustainable if the means of intervention does not move beyond the level of micro-credit. The sustainability of social development schemes will depend on whether new technical means are introduced for a better balance in the gender division of labor and for women's livelihood and security (such as communal child care and micro-insurance schemes). Strengthening these schemes will depend on the extent to which women can encourage the government's commitment to improve women's status, rather than relying only on an increasing proliferation of self-help schemes.

### *Women's Political Representation*

Women's representation in the National Assembly suffered from a crowding-out syndrome after the war ended in the mid-1970s. Women retreated to the household to protect family welfare and ensure social stability. Increased female participation in the National Assembly from 1997 onwards may reflect renewed interest in defending the welfare of specific social groups who are vulnerable to drastic changes in the economic and social environment. Currently, women's representation in the National Assembly is high in the Committee for Education, Youth and Children (41.2 percent), and the Ethnic Council (39.5 percent). Women's representation in the Committee for Social Affairs is 15.8 percent; the Committee for Science and Technology, 10.7 percent; and the Committee for Economics and Budget, 3.1 percent (National Assembly Office, 1999). The social sector appears to have become female-dominated, whereas economic management and the budget remain male-dominated areas.

Women appear to play a marginal role in committees of the Communist Party and the government administration. According to NCFAW (2000), female representation in these committees ranges from 9.94 percent at the commune level to 10.58 percent at the central level,

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Office of the Prime Minister, in 2000 a total of 2.8 million households were classified as poor, based on international poverty measurement standards (17.2 per cent), of which 2.5 are in rural areas. Assuming that one woman per poor household had received support, VWU coverage seems to have included that 2.5 per cent. Criteria for female poverty assessment—depending on locality—may include: 1) women as 'breadwinners'; 2) thatched roof and earthen dwellings; 3) other assets valued at less than 100 US\$; 4) annual 3-6-month food shortage; 5) arable land less than one *sào* per head; 6) children under fourteen with anaemia and other diseases.

and over 11 percent at the provincial and district level. Participation in the people's committees, which make decisions and administer government policy from the commune to central level, is even weaker—4.54 percent at the commune level, 4.9 percent at the district level and 6.4 percent at the provincial level. In contrast, women's participation in people's councils is significantly better: 22.33 percent at the provincial level, 20.12 percent at the district level and 16.56 percent at the commune level. The people's councils are elected decision-making bodies that develop strategies to address the various needs of each locality and monitor the work of state organizations, including the people's committees. The difference in the rate of female participation in people's councils as compared to other political bodies is a direct outcome of concerted efforts mounted by VWU and NCFAW to prepare women candidates for the 1999 election (NCFAW 2000). Through these efforts, both organizations have promoted a more prominent monitoring function for women. Women's position in decision-making at the provincial, district and commune level still leaves much to be desired.

Women's current under-representation in national and sub-national committees in economic management in the National Assembly may contribute to the explanation of how an opportunity to provide a solid gender analysis of public expenditure was missed, although some analysis was initiated by a joint government-donor working group for the review of the national budget between October 1999 and June 2000 (Akram-Lodhi, 2002). This under-representation may also have affected the gendered patterns of access to public funds. The 1997-98 Living-Standards Survey shows that men have more access than women to government banks such as the Agricultural Bank, the Bank for the Poor and the National Fund for Poverty Alleviation. Only 18 percent of loans obtained by women are from government banks (UNDP, 2002: 7). The majority of women still rely on private lenders or the 238 multilateral and bilateral projects run by VWU. These projects cover 1,747 communes and 174,618 households—representing about one-third of VWU total coverage (Phan, 2000).

The current situation shows that the VWU strategy to reduce its financial dependence on the State may have backfired. VWU, through its 'resourcefulness', may have put itself in a double bind: Its effectiveness in organizing women's self-help schemes in an era of crisis and adjustment may have encouraged the State—now recovered from the fiscal crisis—not to step in with financial support. This could potentially put VWU the burden of guaranteeing women's social citizenship rights on the organization, rather than on the State.

## Changing Boundaries of Women's Gender Roles and New Directions for Women's Rights Advocacy

A key lesson in policy dialogue to be drawn from the VWU experience is its ability to influence the codification of gender norms in the Constitution, making it possible to claim that Vietnam, as a nation, aspires to a gender order in which men and women are treated as equal citizens. Gender equality as an issue is thus inherently important to the State as an institution, and is not simply a demand imposed by women's organizations.

However, in this dialogue VWU has also accepted a definition of women's social role that subjugates their gender interests to broader goals of society, that is: women as mothers and first teachers of humanity, above and beyond their role as workers and producers. For this reason, in the devolution of state responsibilities for the social sector to families and communities, VWU is finding itself burdened by a battle for gender equality on three fronts: women's work and livelihood, family well-being, and political representation to prevent further erosion of state responsibility.

One way to alleviate this burden would be to appeal to ethical norms of care compatible with local tradition and universal standards of rights. The traditional Vietnamese notion of public virtue, '*cong-duc*', includes concern for others, for the commonwealth and common endeavor. Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Vietnam is among the first signatories, child care can also be seen from the standpoint of rights of the child, rather than only as an entitlement of working mothers. From both perspectives—'traditional' virtue and 'modern' universal rights—there is scope for reasoning that both the State and society are responsible for the care of the next generation in Vietnam, and that this is not dependent only on women's virtue.

In VWU's experience, financial self-sustainability has been key to public recognition of the organization's competence. This competence has in turn generated public trust, making it possible to organize class-based and cross-class campaigns of solidarity among women. The diversification of resources has facilitated the management of credit and the organization is an effective conduit for credit delivery to rural areas from a variety of financial sources, enhancing coverage both in terms of numbers of households and social areas requiring urgent attention. The organization has been effective in combining domestic mechanisms for mobilization of funds with external models of credit delivery for the rural poor, and has flexibly adjusted to rapidly changing social reality.

In regard to the organization's advocacy role, VWU faces a major challenge: how to influence the State to change or adapt policy and

regulations regarding privatization to support the goals of self-sufficiency and the well-being of women. The networks and social relations among women, cutting across social strata that VWU has fostered in the last 15 years, clearly indicate that the organization has been able to build its stock of social capital in significant ways. From the perspective of structural social capital, a vast network of women's organizations has been created at the commune level, bonded by trust and mutual protection. However, in terms of cognitive social capital, the notion of female virtue still hangs heavily over women in everyday life and is reflected in the values of VWU as an organization. From both a structural and cognitive perspective, social capital in Vietnam is definitely gendered—particularly when it comes to duties and obligations of care. Gendered social capital is revealed in the concentration of women's representation in the social sector, and women's lack of strength to encourage the financial sector to protect the social side of development. Given the support from the government and the international cooperation community, the NCFAW and VWU could help establish concrete steps toward government financing to achieve the status for women inscribed in the Constitution. A 'working mother' gender contract could fail for lack of government support in an economic situation where the household economy continues to be the only means of livelihood for many women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to stress that the State's perception of women's gender roles and women's negotiation of these roles are key determinants in fostering the direction of social policy. Women's specific socio-cultural position in Vietnam in the post-war period made it possible to influence state thinking on gender roles in favor of equality. However, heavy emphasis was placed on women's gender role as mothers in the subsequent period of liberalization, which may have led to a gradual devolution of state responsibilities for women's equal rights to self-help groups and the family. Thus, although the formulation of the 'working mother' gender contract may be considered an achievement of the Vietnam Women's Union, state support for crucial gender arrangements to actually implement this contract leaves much room for improvement. The possibility of altering gender norms in political and social institutions remains limited unless VWU can find a new strategy that moves from a women-centered model based on female private virtue to one that emphasizes care as a public virtue.

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## CHAPTER 15

# Women's Participation in the Dialogue on the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Dominican Republic

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### Introductory Remarks<sup>1</sup>

From October 2002 to March 2003, the Dominican Government, represented by the Social Cabinet with the support of the Civil Society Council of the Cabinet, conducted a social consultation of the proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP). Women leaders actively participated in different levels, scenarios and activities of the consultation. Their contribution was determinant to the successful implementation of the consultation and the formulation of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with gender and social equity perspectives. This paper aims to analyze the initiative and its contribution to the participation of women's organizations in the promotion of social development in the country. The first part includes a brief characterization of the country; the second part includes a description of the consultation process. In the last section, the role of women in this dialogue is analyzed and some recommendations are suggested to promote women's participation in dialogues, policy formulation and decision making.

### Country Background<sup>2</sup>

The Dominican Republic shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti. In 2003, its population was 8.8 million, with one third of the popu-

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<sup>2</sup> The references to growth, poverty and development in this section are based on the consulted version of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (ONAPLAN, 2003a).

lation under 15 years of age. The population projection for 2015 is 10.4 million. The country has undergone a great demographic transition since the 1960s, especially given the significant reduction in the 7.5 births per women in the 1960s, to 3 births by the year 2000. The population is highly concentrated in the urban areas (60 percent) and in the more developed regions of the country as well. International emigration is high, with nearly 10 percent of the population (700,000 persons) living in the United States, Puerto Rico and, recently, in Spain. International immigration is high (more than half of a million persons), especially poor Haitians looking for employment and other opportunities (ONAPLAN, 2003: 17).

After more than 30 years of dictatorial government and a very difficult transition to democracy, the Dominican Republic has undergone significant political and social transformation.

The country's democratically elected government was overthrown in 1964. Civil and political unrest, along with very restricted living conditions for most of the population implied a very backward, unstable society and a weak government. During the 1970s and 1980s, street demonstrations were constant. Efforts to control the situation included an agreement of *Economic Solidarity* with the International Monetary Fund in 1991.

In the late 1980s, with the emergence, growth and institutionalization of new civil society organizations, pressures to enhance Dominican democracy increased. By the mid 1990s, many of these organizations were engaged in political reforms, such as improving the electoral system, the rule of law, and decentralization of the government. The participation of women, through different political expressions and tactics, is considered to have been a determinant factor in the process of organization and mobilization of civil society as a whole (Baez and Paiewonsky 2002; Paiewonsky and Baez 2002 and Espinal, Hartlyn and Morgan 2003: 3).

During the 1980s, as in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic experienced a profound social and economic crisis that left the socioeconomic indicators well below international standards. Since the 1990s, however, an important process of economic, social and political transformation has led to a rapid process of urbanization and to improved economic performance based on tourism, communications and industrial production (mostly "maquillas" with high levels of female labor). The country's financial resources were enhanced by international monetary transfers from Dominican emigrants. Since the mid-1990s, the Gross Domestic Product, GDP, has increased at an average rate of 5.5 percent. Public social expenditure in relation to the GDP increased from 4.7 percent in 1990 to 8.1 percent in 2001, with a rise in social expenditure per capita from US\$ 91.4 in 1995 to US\$ 206 in 2001.

During these same years, public spending on education increased from 1.9 percent of GDP to 2.8 percent and the health expenditure from 1.2 percent to 1.9 percent. Per capita educational expenditure grew from US \$ 30.4 to US\$ 70.3, and the per capita health expenditure rose from US\$ 19.5 to US \$ 47.7 (ONAPLAN, 2003a: 21). As a result of these increments, access to the educational and health services improved significantly .

These and other improvements were significant in terms of human and social development, but their impact on the poor population was significantly lower, leaving a social deficit reflected in low social indicators (illiteracy, primary school enrollment, secondary school enrollment, repetition rates, life expectancy, infant mortality) and low access to public social services (drinking water, adequate housing, swage system and so on). Economic growth did not affect significantly employment opportunities. In 2001, the unemployment rate was 15.5 percent, and significantly higher for women (26.0 percent) than for men (9.4 percent) (ONAPLAN 2003a: 17).

Poverty affects more than half of the Dominican population (51.8 percent in 1998), with 14.6 percent of the population living in extreme poverty (ONAPLAN 2003a: 28) Rural poverty was 79 percent and urban poverty, 40 percent, with 10 percent of poor households in the city of Santo Domingo. Poverty is heterogeneous across regions and is higher among female-headed households, children and the elderly.

Income distribution is highly concentrated. The poorest 20 percent of the population receives only 2.6 percent of total monetary income, while the richest 20 percent receives 57.1 percent. In 1997, the Gini Coefficient of income distribution in the Dominican Republic was 0.517, showing higher inequality than in Costa Rica (0.459), Peru (0.465) and Panama (0.485) and the average in the 1990s for Latin America (0.49) and the Caribbean (0.492) (ONAPLAN 2003a: 24).

Dominican women are more affected by poverty than men: 41.5 percent women are poor, compared to 36.7 of men; and while 13.5 percent of women live in extreme poverty, 9.4 percent of men do (ONAPLAN, 2003b: 15). Among the extreme poor, 57.6 percent of the women are unemployed, compared to 20 percent of men. In 1999, only 19 percent of collective labor conventions benefited female workers (ONAPLAN 2003a: 18). Besides, more than half of the working women are in the informal sector, with low income levels (ONAPLAN 2003a: 18). The average female income is 66.8 percent of male average income among workers with seven to nine years of education, indicating gender income discrimination as well as a lower return on women's educational investment (ECLAC, Wire Dominican Republic Gender Data).

The process of institutional reform started in the late 1990s. In 2001, among other state institutions, the *Social Cabinet* was founded to coordinate the implementation of the government economic and social public policies. The government has formulated and is implementing its Social Development Policy, and in partnership with the civil society, has conducted the National Consultation of the PRSP. These issues are dealt with in this paper.

### *Dominican Women's Experiences in Public Policy Decision-making*

In order to understand women's influence on the PRSP consultation process in 2002, a brief summary of past achievements of Dominican women's movements might be helpful:

- The consolidation of the National Confederation of Women Organizations, CONGAN, which allowed for important outcomes, such as the Law Against Women Violence of 1997 (Law 24-97); Law 275 of 1997 establishing a female electoral quota at 25 percent.<sup>3</sup>
- Increases in the percentage of women in the House of Deputies from 12.5 percent in 1994 to 16.1 percent in 1998, to 17.3 percent in 2002.<sup>4</sup> In the municipal councils the increase in women's representation went from 14.4 percent in 1994, to 24.4 percent in 1998, to 30.8 percent in 2002 (Aquino 2003).<sup>5</sup>
- Women and women's organization mobilizations have to be credited for successful efforts to frame the legal system of the country with gender perspective (Aquino 2003)<sup>6</sup>. CONGAN is presently disintegrated, but the women leaders of that confederation have the know-how to properly deal in public policy scenarios and gain allies to confront gender discrimination and social exclusion<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Other important outcomes of the CONGAN include the reformulation of the Labor Code in 1992 to eliminate discriminatory articles, promote women's labor stability and prevent sexual harassment; the 1994 Code to Protect Boys, Girls and Adolescents; the incorporation during the 1990s of gender perspective in the National Health Law and in reforms of the health sector; the inclusion of women as beneficiaries in the Agrarian Reform Law.

<sup>4</sup> This exceeds the world average of female representatives in countries with female quotas, which is 17 percent. (IDEA, Stockholm, cited by Espinal, Hartlyn and Morgan (2003) p. 14)

<sup>5</sup> Recent modifications include Law 12 of 2000 to increase the female quota to a minimum of 33 percent for the House of Representatives and City Councils and to establish party lists with alternate men and women candidates, and Law 13-2000 to establish that all parties have to nominate a woman to the position of mayor or vice mayor in all municipalities (Aquino, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> A detailed and well-documented analysis of the gender perspective in the public policy agenda of the Dominican Republic is presented in Paiewonsky (2002). See also Baez and Paiewonsky (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Denise Paiewonsky, ed. (2002) provides an analysis of the central role of CONGAN in the public policy scenario, the reasons for its disintegration, and the effects on Dominican women, is presented in .

## The Dominican Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper devises the different plans and actions to implement the National Social Policy focused on the reduction of poverty. This policy was formulated during the present government of President Hipólito Mejía (2000-2004), recognizing that in spite of previous efforts, "the social debt" caused by pervasive poverty is still an acute problem (ONAPLAN 2002a). Its formulation began in early 2002 and was influenced by the results and recommendations of previous social development consultation processes and the Millennium Development Goals<sup>8</sup>. Its aim is to promote integrated development and to reduce poverty for a society based on the values of dignity, equality and solidarity.

Poverty is conceptualized as a situation of *deprivation* (related to the lack of adequate monetary and non-monetary resources and income to satisfy basic social needs), *impotence* (related to restricted political representation and the impossibility to participate in public decisions affecting poor people's lives) and *vulnerability* in relation to different political, economic, social and environmental risks.

In this policy, the Dominican people are considered the country's wealth. Development is understood as a process that requires the integration of economic, social, political and institutional dimensions. Accordingly, development policy processes will depend on the effective participation of authorities and civil organizations at the national and especially at the local levels, implying the need to decentralize the government structure. The policy was proposed in a context that recognized explicit links between equity and democracy and the need to guarantee citizen's rights.

The policy endorses recent legislative frameworks to recognize, protect and enhance women's rights and to promote gender equity<sup>9</sup>. The poverty profile with gender perspective considers the relationship between poverty and economic participation by women (female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households, women's income discrimination, female unemployment and labor market discrimination) and women's high-

<sup>8</sup> These included a consultation conducted by the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in 1987 on aspects of the economy, education, institutional reforms and health; in 1994, the agreements for the social reform and the reduction of poverty; in 1999, on national development priorities; the National Dialogue of 1998, involving more than 3,400 citizens; the World Bank recommendations for national development and the reduction of poverty; and the UNDP 2000 Report on Human Development (ONAPLAN, 2002:98-104).

<sup>9</sup> Among these laws are Law 24 of 1997, on Violence against Women; Law 275 of 1997, establishing a female quota, amended by Law 12 of 2000; Law 55 of 1997, which recognizes women's right to land entitlement and as beneficiaries of the agrarian reform; and State Resolution 111 of 2001, endorsing the international resolution to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

risk health profile. It includes a balance of political and public participation gains and losses and recognizes women's abilities to confront household, neighborhood and community problems (ONAPLAN 2002a: 75-78).

The poverty reduction strategy's twelve goals include the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and changes in gender-discriminating cultural patterns.<sup>10</sup>

### National Consultation on the PRSP: Aims, Objectives and Products

The main objective of the national consultation was to concert the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, which seeks to decrease poverty by half by 2015 and to construct a more equal society. **The consultation goal** was to help reframe the relationship between the government and civil society in order to facilitate crucial issues such as:

- **More effective involvement of civil society in governance** for a more equal society: The intention was to put into action a process of social awareness, discussion, recommendations, actions and commitments to tackle the poverty problem, involving the government and the different social actors at the local and national levels, including the poor.
- **Empowerment of the poor sectors as central actors** in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the strategy to reduce poverty.
- **A first firm step from consultation to full participation** in the poverty reduction process. The government provided civil society with information and mechanisms for consultation and joint evaluations (ONAPLAN 2002 c).

The design of the social consultation process was based on a government/civil-society co-participative approach and the legal framework to decentralize the government. Two parallel processes of consultation were planned and carried out: at the local level, to mobilize the leaders of grassroots community organizations and local NGOs, and at the national level, with the boards of influential institutions related to social development and with different stakeholders.

The consultation opened opportunities to incorporate different public interests, views and values and to enhance responsiveness among the

<sup>10</sup>The target for progress on gender equality are: (1) women's economic and social participation equal to men's by 2015; (2) a 100 percent increase by 2015 in the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament; among municipal mayors and on city councils; and (3) a 5 percent increase in per capita spending to promote the participation of women.



different social sectors involved in the process (Cornwall 2003). Social Consultation on the PRSP promoted the active involvement of women and their contributions added a strong gender perspective.

The consultation was conducted jointly by the government and the Civil Society Council of the Social Policy Cabinet<sup>11</sup>. The President of the Cabinet thus had to bridge the interests of the government and of civil society organizations. This required gathering support for joint consultation and the construction of trust among the actors. For the government, the main concern was the issue of sharing power with civil society. For civil society, the main implicit and explicit concern was related to risking its autonomy from the State. The capacity of the President of the Social Cabinet was crucial to the process.<sup>12</sup>

This National Board for the Direction of the National Consultation on the PRSP, composed of members of the National Cabinet, the National Planning Office, ONAPLAN, and the Civil Society Council of the Social Cabinet, played a key role in overcoming the traditional lack of confidence and in achieving the objectives of the initiative.

### *Consultation on the PRSP at the Local Level, "Where the Poor People Live"*

Local-level consultation involved the leaders of social organizations in all 125 municipalities in the country, including neighborhood boards, social and public community service organizations, women's organizations, productive and business groups, non-profit organizations and local organizations of the political parties.

The provincial workshops were conducted in the poorest municipality of each province, selected using the poverty map (ONAPLAN 2003d). Eight events were organized weekly throughout a five-week period. It is estimated that 1,150 community organization leaders responded to the invitation, including formal and informal grassroots organizations of various political affiliations, with adequate involvement of women leaders, who comprised at least 30 percent of the participants.

<sup>11</sup> The Social Policy Cabinet is a coordinating authority created in January 2001 (Reg. 28-01) to guarantee adequate cooperation among the government's economic, social and political institutions. The members of the Social Cabinet Board are its President, appointed by the President of the Republic (the highest authority of the Cabinet), and the Ministers of the Presidency, Health, Agriculture, the Technical Secretary of the Presidency, Education, Finance, and Labor. Other members of this Cabinet are the directors of the National Housing Institute, the National Budget Office, the National Planning Office and the National Treasury Office.

<sup>12</sup> Peggy Cabral de Peña Gómez was appointed to the presidency of the Social Cabinet in July 2002. She is a well-known, highly influential national leader.

The workshop included dynamics to promote an effective participatory environment, leading to group discussions which sought to:

- define the problem of poverty from the participants' perspectives;
- identify and prioritize local needs;
- stimulate discussion, opinions and recommendations to revise the PRSP;
- complete a written form designed to guide and to register the group's discussions on: (a) the conceptual and empirical aspects of the problem; (b) objectives and main action framework; (c) strategic aspects; (d) suggestions for community participation in PRSP implementation; (e) evaluation of viability of community involvement in household identification to target the actions of the strategy.

The closing session of each workshop informed the participants of the future agenda of the consultation process and of the reformulation of the PRSP, and emphasized the value of the participants' involvement and active participation.

Local leaders identified the main social needs of their communities and expressed the interest of their communities to get effectively involved to confront the problem by (i) working jointly with the government in the process, (ii) promoting community self-management; (iii) contributing with non-monetary and monetary resources; and (iv) closely observing and auditing the use of the monetary and non-monetary resources.

The following actions were recommended or reinforced as determinant to the reduction of poverty: (1) to increase social participation and the commitment of different sectors to collaborate with the government; (2) to assure men's and women's participation in the implementation of the strategy and equal access to benefits; (3) to implement a targeted strategy and (4) to assure adequate public investment for its implementation. More than half of the participants recommended not using international loans to finance the strategy (ONAPLAN 2003a: 53)

### *The Process of Consultation at the National Level*

The social actors consulted at the national level were leaders of the boards of the most influential national organizations and institutions, including: the Congress, the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Youth, the political parties, business associations, labor unions, the main churches, universities and professional associations, the Civil Society Council of the Social

Cabinet, women's organizations, NGOs working in social programs and organizations of vulnerable groups.

The President of the Social Cabinet, with the technical support of ONAPLAN, led meetings with the different institutions. She explained the problem of poverty, its heterogeneous causes and consequences, and the content and main components of the draft strategy paper, and made a formal request to discuss the document and make recommendations to revise the PRSP. Emphasis was placed on the role of each sector to confront the problem and on the need to arrive at a national agreement and commitment to support a national long-term strategy. Each organization set up its internal consultation process after the formal presentation of the document.

#### **The Revision of the Strategy with Gender Perspective**

INTEC University conducted an internal consultation of the draft strategy and called a broad-based meeting of women's organizations, women academics, feminists and the Secretary of Women to analyze the strategy from the gender perspective and to present their main critiques, concerns and recommendations. This process was led by the Gender Studies Center with support from the INTEC-IDB Program to Strengthen Civil Society Organizations. For the workshop, an external consultant of the Gender Studies Center prepared the document "Gender and the Strategy to Reduce Poverty".

A half-day meeting on January 17, 2003 included: (1) ONAPLAN'S presentation of the PRSP, focused on pertinent gender aspects, including statistics by sex, some of which were officially presented for the first time; (2) the INTEC Gender Studies Center critical analysis of the PRSP; (3) an ample discussion of the PRSP document with the involvement of the female leaders and authorities and technical personnel of the Social Cabinet and ONAPLAN; and (4) recommendations of the organizations to ONAPLAN on how to revise the strategy with a gender perspective and how ONAPLAN and INTEC could work together in the process (Gender Studies Center 2003). One of the main outcomes of this workshop was sharing a scientific and empirical approach to the gender problem and the potential role of women, for sustainable implementation of the strategy.

#### ***Products of the Consultation Process***

Consultation on the PRSP in the Dominican Republic produced a concerted national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which was published on June 17, 2003 (ONAPLAN, 2003a). The process itself improved the knowledge and awareness of the national problem of poverty and of the

need for a national commitment to confront it. It facilitated the awareness of local authorities and socialized valuable information on policies to reduce poverty. The participatory nature of the process strengthened and stimulated grassroots organizations and local social capital. Finally, the process led to the creation of the National Network of Grassroots Organizations, coordinated by the Civil Society Organizations Council, for effective participation of locally-based organizations in the implementation, follow-up, evaluation and monitoring of the strategy to reduce poverty.

### *Main Lessons Learned*

- Government and the organized civil society can work together toward long-term national goals. This requires clear “rules of the game” to overcome mutual distrust.
- Institutional reforms matter. The social institutional reforms that included the creation of the Social Cabinet in 2001 created the formal space to coordinate economic and social bodies within the government and between the government and the organized civil society.
- A strong, organized civil society can interact with the government at a high level of social policy decision-making and allow grassroots organizations of the poor to express their own interests and to be listened at the national level.
- New actors with strong social commitment can play an important role for more effective social management.
- A flexible, open, participatory process of consultation allowed the Social Cabinet and the Civil Society to complete the consultation very effectively, considering that it was undertaken in a very short period of time and that it involved a large number of organizations at the local and national levels.
- The initiative represents, for the first time in the country, a strong and successful experience opening real possibilities to move in the near future from the formulation to the “formation” of public policy, given the structural changes involved and the long-term scope of the Strategy to Reduce Poverty.
- Efficient consultation with community-based organizations and local authorities enabled them to see themselves as able to play a central role in the achievement of the local and national objectives of the PRSP.

## Women's Role and Impact in PRSP Consultation and in Policy-making Processes

Dominican women participated very actively in the process of PRSP consultation and demonstrated effective capacity to evaluate the original draft and to make clear recommendations for the formulation of the final proposal for the strategy and for its implementation. It also became clear that some of the women involved in the process had experience in this kind of dialogue and how to "gain allies". As one of the women leaders in the consultation process said, the involvement of women in this experience "was not improvised", but rather the result of systematic and sustained efforts in the arena of public policy formulation<sup>13</sup>. It is clear that they were able to influence the process at the decision-making level of government and in civil society organizations.

### *Women's Participation at the Local Level: Beneficiaries, Leaders and Actors*

Using the categories of modes of participation suggested by Cornwell (2003:1237), it can be argued that at the local level, women were involved in the process of consultation *as beneficiaries* to be enlisted in the process; *as leaders of community organizations*, in order to facilitate efficient implementation of the strategy; and *as actors*, to discuss public views and values, garner ideas and enhance responsiveness.

**As beneficiaries of the strategy to reduce poverty**, women leaders clearly expressed concerns and frustrations related to how they experience and perceive poverty, strongly associated with the social condition of gender subordination<sup>14</sup>. Women emphasized the very negative consequences of poverty on their families, especially on their children.

**As leaders of community organizations**, women attended the one-day workshop, most traveling long distances, often in areas with very limited or no public transportation. Frequently, female community leaders from different municipalities already had formal and informal connections, sometimes having worked together in the same projects.

**As actors of the consultation process**, women participated in a very enthusiastic, active and effective way. In the open discussions after general presentations, men participated more than women, but women's interventions revealed their understanding of the issues under discussion;

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the Director of INTEC Gender Studies Center.

<sup>14</sup> In order to capture the participants' concepts of poverty, during the first part of the consultation program at the local level, they were asked to individually express how they "live poverty".

they could clearly express their points of view, their concerns and their critiques of the different subjects. They made a clear commitment to become active actors in the implementation and follow-up of the strategy's programs and projects in their communities.

### *Women's Participation in National-level Consultation: As Politicians and Social Leaders*

The participation of individual women in key roles in national-level consultations had important repercussions on the process and its outcomes. Most notably, and as previously mentioned, a woman assumed the leadership of the overall consultation process, as President of the Social Cabinet. As observed in other countries, direct involvement of high-level authorities in PRSP consultation is necessary for a successful process.<sup>15</sup> National recognition of the President of the Cabinet as an outstanding figure, both in the political scenario and the social development arena, gave her the legitimacy required to effectively bring together political parties, business sectors, churches, unions, universities and others.

Women also worked as members of the Civil Society Council of the Social Cabinet and in its three Commissions. The commission for public social policy definition and formulation was made up mostly by women and coordinated by a woman. Prior to the consultation, women were involved in: (1) analysis of the pros and cons of backing the government in PRSP consultation; (2) debates with the technical teams of the Social Cabinet and ONAPLAN, to consider the scope and methodology of the consultation; (3) elaborating a response to the National Directory Board of the National Consultation in coordination with the executive commission of the council. During the consultation, these women: (1) worked to identify and involve leaders of local organizations in the provincial workshops; (2) helped to organize the Council Assembly of January 2003; (3) actively participated in INTEC consultation with women's organizations, whose recommendations were determinant for the revision of the PRSP. After the consultation and in Coordination with the President of the Social Cabinet, the women of this commission helped to organize and to formalize the Network of Grassroots Organizations for Social Control of the PRSP.

Finally, individual women academics in the university sector played key roles in the consultation process and in the final formulation of

<sup>15</sup> This is the case of Honduras, as recognized in an interview by the author with Glenda Gallardo, member of the technical team of that consultation process.

the PRSP with social equity and gender perspectives. They included the President of INTEC University, the Coordinator of the Gender Studies Center and the Coordinator of the INTEC-IDB-PSCSO Program.

### **The Influence of Women's Participation in PRSP Consultation**

This section of the text will examine some concrete outcomes of women's organized participation in the process.

Women's participation facilitated successful institutional networking between organizations of the government and civil society and within civil society. Box 15.1 indicates the practical and strategic interconnections of government and civil society organizations that were needed to conduct the consultation process.

Female participation promoted and facilitated the involvement of the poor as one of the objectives of the consultation and helped identify and amplify the voices of grassroots leaders who usually remain beyond the reach of policy formation and implementation (Cornwall 2003). Gender experts and women leaders analyzed the PRSP, considering an integrated approach to the problem of social exclusion, gender discrimination and poverty affecting men and women; they were able to contextualize an

#### **BOX 15.1**

##### **Expected Products of the Consultation Process**

1. A concerted Poverty Reduction Strategy
2. Local needs identified and ranked
3. Stronger mechanisms to de-concentrate and decentralize government
4. Stronger local authorities
5. Stronger participatory mechanisms
6. Evidence that reducing poverty implies a sustainable process of change
7. Stronger social capital at local level.
8. Local community organizations identified and connected in a national network to support, evaluate and control the process and results of the poverty reduction strategy.

engendered analytical critique of the strategy, considering economic and social development trends, thus helping to fine-tune the strategy.

During the debates at the INTEC workshop, there was general acceptance of the importance of balanced macroeconomic growth as a necessary input to the reduction of poverty. However, there was also general recognition that growth was insufficient to reduce poverty and its outcomes should be examined to control possible perverse impacts on women and other excluded sectors of society. It was also debated that increased social expenditure could be effective to reduce poverty if effectively budgeted and implemented. Consideration was also given to the need to formally decentralize the allocation and operation of the national budget and on the need to focus it to cover the strategy's actions for women.

The report of the workshop presented to the consultation board took into account gender discrimination and other types of social exclusion and attention was called to the urgent need to confront what was considered a non-neutral approach to public policies, frequently biased by gender and class.

From the gender perspective in particular, the final report of the INTEC workshop makes the following technical recommendations: (1) to make explicit the transversal gender perspective of the strategy, by revising its logical framework with a gender perspective; (2) to determine in each objective the proportion of women to be benefited, (3) to present the data disaggregated by sex; and (4) to explicitly consider ideological and cultural aspects related to gender subordination and to include specific objectives and actions to systematically confront them during the implementation of the PRSP. The lack of technical support in gender analysis was evidenced and the workshop recommended that a gender specialist be included in the technical team and that the PRSP be revised to consider a National Plan for Gender Equity of the Secretary of Women. The technical team called several meetings with the Secretary of Women herself and with the Secretary's technical team to meet these recommendations.

The consultation process proves that Dominican women were able to articulate and effectively shape the formulation of the PRSP in accordance with the interests of women and women's movements. Some of the women said that the knowledge and experiences derived from the last two decades of their organizations' movements allowed for the emergence and formation of women leaders, and the expertise to:

- conceptualize the gender problem, bearing in mind its cultural, social, economic and legal dimensions and the negative consequences for women and for the society as a whole;



- use data and empirical evidence to base demands for public policies and legal reform on the recognition and guarantee of Dominican women's civil rights;
- demonstrate that confronting social gender discrimination is imperative to the promotion of a more equal society; and
- permeate government institutions such as the Social Cabinet and government and civil society bodies such as the CSCSC with a gender perspective.

### **Women's and Men's Concerns, Priorities and Needs in Public Policy Formulation**

It is well known and documented that women's policy concerns, priorities and needs are related to the traditional responsibilities delegated to them by the sexual division of labor. Increasingly, some women's organizations are becoming involved in public policy dialogues to overcome gender subordination, which requires the confrontation of cultural, social, legal and historic factors that justify the social division of labor, female subordination and social exclusion.

The outcomes of INTEC's workshop show women's input to concerns related to their family survival and to social equity in its multiple dimensions. Specifically, the workshop indicated how recent economic policies for economic stabilization, such as restrictive spending and reduced subsidiary programs without compensatory measures, had perverse social implications for poor sectors and especially for women. For example, interest rate levels seriously restrict women's access to credit. (Gender Studies Center 2003: 9-10). The workshop also highlighted how privatization of social services negatively affected living conditions, increasing women's domestic burden. The reduction of the public social budget worsened living conditions and negatively affected women's opportunities for personal development (Gender Studies Center 2003: 9).

The workshop recommended that the PRSP effectively increase social public spending, targeting the budget with gender criteria, rationalizing budget allocation and decentralizing it to the regional, provincial and local levels (Gender Studies Center 2003: 10).

The workshop also recommended that civil society organizations work with a gender perspective to increase women's capacity for social empowerment.<sup>16</sup> These recommendations are based on an engen-

<sup>16</sup> This was a major recommendation of the INTEC-BID-PSCSO Program, based on Baez and Paiewonsky, 2001 and 2002.

dered conception of citizenship, with implications for social policy such as:

- Citizenship with a male-female profile to guarantee women's rights, to empower women and to confront gender discrimination;
- Engendered participatory democracy to equally guarantee women's and men's civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights;
- Gender equity for sustainable human development;
- Recognizing the social meaning of "private scenarios": it is urgent to revise the conceptualization and delimitation of the excluding conceptions of the public and private society spheres. Reproductive and productive dimensions are an integral part of our present societies and it should be recognized that all members of society play central roles in both scenarios. (Baez and Paiewonsky, 2001 and 2002).

### **Recommendations: Strategies for Decision-making with a Gender Perspective**

Government and civil society together can lead relevant discussion of public policies. In this context, women are able to creatively and efficiently influence consultation processes and to insert structural, macro and gender issues into the discussions. They make conceptually clear and empirically-based recommendations to reformulate public policy, (in this case, the PRSP). The different lessons presented throughout the document highlight these recommendations for social consultations and policy decision-making:

1. **To promote policies with gender perspective.** Gender perspective methods and tools for project development could be useful resources to assure that the voices and concerns of women are heard and taken into account in the design and social control of public policy processes and outcomes.
2. **To promote a central role for women in policy choices.** It is increasingly accepted that "improving women's opportunities requires long-term systematic strategies aimed at challenging prevailing structures and building accountability of government to people for their decisions" (Cornwell 2003: 82). For this reason, "short-term, ameliorative approaches to improve women's employment opportunities are ineffective unless they are combined with long-term strategies to re-establish people's -- especially women's -- control over the economic decisions that shape their lives".

3. **To promote a systematic, but open and flexible, consultation process.** In the Dominican Republic, open and flexible consultation allowed for a joint process of government and civil society with a leading involvement of women who decisively oriented an effective, broad-based experience.
4. To recognize, to validate and to enhance female leadership. The practical involvement of women leaders in the process allowed us to discern a “female profile of leadership”, based on women’s position in society, on their confrontation with social subordination, and on the social and political implications of their practical and strategic needs.
5. **Women’s strategic interests to safeguard basic rights and political will.** The opening of political processes to accommodate greater expressions of opinion and dissent, as well as the participation of poor people in the decisions that affect their lives at the macro and the micro levels, is crucial to build more equal societies. The issue is how to go about this. The consultation on the PRSP in the Dominican Republic evidences how women and their organizations have been able to put together a political, conceptual, and empirical strategy to promote their strategic interests for a non-discriminating, more prosperous and more democratic society.

### **Final Remarks: Deriving Some Comparative Lessons from the Seminar**

The Dominican leaders involved in the consultation process have made it very clear that women’s empowerment and gender equity are necessary to assure sustainable and egalitarian political, economic and social cultures.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most unequal region of the world, with more than 220 million people living in poverty. In spite of social advancements, living conditions are highly inadequate for the poor people, who are excluded from the benefits of economic growth. Educational levels are still low, health and housing conditions are precarious, public care programs for children under five years of age are rare, and domestic labor is a real burden for women. Also, most of these poor women are unemployed or work for minimum salaries in the informal goods and services market, frequently combining domestic and remunerated activities in very complex arrangements.

Latin American and Caribbean women seem to have the most influence at high levels of decision making, in the legal systems and in public policy consultation, formulation and implementation. A regular criticism of this achievement is that women’s mobilizations in the region have been

concerned more with strategic interests, diluting the urgency of the needs poor women struggling for their family's daily survival. A great concern has been the conceptual and political divorce of the interrelations between gender and class and the sometimes conflicting economic interests of poor and non-poor women.

However, this is not true of the case presented here. As this text shows, academic and professional women have worked in the Dominican Republic to promote practical gender interests that greatly benefit poor women, and have promoted strategic interests that question gender subordination and social exclusion. They were able to use past experiences, lessons and gains to influence the direction of the consultation and the content of the final version of the PRSP. Today, against the backdrop of a new economic crisis, these women leaders are looking for ways to continue implementing the strategy in order to have a more equal society by the year 2015.

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## Steps Toward a Gender Policy Management System and Gender Budget Analysis by Women's NGOs in Korea

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Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, countries around the world have placed a strategic focus on gender mainstreaming for integrating equality concerns into policies and programs in different areas. In Korea, too, progress has been made since Beijing in terms of women's machineries, the legal system and gender policies. In 1998, the Korean government began advocating gender mainstreaming and gender focal points were established at six major central government ministries. The Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) was established in January 2001. Two different pieces of legislation that directly deal with women's advancement and gender equality were enacted: the 'Women's Development Act' in 1995 and the 'Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act' in December 1998. In terms of policy plans, the "First Basic Plan on Women's Policies", a comprehensive national plan for the advancement of women, was implemented during 1997—2002 and the Second Basic Plan (2003-2007) was launched in 2003. Several line ministries have their own medium- or long-term plans for women's development.

Initiatives have been taken to develop practical tools for gender mainstreaming and institutionalize their application. Some work has been done on gender statistics/indicators and on gender training, but issues such as applying gender analysis to policies/programs and gender budget frameworks have only recently begun to attract attention in the government policy arena.

On the surface, these initiatives certainly mark a step forward toward achieving gender equality. However, gender policies are not being effectively coordinated and managed. Also, resistance has arisen against policy initiatives for mainstreaming women in decision-making positions in the public sector, due to a lack of understanding of the structural aspects of gender inequality, and to the patriarchal culture deeply embedded in Korean society.

This text highlights recent initiatives by the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) and women's NGOs to promote gender mainstreaming of government policies, within the framework called the 'Korean Gender Policy Management System' (KGPMS). The first section scans the current state of gender mainstreaming in Korea; the second outlines the major tasks for establishing a more accountable gender policy management system (KGPMS). Roles and responsibilities are identified for key stakeholders to establish and operate KGPMS, in order to provide MOGE with a system for effectively mainstreaming gender in the government policies. Moreover, since gender budget is one of the most important elements of KGPMS, this paper introduces a major initiative by 'The Korean WomenLink', a network of women's NGOs for gender budget analysis of local governments, now in its third year.

## **Country Background: A Scan of the Current State of Gender Mainstreaming**

### *The Status of Women*

Women's status in Korea has improved over time, as measured by conventional gender inequality indicators. Nonetheless, significant gender inequalities persist.

### **Women in Education**

In Korea, the average number of years of schooling is constantly increasing for women but still falls short of the average for men (in 2000, 9.8 years for females, vs. 10.6 years for males). The rate of girls' enrollment in university has rapidly increased from 31.9 percent in 1990 to 72.1 percent in 2002 (compared with 33.3 percent and 75.1 percent, respectively, for males). In 2002, female graduates with master's degrees accounted for 36.9 percent of the total and those with doctoral degrees accounted for 23.2 percent.

In 2002, female teachers accounted for 79.8 percent, 69.1 percent, and 41.6 percent of the total at the elementary, junior high and high school levels, respectively. However, female principals comprised a mere 7.0 percent on the elementary school level, 10.2 percent for junior high, and 4.9 percent for high school. In universities, female professors comprised 12.9 percent of the total in 2000, while 27.6 percent of full-time lecturers were women. Females made up only 9.0 percent of university presidents/deans.

### **Women's Paid and Unpaid Work**

The rate of women's participation in economic activities increased from 42.8 percent in 1980 to 49.7 percent in 2002. However, the rate of female

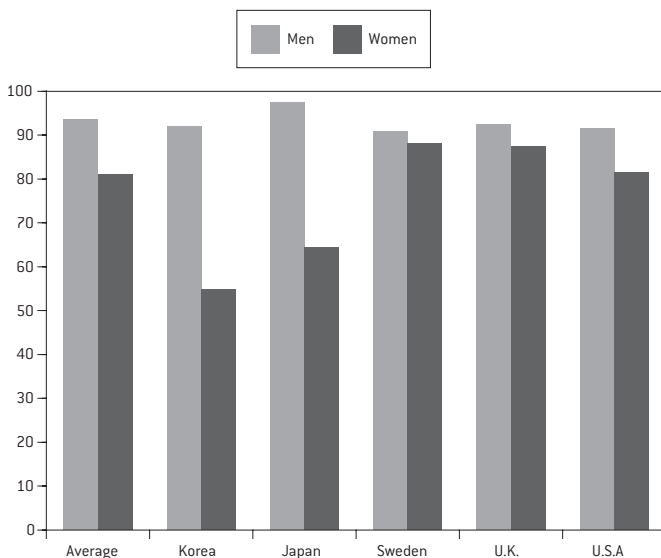


college graduation is only 54.7 percent, the lowest among the OECD member countries (Figure 16.1). The economic activity rate for women with advanced degrees is 62.0 percent, vs. 89.5 percent for men in 2002.

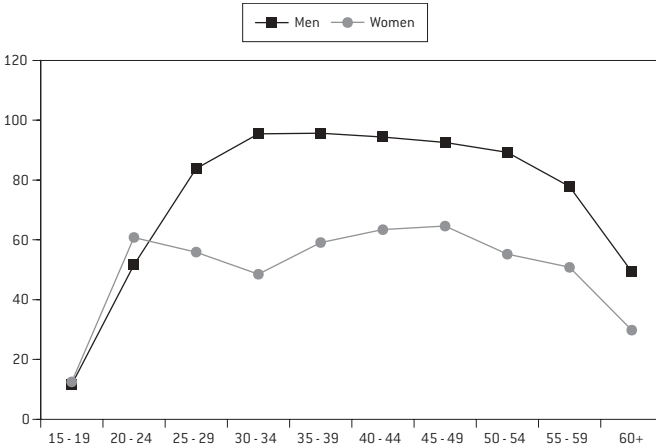
Roughly 70 percent of all female workers quit their jobs to have a family. Accordingly, married women's economic participation rate according to age group takes an "M" shape (Figure 16.2). Many women who leave the labor market attempt to re-enter after raising their children. However, such opportunities are extremely scarce and even if a woman finds an opportunity, her job conditions usually worsen.

Many women in the labor market have the status of unpaid family workers and a majority of them are clerks or sales and service workers. Compared to the continuously increasing trend in women's economic participation, women's entry in managerial/executive positions is still

**FIGURE 16.1 Economic Activity Rate of University Graduates in OECD countries (1999, percent)**



Source: OECD (2001), *Employment Outlook*.

**FIGURE 16.2 Economic Activity Rate by Age and Sex (2000)**

Source: National Statistical Office, *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey in 2000*.

rare (0.4 percent, vs. 4.1 percent for men). Women's lower status is reflected and summarized in their lower wages: the female-to-male ratio of the average monthly wage was 63.9 percent in 2002, up from 55.0 percent in 1990, but still revealing a large gender gap.

Meanwhile, women are expected to take care of housework, protect children and the elderly, and provide volunteer services and other forms of unpaid labor. According to the Time Use Survey by the National Statistical Office that began in 1999, the average time spent on household labor on a weekday was 200 minutes for women and 25 minutes for men.

#### **Women's Participation in Politics and Government**

In the 16th general election in 2000, 16 of the 273 elected members of the National Assembly were women—a mere 5.9 percent. In 2002, a law was introduced requiring political parties to employ a 30 percent quota for female candidates. This law seems to have contributed to a relatively large increase in local nominations for the regional election of 2002: 9.2 percent of the total, a relatively large increase from 5.9 percent in the 1998 election. Women comprise 3.4 percent of local assemblies, including both the broad and basic unit assemblies.

Presently, four of 17 cabinet ministers are women: the ministers of Gender Equality, Justice, Health and Welfare, and the Environment. At the end of 2001, women accounted for 32.8 percent of public officials in the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches, and 23.0 percent in general services. However, female government employees are generally in extremely low-ranking positions.

#### **HDI, GDI, and GEM**

According to UNDP (2003), Korea ranks 30<sup>th</sup> among 175 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), which is based on indicators related to life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrollment ratio and GDP per capita. In the Gender Development Index (GDI) ranking, Korea is 30<sup>th</sup> among 144 countries. In terms of the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which is based on the proportion of females among parliamentarians, administrative officials and professionals, Korea ranks 63<sup>rd</sup> out of 70 countries. Korean women are relatively well positioned in terms of life expectancy and school enrollment, but rank very low in terms of their share of decision-making positions or professional occupations.

### *Policy Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming*

#### **National Women's Machineries**

Key national women's machineries in Korea consist of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Gender Focal Points in six ministries and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Affairs. The role of MOGE as the lead agency of KGPMS is the most critical of all. Roles and functions of these machineries as well as resources available for them should be scrutinized in order to determine if they are properly equipped to act as catalysts for gender mainstreaming.

The Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) was established in January 2001. Currently, its major responsibilities are to plan and coordinate gender-related policies, develop policy options, address gender discrimination, prevent domestic and sexual violence and protect victims, forge cooperative relations with civil society organizations and facilitate international cooperation. The MOGE has one office, three bureaus and approximately 120 staff members.

As in many other countries, the role and status of women's machinery in Korea has changed whenever governments have changed hands, hampering consistent and responsible pursuit of policy implementation and management. Since the launch of the MOGE, women's policies have been expanded and reinforced. The MOGE still faces limitations, how-

ever, due to its small budget and staff, and lack of authority to coordinate gender policies.

Six ministries appointed an Officer in Charge of Women's Policies in 1998 (Justice, Government Administration and Home Affairs, Education and Human Resources Development, Agriculture and Forestry, Health and Welfare, and Labor). These officers are Gender Focal Points.

Since the introduction of this system, mid- to long-term women's policies have been established in the relevant ministries, yielding many positive results, including expanded participation of women in the decision-making process and the adoption of women-specific policies. Unfortunately, the lack of human resources, a negligible budget and the low status of the focal points prevent the system from achieving its envisaged goals. The major tasks still involve programs targeted at women, rather than policies for mainstreaming gender equality within the ministries.

It is imperative to empower women's units with the authority and status to coordinate and assess policies of various divisions from a gender perspective. At the same time, a gender focal points system should be set up at other key ministries, such as Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Ministry of Planning and Budget, which are responsible for general coordination of planning and budgeting of government policies.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Affairs was established in the national legislature in March, 2002. Unlike the Special Committee for Women's Affairs, which preceded it, the Standing Committee on Women's Affairs has the right to propose and vote on bills. The Committee also has the right to audit and investigate the administration of the MOGE and to deliberate on the budget and draft of final accounts. It is anticipated that the Standing Committee will play an important role in gender mainstreaming in the National Assembly. Measures should be undertaken to create a supportive environment.

#### **Legal Framework**

Efforts continue today to build legal and institutional mechanisms to achieve both legal and *de facto* equality, for a truly gender-equal and gender-mainstreamed society. Nevertheless, sex-discriminatory laws still exist and, according to organizations such as the UN and local women's NGOs, real equality falls far short of what the law promises.

The **Women's Development Act** was approved in 1995 to "promote gender equality in all political, economic, social and cultural spheres as well as to facilitate women's development by defining the responsibilities and duties of the State and local governments in realizing gender equality as specified in the Constitution." The Act provides a basis for poli-

cies for women including: affirmative action for women, the Basic Plan on Women's Policy, a fund for women's development, and support for women's activist groups.

In December 2002, the Act was amended to ensure effective implementation of gender policies. The main features of the amendment include (a) conducting gender-based analysis of government policies; (b) establishment of the Gender Policy Coordination Council to coordinate gender policies and to deliberate gender issues; (c) appointment of a person in each government ministry to be in charge of gender policies.

The **Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act** was passed by the legislature in December 1998 to achieve gender equality in all social realms through: the prohibition of gender discrimination in employment, education, provision of goods, services and facilities; implementation of laws and policies; and the restoration of victims' rights, based on the concept of equality outlined in the Constitution. The Act demands that private businesses and public institutions rectify practices involving gender discrimination. It was pursuant to this law that the MOGE was given the right to investigate, judge, coordinate and prosecute cases of gender discrimination and make necessary recommendations, a feat rarely achieved in other parts of the world. However, the Ministry still lacks effectiveness and enforcement authority, as there are no punishments for violations of its provisions, no authority to subpoena the accused in case of refusal to cooperate, and no penalties for non-compliance with the recommendations.

The **Equal Employment Opportunity Act**, enacted in 1987, specifically defines discrimination related to employment and provides for the establishment of a basic plan for the welfare of working women, equal pay for equal work, and prohibition of discrimination in education, placements, promotion, retirement, and dismissals. The Act was revised in 1999 to incorporate demands for the prohibition of indirect forms of sexual discrimination and the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace. The newly revised Act is also devised to support women's dual roles at home and work. Despite these advances, there is still much room for improvement in terms of expanding social responsibility for maternity leave as well as child-care leave payment.

The **Family Law** of 1958 is often cited as the worst case of gender discriminatory law in Korea, as it includes numerous provisions that condone and perpetuate inequality. Despite the principle of gender equality embodied in the Constitution, the Family Law supports the Confucian and patriarchal family ideology. Clause 807 of the Civil Code, prohibiting marriage between people with the same surname and clan, was suspended by the

Constitutional Court in 1997. However, the National Assembly has failed to follow up on the Court's decision to have it amended by 1998. The Ministry of Justice has recently responded to continued calls from civic and women's groups to abolish the head of family system ('Hoju'). The announced draft bill is facing strong resistance from conservative organizations.

### **National Gender Action Plans**

Following the mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action (paragraph 297), the Korean government established the First Basic Plan on Women's Policies in 1997 and the Second Basic Plan in 2002. When the First Basic Plan on Women's Policies was being formulated, most line ministries, except the Ministry of Labor, did not even consider having their own women's development plans. The same was true for local governments. However, many ministries including the Ministries of Health and Welfare and of Agriculture and Fisheries, as well as Government Administration and Home Affairs, now have their own medium- or long-term plans for women. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Science and Technology, have a section on women incorporated in their development plans. Many provincial governments also have their own women's policy plans.

## **Korean Gender Policy Management System (KGPMS)<sup>1</sup>**

### *The Vision for Building KGPMS*

As outlined above, Korea has made many recent attempts to promote gender equality and to achieve women's integration in the development process. However, specific gender mainstreaming measures to strengthen the capability and accountability of relevant bodies and organizations are still lacking. Until institutions are put in place to do this, mainstreaming efforts are likely to remain sporadic and unable to create synergy.

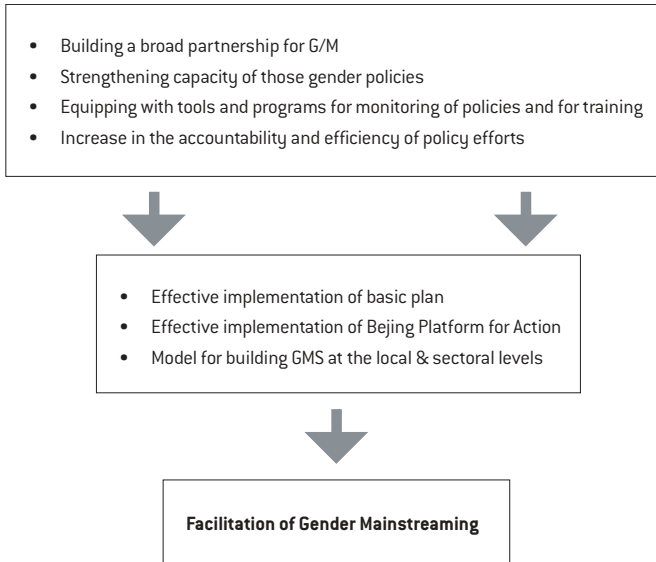
A more effective mechanism needs to be built for women's/gender policies. This is the concept behind the KGPMS, which will align ongoing efforts with new measures to enhance management efficiency for gender policies. As shown in Figure 16.3, the KGPMS is designed to enable efficient monitoring and management of women's policies, making use of current gender data and applying the results to subsequent cycles.

The KGPMS will allow for more extensive cooperation between the MOGE, related government bodies, women's policy officers, related ex-

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on a feasibility study that Kim, Y. et al. (2002) carried out at KWDI with funds provided by UNDP Korea.

perts, and feminist groups. Also, it will help the MOGE, women's policy officers and sector ministries to build their capacity for gender planning, policy coordination and analysis. KGPMS will facilitate the implementation of the Basic Plan on Women's Policies by the MOGE and contribute to the gender mainstreaming of policies in different ministries. The KGPMS can be applied not only to the central government but also to local governments, and can also be selectively applied to specific issues such as violence or health. Therefore, once the KGPMS is established and operational at the central governmental level, it will definitely have a strong and far-reaching impact.

**Figure 16.3 Expected Outcomes of Building KGPMS**

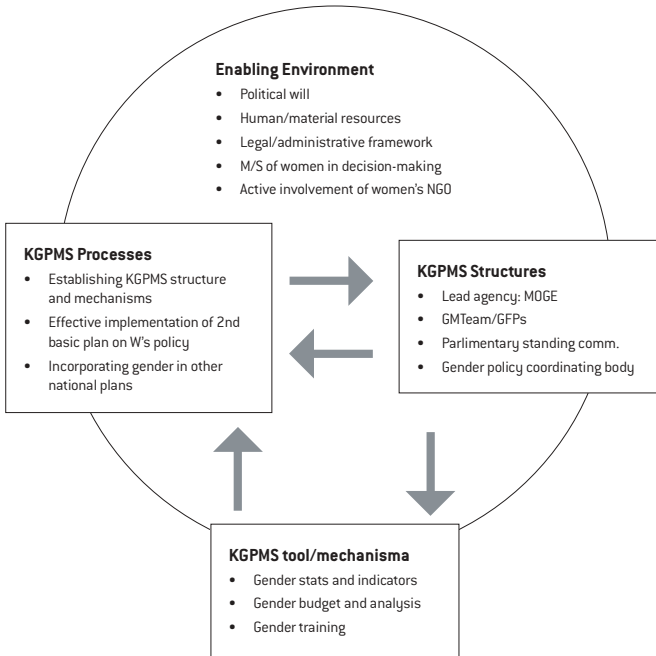


### Steps for Establishing KGPMs

#### Establishment of Structural Elements of KGPMs

The proposed KGPMs has a similar form and elements with the GMS model developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat. However, the KGPMs is tailored to the Korean political and administrative environment and stresses the importance of gender statistics and indicators, as well as a gender budget.

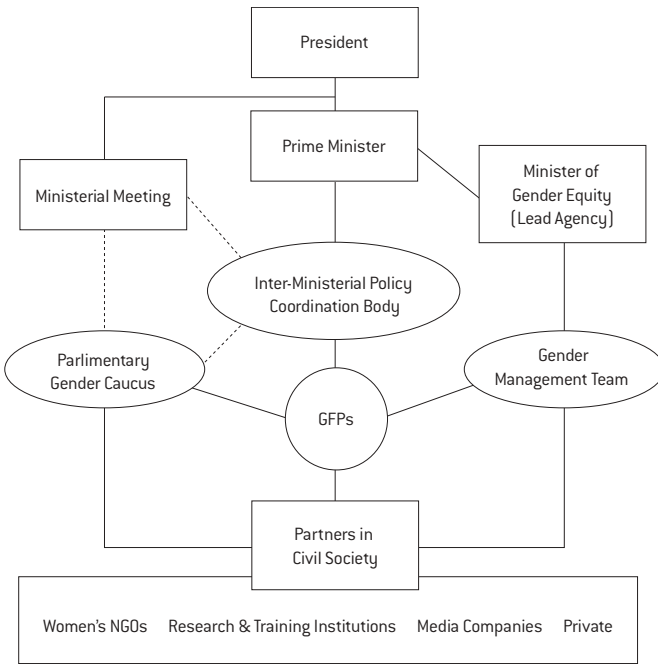
**FIGURE 16.4 Korean Gender Policy Management System (KGPMs)**





In the section that follows, we will identify and delineate the roles and functions of each core structural element of the KGPMS.

**FIGURE 16.5 Overall System for the KGPMS**



The lead agency of the KGPMS, the Ministry of Gender Equality, should take on the role of overseeing the overall operation of the system, including the establishment and institutionalization of the system, monitoring and coordinating the functions of each structural component, and providing support and making reports on the KGPMS for more effective operations. As all ministries are ultimately responsible for promoting

gender equality, the MOGE should lead gender-mainstreaming efforts by introducing the KGPMS and providing necessary resources, taking on the overall management of engendering policies. The MOGE's tasks include:

- Consensus building for KGPMS within the MOGE;
- Establishing KGPMS preparatory committee and appointing a consultant;
- Drafting a plan for building KGPMS;
- Securing political and administrative endorsement for building KGPMS;
- Establishing KGPMS structures and mechanisms;
- Capacity building: developing a 'Capacity Building Plan';
- Institutionalizing and implementing KGPMS; and
- Advocating to the public on KGPMS: developing the *Strategic Advocacy Plan*.

The Gender Management Team will play the role of developing guidelines and a timetable for the implementation of women's policies, establishing specific objectives and action plans and assessing the effectiveness of the KGPMS. Headed by the Director of the Office of Planning and Policy Coordination of the MOGE, the team should include directors and director-generals from the Ministry of Planning and Budget, Ministry of Finance and Economy and other major ministries, as well as representatives of civil society and women's NGOs, to ensure that the proposed women's policies reflect their interests.

Members of the Gender Management Team will constitute the Gender Focal Points of the KGPMS. As in-house gender experts in their respective ministries, they will study gender issues pertaining to their ministry's policies, coordinate planning and training activities, integrate gender perspective into their ministry's mid- to long-term plans and monitor the implementation of all policies and programs of their ministry from a gender perspective. To ensure that the ministries have the expertise needed for gender mainstreaming, it is essential that the members of the Gender Management Team receive comprehensive training on gender planning and analysis.

Furthermore, the Gender Focal Points, as members of Gender Management Team, should be given proper authority. For example, they should be authorized to access information and materials they deem necessary to determine whether their ministry's policies are implemented in a gender-sensitive way. Also, they should have the right to study the po-

tential impact of bills drafted by their ministries and make proposals for legislation. They should also be able to work with other departments/divisions, raise objections, review gender-specific impacts of their policies, examine budget proposals and participate in their ministries' audits. The Gender Management Team should have quarterly meetings to report and monitor the progress of KGPMS implementation within ministries.

The recently-amended Women's Development Act provides the basis for the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Women's Policy Coordination Council under the Prime Minister, for deliberation and coordination of key details of women's policies. This Committee will deliberate and coordinate: 1) details of the Basic Plan on Women's Policies and the resulting Implementation Plan, 2) women's policies that affect multiple administrative bodies, 3) evaluation and improvement of institutions for women's policies. As an intermediary organization, the Council is expected to pave the way for inter-ministerial meetings, and it is recommended that local governments also set up similar committees to coordinate women's policies at the municipal and provincial levels.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Affairs should review all bills from a gender perspective to ensure that the legislative process upholds gender equality. It should be made mandatory that all women-related bills be referred to the Standing Committee on Women's Affairs, even if they are under the responsibility of other committees. In addition, under the KGPMS system, the Committee should build close connections with women's advocacy groups, so as to jointly identify new emerging issues and have them reflected in the legislation process. The Committee should also develop and execute appropriate training programs for lawmakers, their assistants and National Assembly staff, so that they can develop a gender perspective.

#### **Developing Tools for the KGPMS**

**Gender statistics and indicators:** Article 13 of the Women's Development Act specifies the compilation of gender-disaggregated statistics and Article 25 of its Enforcement Decree requires that the result be reported to the President. However, actual implementation has been inadequate. Future tasks include establishing a department within the National Statistical Office to produce gender-sensitive statistics and appoint persons to manage gender-specific data within the statistics department of each ministry.

**Gender analysis:** Several strategies are needed to build capacity in all relevant ministries and agencies to ensure that any policies and programs will take gender concerns fully into account. First, a priority agenda for gender analysis should be identified. Secondly, a gender analysis framework

and methodology needs to be developed. Specifically, tools and sector-specific guidelines for gender mainstreaming need to be developed and pilot-tested, including checklists, guidelines and a training manual for gender analysis. At the same time, gender analysis should be institutionalized in all policy and program development processes, ensuring adequate budget allocation. Capacity building for gender analysis is also critical. Therefore, training should be provided to government officers for effective and efficient application of gender analysis tools. Lastly, the impact of the gender analysis approach to government policy-making processes and its relationship to overall changes in government organizations need to be evaluated.

**Gender training:** This includes awareness-raising and skills training for analysis and advocacy. Strategies include: targeting decision-makers and upper-level personnel; more systematic curriculum for different target groups; and ongoing gender training.

**The KGMPS process: Effective Management of the Basic Plan on Women's Policies**

The Second Basic Plan on Women's Policies (2003-2007) is expected to serve as the core entry point of the KGPMS and to provide an overall frame for the entire KGPMS process. It should be made clear that the Plan is a tool for engendering key government policies. Therefore, systematic monitoring of the Plan's implementation and other accountability measures need to be ensured.

**Building an Enabling Environment for the KGPMS**

Under the KGPMS, more systematic work should be carried out to make Korean legal culture more fair to women: first, intervene in various processes of legislative bodies and educate related officials; second, continue with legislation and revision efforts, and third, educate and promote activities aimed at improving the society's overall legal literacy. For these activities to proceed systematically under the leadership of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Affairs, the committee needs more human and material resources and greater authority.

Another of the most important environmental factors in ensuring successful establishment and smooth operation of the KGPMS is the political commitment of top-level decision-makers. This kind of commitment is demonstrated when a country enters and faithfully implements various international treaties aimed at achieving gender equality and also increases the authority and resources for its ministry responsible for gender equality (MOGE, in the Korean case).

Gender budget can be defined both as a tool for gender mainstreaming and a political movement that seeks to create an environment con-

ductive to gender mainstreaming. Because budget is widely regarded as a gender-neutral tool, it is difficult to solicit cooperation. To implement gender-sensitive budgeting, it is imperative to have a solid partnership among all stakeholders, including the government (especially the Ministry of Finance), private groups, academia, parliament and ordinary citizens. Participation in budgetary processes requires capacity building of participants on budgetary issues. Budget monitoring networks can be an element of such capacity building.

Civil society, through women's organizations, research and training institutes, mass media and business sectors, can play significant roles in strengthening the KGPMS. Within the framework of the KGPMS, women's organizations face new challenges in their new role as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming in multilateral relationships with various stakeholders, including the National Assembly, different government ministries, local government and the business sector.

The Korean Women's Development Institute and other research and training institutes on women's issues need to focus on finding timely issues and producing gender-sensitive information for effective gender policy management. The mass media can also play a supportive role by disseminating gender-sensitive information and monitoring the development of gender policies.

### **Gender Analysis of Government Budgets: A New Initiative by Women's NGOs**

Recently, NGOs have begun to gravitate towards budget work. This is natural because the budget reflects a government's policy priorities more than any other document, translating policies, political commitments, and goals into decisions on where funds should be spent and how funds should be collected (EU, 2001: 8). This section of the paper summarizes new initiatives by women's NGOs in Korea to carry out gender analysis of local governments' budgets.

Women's organizations in Korea have played a crucial role in advancing the status of Korean women over the past few decades, mainly through advocacy activities. They provided the foundation for major legal reforms of sex-discriminatory laws, and legislation to protect victims of sexual and domestic violence. Democratization in Korean politics starting in the mid-1990s provided the progressive women's movement with momentum to transform its strategy from 'social reform' to 'gender mainstreaming' (Yoon, 2003: 1). The government was once the target of conflict and antagonism but now is a partner for negotiation and dialogue (i.e.: 'politics

of engagement' or 'critical participation'). Adopting 'a strategy of analysis and feedback,' women's organizations aim to build their own capacity as well as increase their influence on women's policies. Especially in Korea, where the history of self-government is relatively short, recent decentralization brings budgeting closer to communities and makes it more real for grassroots organizations.

The increasing interest in gender-sensitive budgeting reflects a growing awareness of the importance of public resource allocation for gender equity. The idea of gender budgets gained momentum internationally in 1995 when the UN Platform for Action recommended that governments make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures and adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures (Sharp, 2003: 6). This global call for a gender perspective in government budgets was central to furthering the key themes of the Beijing Platform for Action: government accountability for gender equality commitments and gender mainstreaming (Sharp & Broomhill, 2002: 26, in Sharp, 2003: 6). Gender budget initiatives also have taken on, and been influenced by, the discourse of good governance that has characterized the public sector reforms of the past decade. (Sharp, 2003: 5)

In many countries, a significant gap exists between the gender equality commitment of a government and the policies and programs funded by its budget. Many such policies are never implemented because they do not form part of the budgetary decision-making processes of government. Gender-sensitive budgets have emerged as an important strategy for highlighting what government budgets have and have not done to promote economic and social equality between men and women (Sharp, 2003: 1). As Moser rightly states (1993: 128), budget allocations are the ultimate verification of legitimacy, when lip service must be converted to practice.

### *A New Project by WomenLink<sup>2</sup>*

In 2001, WomenLink launched a new project for "Making a new paradigm for women's policy and budget in local governments" to identify the structural context in which the gap between women's policy and its implementation occurs. As Sharp summarized (2003: 9), their goals were:

- To raise awareness among stakeholders regarding gender issues and impacts embedded in budget and policies.

<sup>2</sup> Established in 1987, Korean WomenLink is a self-organized grassroots women's organization concerned with women's rights within the family, workplace and society. It has 11 local branches and more than nine thousand members. [www.womenlink.or.kr](http://www.womenlink.or.kr) or email: [minwoo@womenlink.or.kr](mailto:minwoo@womenlink.or.kr)

- To make governments accountable for translating their gender equality commitments into budgetary commitments.
- To change budgets and policies to promote gender equality.

For this purpose, a group of about 50 key activists gathered and started with a slogan "There is Gender (Dimension<sup>3</sup>) in the Budget". They began studying women's policies and budget-related issues as well as analytic tools and methodology. In the beginning, most did not have a clear understanding of the term "gender mainstreaming" and were not inspired to read budget material. They had difficulties developing an analytic framework partly because they were confused about the scope and definition of women's policies.

In 2001, Korean WomenLink Headquarters and five local branches participated gender budget analysis of six local governments and in 2002, headquarters and seven local branches analyzed the budgets of eight local governments. This year, they analyzed the budgets of the women's units of ten local governments by Headquarters and nine local branches.

They looked at the level of implementation of the Women's Development Fund, as well as the budget allocated to the Basic Plan on Women's Policy. They were not able to employ the theoretical framework for gender budget analysis in which total expenditure is classified into three categories of women-specific expenditures, gender equality expenditures and general expenditures. The most significant limitation of their work was that they observed only the budget plan, not the actual spending.

### *Collection of Data and Materials, and Analyses*

In the first year, collecting data and materials was a frustrating process. To many civil servants, disclosing policy and budget information to civic groups is dangerous because it opens their work up to challenge and criticism. Later, public officials became more friendly and cooperative in granting women's NGOs access to data and material.

Despite these changes, difficulties remain, due to the lack of updated budget data or a coherent budget recording system, and passive attitudes on the part of public officials. The analyses show that in 2003, about half of proposed policy projects had no budget allocations in the ten local governments analyzed. Five out of ten local governments allocated the most budget resources to welfare and health-related projects, but hardly any to projects for incorporating gender perspective into

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<sup>3</sup> Added by the present author.

policy process, increasing women's representation in decision-making, promoting women's peace or international cooperation activities. The proportion of the budget for women's units was extremely small. In 2002, only two of eight local governments reported it as higher than 1 percent (Yoon, 2003: 5).

### *Changes on the Part of the Government and Institutional Development*

While applied budget work demands quality analysis, it also requires that its findings be presented for maximum impact on policy debate (EU, 2001: 5). The very process of analyzing and providing feedback on women's policy and budget has been a process of policy dialogue, involving roundtable discussions with public officials, discussions among women's organizations, and submission of results to local assemblies. Most of all, women's NGOs realized that providing feedback to public officials on the results of analyses, they were able to provide these officials with a realistic picture of how their women's policy budget compared to that of other local governments. They also used the opportunity to discuss an increase in the women's budget. One participant recalled:

*"She (an officer in Women's Unit) said that they had difficulties in securing budget for Women's Development Fund at the local assembly but were able to persuade high-level officials and members of assembly by showing them last year's results of analyses by WomenLink and arguing for the need to allocate more budget for women's policy. She even thanked us and became a supporter of our organization." (Yoon, 2003: 8-9)*

In 2002, WomenLink submitted a written petition to the National Assembly requesting a gender-sensitive budget policy, based on the results of their analyses in 2001 and 2002. In response, the Parliamentary Standing Committee adopted a Resolution for Gender-Sensitive Budget and Data Submission. Among the key demands of this resolution are: the process of budgeting and making budgeting guidelines should accommodate a gender-sensitive perspective; the basis and details of the budget for women's policies should be made explicit; data on the current status and details of the women's policy budget should be submitted to the MOGE, the Standing Committee on Women's Affairs and the Special Committee for Budget Settlement in the National Assembly.

Also, this year, the MOGE has been implementing gender budget analysis of four ministries and providing each Ministry and Office with *Gender Budget Formulation Guidelines* for 2004.



### *Impact on Participants and Their Organizations*

The process of collecting and analyzing information and communicating the results helped empower women's grassroots organizations and increased their negotiation power in policy dialogue with governments. Some participants confess that they initially experienced frustration, due to their preconception that "analyzing policy is an expert's job" and "policy and budget issues are too complicated and difficult." One participant said:

*"I was amazed at myself being able to read and speak about policy and budget. I have been a women's activist for seven years and budget. I have been a women's activist for seven years and I now realize how ignorant I had been on these issues. I felt ashamed and proud at the same time of myself. I now feel that I have the confidence and tools I need to be an activist."* (Yoon, 2003: 7)

The methodology and tools used in this project need much improvement and the results must be used more systematically. The results must be accessible to a wide range of readers—particularly policymakers, the media and the public. The goals are to raise the level of budget literacy among those engaged in the budget policy debate, and to bring more people into the debate (EU, 2001: 5-6).

Despite limitations, participants experienced growth and felt that their organizations' capacity grew, as they expanded from 'policy advocates' to policy analysts and active policy agents. They were able to argue the marginality of women's policy with concrete evidence from their analyses. Providing public officials with feedback based on the result of analyses, they became a confident stakeholder group.

Participants realized that most of women's policies are broadly and ambiguously stated, lacking clear definitions of goals and priorities, and that mechanisms are not in place to allocate adequate levels of resources for their effective implementation. The world looked different once they had developed an eye for reading budgets.

### **Conclusions**

There are many potential entry points for gender mainstreaming in Korea. The Basic Plan on Women's Policies has a solid legal basis and presents sector-specific objectives as well as core tasks. Because it imposes binding implementation obligations on line ministries and local governments, the Plan serves as the most important entry point and provides the basic framework for mainstreaming women's policies in Korea. The MOGE can act as a catalyst of mainstreaming at the government level. Six ministries that already

have a Women's Policy Officer can also serve as an entry point for gender mainstreaming in the administration, just as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Affairs can serve as one in the legislative branch.

Several Korean women's groups now exist, with a high level of awareness and capability to act. A government-established research institute with accumulated knowledge on women's studies and policy development also facilitates the process. Proper use of these assets will facilitate the establishment of KGPMS. By bridging the existing structures and mechanisms, the KGPMS will allow effective management of the process of mainstreaming gender policies. If Korea succeeds in launching and implementing the KGPMS effectively, it could set a model for good practice for other Asian-Pacific countries with similar policy environments. Activities such as budget analysis from a gender perspective by local women's organizations will serve to facilitate policy dialogue between civil society and policy makers, and thus consolidate the partnership approach of the KGPMS. Therefore, gender budget analyses by women's NGOs need to be continued and expanded and tools and methodologies need to be developed to aid these activities. Constructive participation by women's NGOs can raise the quality of the budget debate and improve budgetary outcomes through:

- *Training:* Women's organizations, with the help of KWDI, can develop budget-training expertise aimed at augmenting the analytical and advocacy capacity of other organizations and legislatures. Highlighting crucial information and policy issues: Women's NGOs are in close contact with grassroots women, especially the poor, and can feed these perspectives into the budget decision-making process.
- *Identifying good practices:* Through analysis, women's NGOs can identify good practices that help governments make better budget policies.
- *Building accountability:* Through their analyses, women's NGOs can reinforce channels of accountability. They can also demystify the budget for different stakeholders and bring them into the important debate on how to allocate resources to meet the most pressing needs. (EUI, 2001:9-10).

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