

PN-ABS-213

ISBN 89660

WOMEN AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA



IULA/CELCADEL



LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

NOTEBOOK OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

IULA/CELCADEL USAID-WID USAID-RHUDO/SA

16

WOMEN AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

**Notebook of the Local
Government Training
and Development Center**

Quito, Ecuador

May, 1994

Local Development

**Notebook of the Local Government Training
and Development Center (CELCADEL),
Latin American Chapter of IULA**

Number 16, Quito May, 1994

**Responsible for Publication: María Arboleda, IULA/CELCADEL
Translation: Sue Mann (S. Dubois, Brazil: Women decisionmakers
in local government)
Production-English Edition: Servicios Editoriales
Any portion of this book may be reproduced provided that the
source is cited.**

**IULA/CELCADEL
Agustín Guerrero 219 y Pacífico Chiriboga
Casilla postal 17-01-1109
Teléfonos: 469365 - 469366
Telefax: (593-2) 435205
Quito, Ecuador**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ Introduction	7
■ Old Dreams and New Visions. From women to gender: A change in the concept of Development Patricia Portocarrero	11
■ Women and Municipal Government Jeanine Anderson	21
■ Women and Municipal Government: The opportunity to participate locally and democratize barrios in Chile Andrea Rodó	36
■ Women in Local Power in Ecuador María Arboleda	51
■ Brazil: Women decisionmakers in local government Center for the Study on Women and Public Policy	77
■ Comunamujer: a study of women's participation in Municipal Government Silvana Bruera / María González	103

INTRODUCTION

The "Women and Local Development" Project was implemented in Latin America over the last three years with the joint efforts of USAID-RHUDO/SA, USAID-WID and IULA/CELCADEL¹. It was an ideal period for the project.

It is widely acknowledged that Latin American women had become more active socially and politically by the late 1980s. Their efforts were focussed on opposing dictatorships and defending democracy, human rights and improving general living conditions.

With these efforts, women's movements and organizations, together with other social movements, shaped a proposal for a different kind of democracy and new forms of citizen participation. These movements brought a critical perspective for the forms of discrimination and inequality that affect women in different areas.

Women first became active on a national level. However, local democracy, with its informal channels for public participation and its proximity to the demands of daily life, became the arena where women's actions have been most extensive and persistent.

Thus, women increased their participation at municipal elected positions. More and more women entered municipal government as mayors, prefects, intendants, and city council members (concejales, vereadoras, regidoras, edilas).

Additionally, grassroots women and their organizations have made their presence known as valuable social and political stakeholders.

The program began towards the end of 1990, when the return to democracy in many countries had once again moved formal politics and party systems to the forefront. Social and women's movements faced the challenge of making their presence and platforms known in an unfamiliar setting.

Thus, the "Women and Local Development" Project set out to determine how sensitively, openly and professionally municipal governments can respond to women's demands and participation. The project gathered information on the most significant experiences in this arena in the last decade.

In addition to the activities, research projects and events undertaken by the program these last three years, the Latin American Women and Municipal Government Network was formed and it has been strengthened by the program. It consists of women in municipal entities, research centers, NGOs and municipal governments throughout Latin America.

1. USAID-RHUDO/SA: Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for South America - United States Agency for International Development.
USAID-WID: Office of Women in Development - United States Agency for International Development.
IULA/CELCADEL: Latin American Training Center for the Development of Local Governments - International Union of Local Authorities.

Women and Local Democracy in Latin America brings together some of the most important papers, articles and summaries of research findings produced during the program's implementation.

Patricia Portocarrero Suárez, from the Centro Flora Tristán, and Jeanine Anderson, from SUMBI (Peru); Andrea Rodó, from Surprofesionales (Chile); Patricia Alameda, from PROCOMUN (Colombia); Silvana Bruera and Mariana González, from CIESU (Uruguay); and a research team from IBAM coordinated by Maria de Graça Neves (Brazil), joined Marfa Arboleda, Women and Local Development Program Director, from IULA/CELCADEL, in analyzing various elements of women's social and political participation in local government and perspectives on this involvement.

The different authors' focusses and analyses highlight the need to work towards increasing female citizens' participation in local communities, and the need for political and technical efforts to effectively overcome the obstacles to this participation.

There is also an urgent need to undertake consistent, sustained efforts in gender planning in public municipal policies and to increase social and institutional sensitivity in order to consolidate and strengthen women's accomplishments in local power.

With this publication, IULA/CELCADEL and RHUDO-SA/USAID reiterate their desire to support Latin American women's efforts to build local societies free of discrimination and inequality in the area of gender.

JAIME TORRES LARA
Executive Secretary - IULA
Director CELCADEL

WILIAM YAEGER III
Executive Director
USAID-RHUDO/SA

**Old Dreams and New
Visions
From Women to Gender:
A Change in the Concept of
Development**

Patricia Portocarrero Suárez
Centro Flora Tristán
Perú

Some development projects -- in their attempts to overcome women's subordination -- have focussed on women's issues rather than on overall gender relations, reflecting the concepts of development held at the time. These concepts, and the way specific projects are implemented, have been changing.

This paper is an attempt to highlight these changes by looking at the historical context in which "Women in Development" (WID) came about and explaining WID as a response to previous deficiencies; the result of circumstantial predicaments and needs. By examining the alternative "Gender in Development" (GID) in the same way, we see it as a consequence of comprehensive, critical reflection on development theory and practice, which has changed the concept of development and brought about a new proposal. A proposal in which development is a vehicle for change, rather than for handing out assistance. A proposal which is innovative in the economic, social, institutional and personal domains; implemented at specific times and places: one which requires its beneficiaries, no longer seen as a homogeneous group, to participate actively; one which clearly works towards self-sustainability, reminding us that no action for change makes sense unless it is defined, implemented, evaluated and carried on by the beneficiaries themselves and their organizations. In short, a concept that seeks to determine who the most disadvantaged stakeholders in the most vulnerable groups are, to empower them and turn them into agents of change. The beneficiaries are given not only access to but also control over development resources and benefits; control over their lives to develop their potential.

In synthesis, Gender in Development - GID pulls together and nourishes a concept of development that underscores the complex, multidimensional nature of each society and each intervention context. With GID, overcoming women's subordination, along with other unjust positions and relationships, is no longer merely an ideological proposal, or one in which the poor simply make demands. Rather it becomes, both in theory and practice, part of the world of social sciences and development, seeking change for women and men and the relationships that limit their potential.

Women in Development: The Story of an Old Dream

The failure of one of the first theories of development to take the full range of stakeholders into account has meant that development practitioners and extension workers, ever since

Gender in Development - GID pulls together and nourishes a concept of development that underscores the complex, multidimensional nature of each society and each intervention context

Failing to recognize the uniqueness of the members in each society, the numerous identities and different ways of being man or women development was equated with economic growth and conceived of as a linear evolutionary process towards capitalistic modernization

the 60s, have been calling attention to the fact that women were not being considered at all.

One cause of this phenomenon -- intolerable today -- lies in the suppositions these first theories were based on.

Failing to recognize the uniqueness of the members in each society, the numerous identities and different ways of being man or women¹ -- as Meynen and Vargas said in '92 -- development was equated with economic growth and conceived of as a linear evolutionary process towards capitalistic modernization. Westernization of all societies was the message implicitly or explicitly carried by the programs, projects and actions through which aid was "exported". In this framework, it is no surprise that "development" sought to promote urbanization, industrialization and growth of the market, which, if left free, should provide beneficial changes for most people. Agriculture, meanwhile -- in spite of its vital importance -- was merely a secondary consideration in designing policies.

Throughout this whole period, the "trickle down" theory of development was particularly important in making the proposed focus cohesive. According to this concept, economic and social benefits achieved should "trickle down" from: the elite to the masses, the city to the countryside, communities to families and families to each family member; equally, without distinction.

However, as the theory was put into practice some difficulties and gaps soon became evident and impacts were not always beneficial to target populations. Discovered in evaluations and studies, these were the first warning signs to development planners. The market then appeared in its true dimension: an inefficient mechanism for distribution of benefits to the masses. It became evident that problems of unjust economic distribution do not show up in the Gross National Product, which had previously been used as a relevant indicator of development. The decline and impoverishment of agriculture, migration to the cities, and precariousness of urbanization were phenomena the model had not foreseen.

Not only did it become evident that most of the population was deprived of the benefits that the free market and trickle down theory had promised them, but an "untouched" group -- or rather a group impacted in an unforeseen way by the processes in motion -- was identified: women. Paradoxically, subsequent evidence underscored women's role in being ultimately responsible for birth control and satisfying their families' and communities' basic needs and, subsequently, as members of the poorest sectors of the population.

1. Women are found in concrete situations shaped by their different identities. So, there is the professional middle-class woman, for example, whose interests and needs are clearly different than those of a working class woman, who, in turn, is different from a rural woman. Class, race, age, and occupation are elements that play a part in forming different groups of men or women.

In previous papers we have explained the effect this new awareness had: a gradual but growing interest in the topic of women and a flood of aid proposals that, based on women's traditional roles, would ensure the welfare of the "others" in women's lives.

In synthesis, by examining development's social aspects, we became aware, over time, of the importance of identifying women as beneficiaries of the processes in motion.

To compensate for previous deficiencies, counteract previous trends and respond to previous needs and current needs and demands, in other words, to offer comprehensive analyses and proposals for immediate action, "Women in Development" - WID materialized: a new theoretical and practical concept that proposed successive strategies² with the same end in mind: to underscore women's roles and foster changes.

New Visions: Gender in Development

For over 10 years, WID fostered hundreds of research projects on women throughout the world and the collection of specific data that would direct policy design to identify women as fundamental stakeholders. This is how different types of projects originated: projects that targeted -- and still target today -- women; projects of which women were an implicit or explicit part; and projects that had a separate component aimed at women.

In spite of all its efforts, WID faced several problems: limited funding, unqualified personnel, extension workers -- with few women among them -- who resisted committing to the concept. But "Women in Development"'s fundamental problem went beyond these limitations. Evaluation soon showed that WID was a comprehensive strategy which, having women as its only target, saw women as both the cause of the problem and the only means of solving the problem. In other words, for WID, women are both the victims of a situation and hold exclusive responsibility for changing it. Under WID, women, especially in Latin America, should be targeted for aid to help overcome the disadvantages which originated in and can be explained, at least in part, by their traditional roles and their double- and triple-length workdays.

The strategies and projects which were based on WID's analysis overlooked a fundamental point: women cannot be isolated from overall social conditions. When women are considered in

A gradual but growing interest in the topic of women and a flood of aid proposals that, based on women's traditional roles, would ensure the welfare of the "others" in women's lives

For over 10 years, WID fostered hundreds of research projects on women throughout the world and the collection of specific data that would direct policy design to identify women as fundamental stakeholders

2. Strategies of welfare, equity, antipoverty and efficiency studied by various authors. See Portocarrero, Patricia (90): *Mujer en el Desarrollo: Historia, Límites y Alternativas*. (Women in Development: History, Limitations and Alternatives). IRED, Flora Tristán y Guzmán, V., Portocarrero, P., Vargas, Virginia (91): *Género en el Desarrollo: Una Nueva Mirada. Entre Mujeres*. (Gender in Development: A New Look. Among Women.) Flora Tristán Ediciones.

The strategies and projects which were based on WID's analysis overlooked a fundamental point: women cannot be isolated from overall social conditions

Inequality, which characterizes gender relations and determines the subordination of one part and the prevailing power of the other has made gender relations a major factor in power relations

3. Nevertheless, this does not mean we should skip stages: there are projects aimed solely at women that attempt to provide them with they need to make an even playing field for women and men. These seem to be parte of a necessary, though by no means definitive stage.

isolation, the disadvantages they face can be detected, but little can be done to explain them, much less to change them.

GID, on the other hand, is based on a different assumption: women's subordination is not just a women's problem, but one that is the result of social gender relations.

Even though it is not possible, based on biological sexuality, to define "masculine" and "feminine", we should acknowledge that our culture has done just that -- physically and symbolically. Thus, differences between men and women are established by society and unequal social relations: i.e. what society associates with "masculine" and "feminine". These associations, which are solidified by societal norms and values and which define the appropriate predispositions, aptitudes, tastes and behaviors for each sex, place women in a subordinate position in a society rooted precisely in physical and social practices that are no longer valued.

Inequality, which characterizes gender relations and determines the subordination of one part -- female -- and the prevailing power of the other -- male --, has made gender relations a major factor in power relations. With this in mind, it becomes essential to consider and analyze gender relations in order to know what life in a society -- in terms of equality or inequality -- is really like.

J. Scott (86), among others, maintains that while gender is a basic component of inequality, it is not the only one, or necessarily the most important one. There are other components, such as class, ethnic identity and age. Domination of one by the other, or their relation to each other, depends on the situation, the society and the problem being dealt with, just as a gender- and socially-based point of view affirms. (CIDA 90) Our goal should be to overcome women's subordination, but to also try to change any other type of unequal relationship that restricts human potential. There are different opinions of how to achieve this, and different means, but it is a useful goal for those who theorize on and practice development.

Development practices and actions can then become an important means through which to influence social structures that, as such, are susceptible to long-term change and short- or middle-term variations. For those of us who hold these beliefs, women are no longer the central concern, the sole target of policies and projects.³ Instead of concentrating on women, we propose working on the specific mechanisms that perpetuate inequality, which in the case of women's subordination are public and private social conventions: sexual division of labor in all its aspects -- norms, values, and symbols; physical and cultural relationships and practices. Our central focus lies in asking ourselves how inequality is perpetuated, where, and to

what specific components it is tied. Socialization of children by the family, education of children and youth in school, and expectations that one gender puts on the other when forming a couple thus become issues for analysis and areas for action.

If we continue analyzing elements of the WID proposal with the purpose of comparing them to elements of GID, we see that WID has problems that go beyond its definition and scope of action, linked to problems in the development theory in vogue during the same period. Like the development theory of its time, WID lays stakes on a model of development already underway; a proposal that is already defined. Both assume one single model to be desirable and neither question its viability in diverse situations nor seek alternatives that could better satisfy the target population. Boserup, one of first to study WID, demonstrated this. Even though WID criticizes the negative impact of capitalistic modernization on women, it has not been able to break away from the paradigm. On the contrary, its demands are geared toward ensuring that the benefits of said modernization reach women.

As we have seen, the fact that WID is based on a given model, associated with the style of development which responds to demands, has had and continues to have diverse consequences in its programs, projects and actions. In the first place, development is equated, though not always explicitly, with what men and women can have or get in a given situation: better jobs, better income, more awareness and education. Secondly, WID encourages beneficiaries to act as claimants, which ultimately makes them simply beneficiaries: passive recipients of assistance.

Our proposal, on the other hand, echoes the doubts now being raised about the paradigm of development and the resulting changes in projects and action. **When we ask ourselves "What kind of development are we talking about?" we are questioning the validity of models and proposals that have little to do with our reality and needs.** We are the ones who should define what we want. With this in mind, all policies and programs should defer to the stakeholders -- the vulnerable groups the aid is intended for: the women, men and organizations that, no longer passive recipients of assistance, become active individual or collective stakeholders. As we put development theory into practice, we need to determine how we want to be organized socially, to build the kind of society we want. We also need to recognize our limits and, as we try to expand these limits, reflect on what alliances are appropriate at each moment; which sectors agree with ours, ultimately, on the best way to tie into macro trends or to push for certain social and economic policies which, while requiring political commitment, can make

J. Scott (86), among others, maintains that while gender is a basic component of inequality, it is not the only one, or necessarily the most important one. There are other components, such as class, ethnic identity and age

WID has problems that go beyond its definition and scope of action, linked to problems in the development theory in vogue during the same period

All policies and programs should defer to the stakeholders -- the vulnerable groups the aid is intended for: the women, men and organizations that, no longer passive recipients of assistance, become active individual or collective stakeholders

Since it affects the development of human beings' overall potential, this proposal focusses not only on what men and women can have or get, but also on what they can control: their resources, what they can achieve through development, their destinies

Analysis from a gender perspective demands a search for the answers with interaction among different stakeholders who look at reality with open, sensitive eyes and have different past and present experiences, both subjective and objective

our goals possible and multiply the effects, freeing us from isolation and impositions.

Allowing target groups to play a role in this process not only opens the way for novel social proposals and helps turn the beneficiaries -- previously seen as passive recipients -- into agents of change and active stakeholders; it is also in and of itself an example of a type of democracy where the objectives are determined through the process of identifying problems, searching for solutions and choosing appropriate development models. Throughout this whole cycle, which goes beyond any one project cycle, there are two stakeholders who are equally capable, valuable and willing to learn, give and receive: the promotor, technician or extension worker and the beneficiary/agent.

In several ways this participatory model is a different notion of what development is, both in theory and practice. Since both the extension workers and the target stakeholders -- men and women -- participate, **it is, by definition, a proposal for communication between classes, genders, and even cultures.** On the other hand, since it affects the development of human beings' overall potential, this proposal focusses not only on what men and women can have or get, but also on what they can control: their resources, what they can achieve through development, their destinies. Development is conceived of as a vehicle for social change: economic, institutional, political, social and personal. To be valid it should have within it the seeds for its own regeneration: commitment and consensus from those who work in it: **the source of its self-sustainability.**

Models for working from a gender and social analysis perspective are few. The two most well known are the Harvard proposal, with valuable, flexible concepts such as access and control, and the CIDA proposal, which is more complete and complicated since it additionally emphasizes the need to evaluate the way that different components of inequality are tied together and the extent of their effect, as well as to analyze resource redistribution at different levels, the most familiar being in the community, among homes, and among and within families. All such proposals refute the "trickle-down" theory and raise questions about WID. None, however, is a model to be mechanically followed. As in all social sciences, development theory and practice can only decide which path to follow once it has acknowledged the context a program will take place in, what resources are available, and what the target stakeholders -- who will in turn help choose the path -- are like. **Analysis from a gender perspective demands a search for the answers with interaction among different stakeholders who look at reality with open, sensitive eyes and have different past**

and present experiences, both subjective and objective. Thus, they will be able to intervene in new ways to disassemble any type of discrimination that inhibits full development of society's most important element: women, men, children, the elderly -- human social resources.

To summarize, as we put together and build up a new way of understanding development from all angles, we are simply affirming, on the one hand, how complex society is, and on the other, the need to identify all societal relationships and their contradictions based on inequality and underestimating and failing to recognize the "others" as active stakeholders, capable of controlling and acting on their destinies. We propose working to change the conditions that limit people's development, prioritizing in each specific context the urgency of change or action on one or more of these conditions. **In any event, however, our proposal entails conscious political will to promote change.**

Gender in Development, like WID before it, is in keeping with the broader processes in motion; it manifests the guidelines, doubts and limitations of a new, more flexible development theory and practice. It proposes to change the social relations that impose inequality, and in so doing break away from the ghetto model of development practice, leaving behind the demand model. We are betting on overall development of the personal and social potential of women and men in our society - **- on using our differences to improve communication.**

We propose working to change the conditions that limit people's development, prioritizing in each specific context the urgency of change or action on one or more of these conditions

Gender in Development, like WID before it, is in keeping with the broader processes in motion; it manifests the guidelines, doubts and limitations of a new, more flexible development theory and practice

Bibliography

- Canadian International Development Agency (89). *Guidelines for Integrating WID into Project Design and Evaluation*. Quebec. Canada.
- Centro Nacional de Cooperación al Desarrollo. *Bélgica y WIDE (92). Dos mitades hacen un todo: Balance de la Relaciones de Género en el Desarrollo*. Dublin.
- Coady International Institute for Social and Human Resources (90). *Handbook for Social Gender Analysis*. CIDA. Canada.
- Guzmán, Virginia; Portocarrero, Patricia (92). *Construyendo Diferencias*. Sarec, Flora Tristán. Lima.
- Meynen, Wicky y Vargas, Virginia. *La Autonomía como estrategia para el desarrollo desde los múltiples intereses de las mujeres*. En: Patricia Portocarrero (editora), *Estrategias de Desarrollo para Cambiar la Vida*, International Development Research Center (IDRC) Canada. Flora Tristán, Lima.
- Scott, Joan (86). *Gender: A useful category of Historical Analysis*. *American Historical Review* Nº 91, págs. 1053-1075.
- Silvia Checa, María Luisa (92). *¿Dónde está el cambio?* En: Patricia Portocarrero (editora) *Estrategias de Desarrollo para Cambiar la Vida*. International Development Research Center (IDRC Canada). Flora Tristán. Lima.
- Star, Marga; Vega, Marisol (92). *Las Diferencias de Género y las Relaciones Interpersonales*. En: Patricia Portocarrero (editora) *Estrategias de Desarrollo para Cambiar la Vida*. International Development Research Center (IDRC Canada), Flora Tristán. Lima.
- Overholt, Catherine; Anderson, Mary; Cloud, Katherine; Austin, James (ed) (85). *Gender Roles in Development Projects: A Case Book*. Rumian Press. Connecticut. USA.
- Portocarrero, Patricia (90). *Mujer en el Desarrollo: Historias, Límites y Alternativas*. En: Patricia Portocarrero (editora) *Mujer en el Desarrollo. Balance y Propuestas*. Ired, Flora Tristán. Lima.

Women and Municipal Government

Jeanine Anderson
SUMBI
Perú

In order for women to be able to make use of our local government and have it work for us, we must have a clear idea of what it is and how it works. My comments in this paper revolve around this problem. First I will theorize on municipal government, drawing on empirical studies. Then I will deal with the problem of power in the municipal sphere, specifically looking at who the countless stakeholders contending for that power are. Finally, I will refer to some of the problems women face when they try to participate in this sphere, which is, after all, not very familiar terrain for women.

Municipal Government as an Arena

Empirical studies on municipal government present the municipal sphere as a complex arena where special interest groups are in a never-ending process of conflict and negotiation.¹ Much of Latin American literature on popular sectors and their problems in obtaining access to local government tends to give a different view of local government. Many groups have lacked access to municipal government in the past, and the appearance of so many sectors on the municipal scene is something new, but the relationship of each different group with municipal government is usually analyzed separately. Another issue is the degree of proximity different groups have to local power. The greater influence of some groups (e.g. managers of banks located in the district, owners of large factories and businesses operating there, large construction companies with contracts to build roadways and public buildings) is commonly explained in terms of such proximity to local power.

A more modern view of this phenomenon is based on the concept of networks.² The municipal arena is defined as a tightly woven system of networks. Within this system, the mayor's office and the municipal council, and sometimes the municipal bureaucracy, hold privileged positions. They are the point of reference for the other stakeholders. However, in trying to understand power relationships in the municipal arena and local government's role in decision-making, the interrelationships among these other stakeholders are just as, if not more important than the relationship each has with the city government.

To "flesh out" this view of the municipal arena as a tightly woven system of networks, I especially rely on Galaskiewicz' classic study (1979), *Exchange Networks and Community Politics*.³ In a medium-sized U.S. city, Galaskiewicz drew up a list of over eighty organizations and entities that, according to

Empirical studies on municipal government present the municipal sphere as a complex arena where special interest groups are in a never-ending

A more modern view of this phenomenon is based on the concept of networks. The municipal arena is defined as a tightly woven system of networks. Within this system, the mayor's office and the municipal council, and sometimes the municipal bureaucracy, hold privileged positions

1. WASTE, Robert J., editor. *Community Power: Directions for Future Research*. Sage Publications (1986).

2. ELAU, Hinz. "From Labyrinth to Networks: Political Representation in Urban Settings". In WASTE, pp. 139-178.

3. DAHE, Robert, *Who Governs?* New Haven; Yale University Press (1961).

Galaskiewicz' suggested that municipal government's role as an arbitrator among the special interests of diverse citizen groups was important -- more important, actually, than its initiative in defining problems to be solved and searching for solutions

informants knowledgeable about the city, exerted influence on municipal government decisions. Using network analysis techniques, he established interrelationships among system members, even observing how alliances formed or failed to form depending on the matter or type of municipal intervention at stake. He was able to distinguish affinity networks: all religious institutions, for example, tended to take similar positions and, furthermore, communicate among themselves frequently; private charity institutions; businesses in certain fields; and the media. The financial institution network played a key role in this interinstitutional system, which comes as no surprise since financial institutions determine where many investments are made and many other stakeholders are dependent on them for credit and financing. However, the private charity/community service organization network was also quite central. These institutions have numerous, strong relationships with other stakeholders since they are able to act as a bridge between one stakeholder and another and, paradoxically, because they are frequently asked for support and donations.

Galaskiewicz' study put forth several propositions that have been confirmed by subsequent research. He suggested that municipal government's role as an arbitrator among the special interests of diverse citizen groups was important -- more important, actually, than its initiative in defining problems to be solved and searching for solutions. Network members propose the agenda, and local government then sorts out different stakeholders' requests.

On the other hand, any line around the geographical area of a municipal government's jurisdiction is arbitrary. Supposedly, organizations and institutions whose headquarters are within the city limits or whose special interests are closely identified with the city itself would be inside this line. However, in reality, many other entities -- not the least of which is federal government -- intervene in a city's political life, with many other special interests and mandates. Nevertheless, for the purpose of analysis we have to recognize the city limits and proceed as if the system were relatively closed, knowing that it in reality it is not.

Another of Galaskiewicz' findings concerns the changing alliances among influential stakeholders in the municipal sphere. These stakeholders constantly evaluate their involvement in different local government matters. Many stay out of debates on problems that have nothing to do with their particular special interests. They cannot always stay clear, though: they are sometimes dragged in by allies they will need when other battles are fought, closer to their special interests.

This touches on the controversy between "pluralists" and "elitists" which occurs in the older democracies of the North. For "elitists", municipal power is concentrated in a tight little knot of the network of organizations and institutions surrounding city government. These organizations and institutions negotiate municipal decisions among themselves and are involved in all matters that come up for consideration. "Pluralists", on the other hand, following a tradition that started with Toqueville, if not before, maintain that the stakeholders fighting for local power are selective about what will mobilize them, and that the power they wield in one area is not necessarily transferable to other areas. The group of organizations that can influence the city's educational system, for example, has no power over investment or infrastructure decisions in other areas of municipal activity.

Lastly, the study of inter-organizational networks in the municipal or any other political sphere helps explain the growing number of active stakeholders. There is sound evidence for the principle of "organization breeds organizations", both opponents and allies. In other words, a certain part of the network may suddenly become very active, turning into a "battleground" for resources and power. The increase in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in recent years, along with the increase in grassroots organizations working with NGOs on development projects, can be understood in this framework, which is clearly not just municipal, but also includes the international donor organizations funding them.

Areas of Municipal Action

A necessary complement to the thoughts outlined above is to know **what kinds of problems or matters municipal power is applied to**. It is generally accepted that local government activities can be divided into four categories: assistance programs, allocation of services, stimulation of economic activity in the city, and a fourth category, which has more to do with city government itself and its decision-making process. **Let's quickly examine each of these areas and their relevance for women.**

1. Assistance

All -- or almost all -- local governments are active to one degree or another in sponsoring or directly managing assistance programs and/or services for citizen groups with special needs. Cities have a long history, for example, of providing shelters for

The group of organizations that can influence the city's educational system, for example, has no power over investment or infrastructure decisions in other areas of municipal activity

The study of inter-organizational networks in the municipal or any other political sphere helps explain the growing number of active stakeholders

All -- or almost all -- local governments are active to one degree or another in sponsoring or directly managing assistance programs and/or services for citizen groups with special needs

Municipal governments in Peru, for example, respond to nutritional needs of the large number of poor under their jurisdiction with programs such as Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk) or support for soup kitchens

The city is not always the direct provider, but even when public or private enterprise provides a service, local government plays a big part in deciding how it will be allocated

the aging homeless, schools and institutes to give technical training to poor youngsters, orphanages, and homes for the mentally ill. It is easy to forget how long this history is. However, as early as the 16th century, the Paris city government, for example, was in the "business" of caring for abandoned infants, through rather expensive, administratively complex systems.⁴ These systems involved establishing or subsidizing orphanages where infants could be handed over or taken in for a few hours or days if they had been abandoned in the street or at a church entrance. Since breastfeeding was essential for these babies' survival, the next step was to organize sending them to rural towns or villages where wet nurses could be found, hired by local government and supervised by the local priest. These days we would probably say that assistance of this nature is not an appropriate role for municipal government. However, it is interesting to examine this case to realize how elastic the limits are of what is appropriate within local government's role of assistance. Abandoned infants were far too common in the early stages of urban migration and industrialization in countries like France. Municipal governments responded to a social problem that was serious and prominent at the time. Today's high-priority social problems are different, but equally serious and inescapable. Municipal governments in Peru, for example, respond to nutritional needs of the large number of poor under their jurisdiction with programs such as Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk) or support for soup kitchens. Municipal health centers, dental care programs, or, recently in Peru, haircut campaigns for schoolchildren as they enter a new school year, are other contemporary examples of this long-standing tradition of municipal assistance to citizen groups with special needs.

2. Allocation of services

The second area of municipal activity is allocation of the "routine" urban services we have come to see as a natural part of the urban scene: electricity, water, garbage collection, street paving and maintenance, sanitation, city police, public parks and recreation areas and, sometimes, basic education. The city is not always the direct provider, but even when public or private enterprise provides a service, local government plays a big part in deciding how it will be allocated. Which sectors will get the best service? Which neighborhood will get more police protection, better electricity and water service, better transportation facilities? Undeniably, city government has important decision-making power when it comes to planning the expansion of services.

4. SUSSMAN, D. *Selling Mother's Milk: The Wet Nursing Business in France*. U. of Illinois Press (1984).

3. Land use

The third area of municipal activity -- though given its importance perhaps it should be in first place -- is promotion of the economic activities on which the city's health vitally depends. The city does this mainly by deciding how land within the city's jurisdiction can be used. - Municipal government promotes the economic activities on which the city's health vitally depends. The city does this mainly by deciding how land within the city's jurisdiction can be used. It can designate certain pieces of land for industrial or commercial use; determine which areas will be used for housing these companies' workers and which will be used for high-income housing; reserve traffic flow corridors; and, if it wants, promote certain economic activities in the city to provide employment and broaden the tax base. The decisions municipal governments make determine whether or not the city or district under its jurisdiction will be a favorable environment for economic growth, providing for the population.

It has been said, for example, that New York City's serious financial problems began at least 60 years ago when a group of city planners decided to turn that important industrial center into a city specializing in financial services and such. This specialization was unable to absorb the migrant labor force, which keeps arriving to this day. Consequently, urban and education services have seriously deteriorated and the city can no longer attract investment, even for these relatively sophisticated services that, according to the so-called "Regional Plan", were supposed to sustain the city's economy. Clearly, disputes about land use and where to expand are crucial.

4. Decisions about decision-making

The fourth area of municipal government activity is its influence on decision-making: how decisions are made in the municipal arena. The city makes policies to regulate policy-making. While it is true that many procedures are determined by each country's federal- or municipal-procedure laws, such laws are never complete: they do not have provisions for every possible case. Municipal government has a lot to say about what steps are taken before a proposed regulation or ruling reaches the city council for debate: they can have a study conducted, ask a consultant for an assessment, elicit opinions from the groups that will be most affected by the proposed decision, call for a public council meeting, make their sessions on the issue closed or open to the public. Each option has major implications for different groups' access to the decision or matter at hand because each group controls some mechanisms better than others: some give more opportunity to

Municipal government promotes the economic activities on which the city's health vitally depends. The city does this mainly by deciding how land within the city's jurisdiction can be used

The decisions municipal governments make determine whether or not the city or district under its jurisdiction will be a favorable environment for economic growth, providing for the population

Municipal government has a lot to say about what steps are taken before a proposed regulation or ruling reaches the city council for debate

experts such as consulting firms, others give more to citizens who have organized into an association, others to "common" citizens not necessarily associated with formal organizations.

In almost all Latin American countries there is extensive debate on women's roles and their relationship to municipal government

And Women?

Let's examine these four areas of municipal activity and decision-making. Each is important for women. The two we are most familiar with are the area of assistance -- ever since the economic crisis created the relentless pressure that has led to emergency programs in most Latin American countries -- and the area of services -- due to the obvious impact on quality of life for women, who are responsible for most of the work involved in keeping house and managing the home. In almost all Latin American countries there is extensive debate on women's roles and their relationship to municipal government in these two areas of activity. In the area of assistance, the discussion tends to revolve around women's role as voluntary recipients of various emergency services (child care, community soup kitchens, breakfasts for children and the elderly, etc.). In the area of service allocation, women are seen more as claimants who mobilize their communities in marches and protests against the discrimination they feel in allocation of services and who take care of the tedious red tape to obtain basic services.

The area of activities and decisions having to do with municipal government procedures is the most promising for women's participation in the future

The area of economic growth is less a "women's" area, which is regrettable because we are vitally interested in job creation, work conditions, and, in general, the economic health of the district or city we live in. Again, many municipal decisions in the area of economic growth have to do with land use and tend to be technical and poorly publicized. In a way, as indirect and, one might almost say, unintentional as their participation has been, women have had a strong influence in this area, as they have instigated the occupation of new pieces of land for housing. But it is still true that we have not had, nor have we demanded, the same access to decisions in this area as we have in areas that fit in perfectly with the traditional female roles of taking care of others and watching out for their welfare.

The area of activities and decisions having to do with **municipal government procedures** is the most promising for women's participation in the future because it is here that we can make ourselves heard and have a vote in the wide range of municipal decisions and programs. The results of this participation remain to be seen; it will simply ensure women's presence. Examples of this presence are: the women's advisory commissions set up in some city governments, mechanisms such as the public

defender offices for women that some municipal governments have created, and women officials throughout municipal bureaucracy who can join forces when there is a possibly discriminatory act under consideration or when the opportunity arises for initiatives favorable to women.

We began by pointing out that the municipality is an arena that could be depicted as an enormous system of networks interconnecting numerous organizations, institutions, businesses, associations, clubs and even sometimes particularly influential individuals. **Women's organizations, at any level, are just such players.** They all focus their attention on municipal government, trying to make sure its decisions are favorable to them, or at least that they do not harm their special interests. The group of stakeholders operating in each of the four areas of municipal activity is, up to a point, specialized for the type of issues at stake. To a certain extent we can predict who the other players would be if women were to present a demand in any of these four areas.

In other words, we can identify with some precision who women will be talking to. Some are potential allies; they have the same special interests as women, or at least the same enemies. Others, predictably, will oppose the requests women make. Others will remain silent; with little to gain or lose, they won't waste their energy going to battle either in favor of or against women.

Let's imagine who the principal stakeholders would be in each of the four established areas of municipal activity. My impression -- if the situation in Ecuador is not too different from Peru's -- is that they would be those I note below, among others. The list is not exhaustive, but only suggestive.

In the area of assistance:

Charity associations, federal government assistance programs, groups of people with special needs (the blind, the disabled, tuberculosis patients, etc.), groups of poor people.

In the area of service allocation:

Service customers in all social sectors; charity associations; the construction industry; professionals and administrators in the companies and institutions that provide these services; neighborhood organizations, each pressuring for better services for its neighborhood.

In the area of economic growth:

Urban developers, environmental protection organizations, neighborhood organizations, consumer organizations,

The group of stakeholders operating in each of the four areas of municipal activity is, up to a point, specialized for the type of issues at stake

Most stakeholders in the municipal arena arrived on the scene before women. They are more experienced in the game of negotiating and getting what they want

professional associations, business manager organizations, bankers and financiers, labor unions, investors.

In the area of decisions about decision-making:

Political parties, those wanting to reform the local political system, human rights organizations.

Most stakeholders in the municipal arena arrived on the scene before women. They are more experienced in the game of negotiating and getting what they want. Here, too, women have fallen behind by not having organized to participate in exchanges with many groups and entities that could help us get our share. We have often rejected support from potential allies because we didn't consider them sufficiently "pure" and flawless. We have often been very naive, supposing that other stakeholders would "have to" react to our proposals favorably simply because it is time to compensate for discrimination against us in the past. Certainly this failure to enter the traditional political game has cost us many potential victories, including the chance to enter this area of governmental procedures with more strength and push for reforms of the decision-making process to make it more favorable to us.

This tendency for the enemy to stay hidden makes it especially difficult for women, as it can be covered up by very friendly dialogue

Experience shows that it is quite easy to discover friends among the stakeholders operating in the municipal arena. When one group or sector puts forth a proposal, others who see that it might benefit them come forward with offers of support. Those who feel threatened by the proposal, those who would lose resources, prominence or power for their own cause, tend to stay in the background. They save their energy to fight at the most opportune moment, operating behind closed doors if possible. This tendency for the enemy to stay hidden makes it especially difficult for women, as it can be covered up by very friendly dialogue. After all, it is not "fashionable" these days to speak out against certain compensatory benefits for women, or to support discrimination and exclusion. However, as we know, saying the right things does not mean that those who say them are really willing to share power, even municipal power, with women.

The Challenge Women Face

I would like to end by pointing out some other special problems women are faced with, assuming that my view of municipal government is essentially correct. I perceive three problems, which are serious, but not insurmountable if we are aware of them and develop mechanisms to solve them.

1. If municipal power is negotiated among a group of organizations, with municipal government being *primus inter pares*, clearly the leaders of women's organizations have to develop relationships with numerous organizations and institutions in order to be effective. **Women leaders** -- just as bank presidents, union leaders, private institution boards of directors, and business owners -- are the link between their organization and the other stakeholders in the municipal arena. They don't have to relate to each and every one of them, since some are neither friends nor enemies under any imaginable circumstances. However, it is important for them to learn to relate to a wide range of stakeholders in order to effectively build alliances and identify opponents. There are really two problems here. On the one hand, as mentioned above, women leaders must learn how to hold their own in interorganizational negotiations with other stakeholders with more experience. On the other hand, members of women's grassroots organizations need to understand why their leaders are conversing and negotiating with the other stakeholders. Women in a soup kitchen or a day-care center might think that the only valid reason for a leader's absence from the organization is to take requests and demands to the city, federal government ministries or identified donors. **However, if the leaders limited their activity to this, the organization's chances to defend its interests in the municipal arena would be quite limited.** What tends to happen now, of course, is precisely that the membership of women's organizations limit the scope of activities they consider legitimate for their leaders. If leaders spend too much time talking to representatives of other organizations, they run the risk of being accused of having "gone over to the other side" -- the side of the privileged -- or at least of neglecting their true obligations to the organization.
2. **Lack of experience as active stakeholders in the municipal arena means that women find it difficult to estimate and put reasonable limits on what it costs to deal with other stakeholders.** One example is the time it takes to approach another organization, understand its positions, establish where they differ from one's own positions and agree on the extent to which it is possible to work for each other's causes. Other examples can be political: loss of credibility, being misunderstood by another ally, or internal dissent in the organization. Other costs can be directly economic. In women's popular organizations in

If municipal power is negotiated among a group of organizations, with municipal government being *primus inter pares*, clearly the leaders of women's organizations have to develop relationships with numerous organizations and institutions in order to be effective

Lack of experience as active stakeholders in the municipal arena means that women find it difficult to estimate and put reasonable limits on what it costs to deal with other stakeholders

Many women's organizations have trouble making a place for themselves in the group of stakeholders who are influential in the municipal arena

Women's vote can be a powerful weapon when women are summoned to a cause they recognize as their own

One of the most useful things municipal government could do is to familiarize women leaders and their organizations' members with the network of other organizations the city deals with

Lima, even the price of bus tickets to visit a sister organization is calculated and debated.

To identify the costs is not essential here; what is essential is realize that women do not have the necessary feel for the total costs, having less experience in negotiating for municipal power than most men. It is difficult for us to spot all the stakeholders who can affect how our demands are received. Once we identify them, it is difficult for us to estimate how much we need to invest to sway them to a position favorable to women. We tend to seriously underestimate, which can diminish the effectiveness of our organizations and cost more in the long run.

3. Many women's organizations have trouble making a place for themselves in the group of stakeholders who are influential in the municipal arena. Sometimes an organization is too small or too new, but mostly their presence is not recognized because they are too informal. Otherwise it would be easier to establish alliances. Women's organizations would be sought out by other organizations instead of always having to take the initiative of investing most of the time and effort themselves. Part of the problem is, of course, simply prejudice: it is difficult for the old, established male organizations to imagine that women's organizations could be useful allies. They do not associate them with power, efficiency, effectiveness or other qualities that they look for in their political allies. Women, on the other hand, also underestimate our ability to gather support and apply pressure. We too often forget that women's vote can be a powerful weapon when women are summoned to a cause they recognize as their own.

Municipal Government's Role

There is a great deal municipal governments can do to meet women halfway, but first they must assimilate these problems and ideas into their way of thinking and recognize the political strength women have locally. From the perspective presented here, one of the most useful things municipal government could do is to familiarize women leaders and their organizations' members with the network of other organizations the city deals with. Such actions, that help women figure out the other stakeholders' positions more accurately, would have the immediate effect of tying women's organizations more firmly into the local power system. At the same time, it would give

women the tools they need to better prepare themselves to increase their interaction with other stakeholders.

This type of strategy would also contribute to giving women more weight in the fourth area of municipal activity, that of decisions and procedures. Fostering women's ability to negotiate their interests before an issue reaches the municipal council would leave them in a better position to negotiate with the council. Women, who have entered the municipal arena with such force, who have contributed so much to creating their environment, do not expect protectionism and favors from local government. They do expect and deserve to be treated justly and equally. I have tried to suggest some ideas that would help us get there.

Women and Municipal Government: The Opportunity to Participate Locally and Democratize Barrios in Chile.

*Andrea Rodó **
SUR Professionals
Chile

* This paper was written, with Veronica Matus' collaboration, before the June 1992 municipal elections in Chile

This April, we sent a short survey to female officials in two municipalities -- one in the south of Chile and the other in the Santiago metropolitan area -- asking them about the most significant requests they received from women in their community. At the same time, we asked women leaders in these communities about the most important requests they make of municipal government.

The answers matched perfectly.

According to the municipal officials, women ask for crafts (knitting, cooking and sewing) materials and/or for resources to solve urgent problems in the areas of housing, health and food/nutrition.

According to these (municipal) officials, women are "always" asking for something; "they never miss an opportunity to ask for things", taking advantage of their status as mothers and, often, as victims. According to the officials, this is what characterizes women's requests and their relationship with municipal government.

The women from the community, in turn, said that their main requests to municipal government were for materials for crafts classes and, above all, resources for dealing with problems, mainly in the areas of health and housing. They said that in order to get help they had to present themselves as extremely poor and needy.

What do these two similar results indicate? What is revealed by the types of requests women make and the perception that each group has of the other?

In our opinion, what is revealed -- above and beyond the specific facts -- is that the type of relationship women and municipal government have established with each other has historically been typified by dependence, requests for and granting of aid, and power dynamics.

Women have been treated as if they were particularly incapable and in need of aid or financial/social support. This became much more pronounced during the Pinochet dictatorship. The model imposed by the Pinochet government was that the relationship between local government and its beneficiaries be basically authoritarian and directed to individual cases.

Women as a social group with its particular demands and needs -- resulting from discrimination -- have historically not been recognized by municipal governments, or even by women themselves. Paradoxically, the State has failed to understand that women are the best channel to gain access to families and implement its social policies.

According to officials, women are "always" asking for something; "they never miss an opportunity to ask for things", taking advantage of their status as mothers and, often, as victims. According to the officials, this is what characterizes women's requests and their relationship with municipal government

Women as a social group with its particular demands and needs -- resulting from discrimination -- have historically not been recognized by municipal governments, or even by women themselves

Under the circumstances, the answers given by women in the community and in municipal government to the survey are not so strange.

Local government has traditionally viewed Chilean women as wives of heads of households (mothers and housewives), categorized as passive elements who are dependent and in need of assistance to meet needs related to their most traditional role and functions or to solve problems caused by the poverty typical of low-income urban sectors.

I would like to reflect upon the problems Chilean women have had in trying to deal with discrimination against and social/political exclusion of women, and how they can change their relationship with municipal government to increase their opportunities for participation and therefore for full citizenship. Above all, I would like to point out the challenges women face these days in the process of democratic reconstruction.

At the time of the military coup, Chilean women had only recently begun to experience and exercise citizenship (since 1949)

Lastly, I would like to point out certain aspects of the alternatives available to a democratic municipality to truly become an arena for community participation and development in Chile.

Women Under Dictatorship (1973-1990)

When we reflect on women's organizations and their ties to municipal government, especially considering the challenges that arise as we try to change the institution so that women from low-income barrios can really be involved in running their communities, we must take a look at how women have organized in recent years.

The lessons learned during this period and the cumulative deficiencies are the experiential, subjective foundation for facing today's challenges.

The military dictatorship was a time of political, economic and social exclusion, especially for the poorest sectors. The State increased aid to the poor. Its policy was to provide subsidies and allocate individual benefits in the poorest sectors.

All vestiges of organization, collective action, and dialogue with the community were eliminated. The State was a remote, distant institution, though certainly omnipresent in its role of repression and indoctrination.

Even under these difficult circumstances, women did not stay home. In spite of fear, repression and the enormous crisis that

directly affected their families' survival and unity, they actively went out and looked for ways to fight the situation.

It is important to point out that, at the time of the military coup, Chilean women had only recently begun to experience and exercise citizenship (since 1949).

Thus, when the dictatorship began, women had been citizens for only 24 years. This was too little time, considering that citizenship was basically just a formality, limited to voting -- especially for women, who, after having won citizenship, went back home, encouraged by traditional leftist and center parties' promises of social change and freedom.

Not only was their experience limited in time, but it was also marked by the absence of true participation.

Thus, the military coup restricted, once again, women's citizenship. Nevertheless, the need to survive, deal with emergencies, and protect life itself made women go back out and look for support and solidarity in their communities.

Historically, Chilean women have always taken political action in times of crisis. This was not a new phenomenon. What was new, however, is that they did it during a time of repression, and absolutely unaided, with complete autonomy from political parties or forces that might have questioned or placed conditions on their efforts and initiatives to organize and resist. **The public world these women entered was, however, one they knew -- their local area -- which, for these women, was like operating in their own homes. It was precisely, and paradoxically, the State's absence that made it easier for women to act.**

The local sphere is perfect for women to operate in. Not only is it nearby and familiar, but it is easy for them to develop networks and systems of self-help that draw strength from the community/neighborhood culture, marked by solidarity and personal relationships.

The emergency nature of the situation, which put family survival at risk, brought out women's know-how, acquired through the daily experiences of keeping domestic neighborhood and community life going socially and materially.

Thus, initially motivated by survival, women began creating different kinds of groups and organizations. Some had to do with subsistence -- food and nutrition, health, housing, education and politics -- and others had to do with human rights and the struggle against the dictatorship. Later on, groups and organizations formed to reflect on women's issues from a gender perspective. Women's common experiences and collective work created opportunities to reflect and learn

The public world these women entered was, however, one they knew -- their local area -- which, for these women, was like operating in their own homes. It was precisely, and paradoxically, the State's absence that made it easier for women to act

together about other aspects of their lives, related more specifically to their status as women.

Thus, women quite capably took control of their barrios and, showing great creativity and strength, put together self-help networks, invented new forms of organization and created an active, original movement. It was a heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, ever-changing, self-directed movement, and it spread. Personal and solidarity relationships prevailed, for the most part, over political relationships and motives and/or those having to do with power.

The movement kept its distance from authorities and the State. The type of institutions which might have limited its actions for and in the barrio were lacking. Political parties as mediators and bridges to institutional power were absent. Unfamiliar and complicated political and institutional structures that might have interfered with its operations didn't exist. All these incentives made it possible for women to participate in a sphere that was familiar and close by.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supported, accompanied and advised women during this time. NGOs fostered the process of women's consciousness-raising and reflection on their status and discrimination. The presence of NGOs, no doubt a key factor, not only consolidated and promoted women's processes of reflection and organization, but these NGOs also, along with the Catholic Church, provided supplies for different subsistence initiatives.

Notwithstanding the different processes described above, gender identity was still too weak to foreshadow a movement that could transcend such circumstances and keep going over time, with political proposals to truly incorporate women in public decision-making

Lessons Learned Along the Way:

From dealing with urgent matters to taking the lead in social action

Even though the women's movement during the dictatorship had no direct relationship with the national political scene, nor was it carried out in the traditionally established framework of struggle to claim social and political privileges, women gained important, unprecedented experience in the public arena.

The most significant lessons learned and social achievements during this period are listed below:

1. The value of organization and collective action as useful, efficient tools with which to face concrete problems was recognized. This legitimized women's participation, causing those within the movement and others to give it the social recognition it deserves.

2. Small groups or opportunities for reflection were created, where self-appreciation, personal development and gender consciousness evolved. While dealing with the crisis and extreme social exclusion, women created opportunities to share and reflect on diverse problems having to do with their status as women.

Thus, Chilean women's issues became visible. Furthermore, the crisis made various other problems visible, particularly those having to do with discrimination against and over-exploitation of women in the workplace.

Poverty became increasingly female, with women working two or three shifts. Increasing domestic violence, a product of the crisis situation and the change in traditional domestic roles, was another related issue.

When problems which are traditionally personal and private become social phenomena, not only do they become public, but the meaning and dimension of the problems also changes: private issues become political issues.

3. Small groups and organizations were linked into networks, which gave them more recognition and strength for dealing with others.
4. Organizations exercised democratic principles that favored participation, expression of ideas and shared responsibility among participants.
5. Social and political leadership developed; women leaders who addressed women's issues in their speeches and actions appeared on the scene.
6. Women's diversity and heterogeneity was recognized. Different needs and interests were accepted among peers.
7. Action became an alternative to simply making requests. Women became agents of change rather than simply recipients of aid, and came to value their social and political skills and possibilities.
8. Group identification formed; elements of collective identity appeared that gave strength and substance to women's actions.

When problems which are traditionally personal and private become social phenomena, not only do they become public, but the meaning and dimension of the problems also changes

However, what fundamentally united women and gave them identity as a social group was the fight against dictatorship and for democracy.

Notwithstanding the different processes described above, gender identity was still too weak to foreshadow a movement that could transcend such circumstances and keep going over time, with political proposals to truly incorporate women in public decision-making.

The big job or challenge in the case of women is to create channels to truly incorporate them into public life and democracy-building

Obviously, this process suffered from major deficiencies, mainly in the area of women learning about how to operate in the public sphere.

The main aspects lacking from this experience, in our opinion, were as follows:

1. There were no ties to or dialogue with institutional power (municipal governments, neighborhood associations)
2. No systematic, consistent gender demands were formulated, which might later have legitimized any project or proposals for change that community women might make to the State, government, and society.
3. No proposal was designed by community women that might institutionalize and legitimize forms of organization and participation, or that might recognize women as a stakeholder or social group.
4. No platform that might ensure a basic program to resolve women's core demands was negotiated with political parties or forces.

Thus, during the dictatorship, community women gained significant experience in organization, community action and gender consciousness. Nevertheless, they lacked a clear political strategy that could have transformed their experiences into a durable social and political force. **Perhaps even more seriously, women did not elaborate more consistent, cohesive demands as a project or proposal for change that women could present to society at large.**

Recovery of Democracy 1990-1992

Democratic recovery in Chile put participation -- understood as incorporating diverse sectors and social groups into managing, developing and democratizing the country -- on the public agenda.

The big job or challenge in the case of women is to create channels to truly incorporate them into public life and democracy-building.

The challenge that arises is to increase the opportunities for action and participation; in short, to recover and exercise women's citizenship.

For women, citizenship implies not only receiving recognition as a social group, but, above all, being included in power and public decision-making. Historically, women have been either

excluded, or only partially or occasionally included, in public decision-making.

In Chile, changes after the plebiscite allowed for approval of the "Municipal and Regional Constitutional Amendment", among other things. The reform's most notable aspects have to do with electing mayors and council members by popular vote and increasing civic participation in the community. The Municipal Council and the Socio-Economic Advisory Board were created for these purposes. These institutions will modify municipal structures so that not only municipal authorities will be elected, but territorial and functional local organizations can also elect representatives to city government.

In short, this is a new opportunity for participation and power for organizations in general, and thus for women.

What Are Women and Their Organizations Doing These Days?

The circumstances just described are promising. Nevertheless, the process that many organized women have lived through has left them perplexed. With the arrival of democracy, women have taken their energies and voices back home, to wait and see what will happen with time and the democratic process.

Without a doubt it is a time of transition, and women, more than having "gone back home", find themselves in a complex, unclear situation. It is a time where political will and promises are restricted by the authoritarian institutions still in place. It is thus a politically active time for many, but the process of democratization and learning to operate accordingly continues.

Democracy, in fact, places previously invisible or unrecognized topics and problems before the Chilean people, including women's issues. Certainly this has not "just happened". If discrimination against women is now on the public agenda, it is partly because of women's efforts to make themselves, and the problems related to their subordination, visible. Although they are still very much in the minority, women have also incorporated themselves into the political system. There is even a ministry office (SERNAM)¹ and, consequently, a woman minister. In the legislative branch, seven of the 120 representatives and two of the 38 senators are women.

As we prepare for the next municipal elections², 17% of the council member candidates are women.

Nevertheless, women's grassroots participation and involvement in this public debate is scarce, or non-existent. It

In Chile, changes after the plebiscite allowed for approval of the "Municipal and Regional Constitutional Amendment", among other things

If discrimination against women is now on the public agenda, it is partly because of women's efforts to make themselves, and the problems related to their subordination, visible. Women have also incorporated themselves into the political system

1. Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Service).
2. Held in June, 1992.

For the time being, the public world -- the world of power and politics -- is still alien and distant, particularly for Chilean women

Good intentions are undoubtedly not enough. Municipal government, as the embodiment of local power, first of all needs to redesign its traditional relationship with organizations, particularly with women's organizations

is the traditional political bosses who debate, not the women or their neighborhood or community grassroots organizations.

The current scene, then, characterized by the active presence of political parties, election activities, political compromises and division and distribution of power, crushes women. They have no way to respond or participate in politics.

In fact, once again today the political scene in Chile is such that women do not know how to operate. Even though the government shows political will and has decided to open the way for social participation and to truly decentralize power, this has not yet occurred. It is a time of transition.

At this time, the old, traditional ways of doing politics still exist, limited by the institutions in place: the State has been revived, political parties have flourished and institutional power is once again expressing itself in different areas and ways. However, only the traditional political actors have access to the dynamics among these forces.

For the time being, the public world -- the world of power and politics -- is still alien and distant, particularly for Chilean women.

Distance from the sphere of central power is our current lot, where women, be they organized, working women, or whatever their status, feel neither represented nor listened to.

Municipal government has not yet included women and their organizations in dialogue, participation or decision-making, and it remains unable to do so. We are still in a period of transition where there are no established opportunities or methods for popular participation. However, the expected reform will surely initiate and regulate this process in the near future, offering new challenges for women's participation and involvement in local government and community development.

Relations Between Municipal Government and Women's Organizations

The new form of municipal government, decentralized and with the political will to increase citizen participation, needs to find a way to truly make integration and dialogue with women's organizations possible.

Good intentions are undoubtedly not enough. Municipal government, as the embodiment of local power, first of all needs to redesign its traditional relationship with organizations, particularly with women's organizations.

The reform and the upcoming election of the Socio-Economic Board, will make it possible for organizations to be represented in municipal government. **Nevertheless, representation is not enough. The role women and their organizations play in local development must be redefined, and valued.**

This means that we must break with the stereotype that women's role is merely to receive and/or request social benefits or policies.

The fact that women organizers represent women in government loses political value and importance if our conception of women and appreciation of their value does not change, as well as our perception of women's requests and specific problems. Women don't wish merely to vote and have the opportunity to present their demands. Women must be involved in making and administering decisions, designing and planning policies and solving social problems.

This way, women's involvement will broaden the scope of community action to include other, currently more significant psychosocial, cultural, and environmental problems; problems that concern today's men and women.

This way, women's involvement will broaden the scope of community action to include other, currently more significant psychosocial, cultural, and environmental problems; problems that concern today's men and women

Women as Stakeholders in a Democratic City

Women, as previously mentioned, seem to be in transition. The current political scene is also in transition, and therefore complicated, bureaucratic and competitive. It is difficult for women to make room for themselves in this scene, and to make their voices and demands heard.

Nevertheless, we believe that conditions after municipal elections will be optimal, or a least better, than in previous political scenarios where women had little or no access to participation and administering municipal policies.

Thus, we are faced with some questions or challenges that municipal government and women's organizations must honestly face. In short, how we define and handle the relationship between the State and civil society, or between the government and the people, is crucial.

Municipal Government's Role

First of all, municipal government should, in fact, consider women as a doubly-marginalized social group, both as a social group and in terms of gender. This requires that women be

Women should be involved in designing and planning social policies. Community women's organizations should not be simply a network through which to apply social programs

recognized as capable of solving their problems, of developing self-reliance skills and of contributing to their community's development. Women should be involved in designing and planning social policies. Community women's organizations should not be simply a network through which to apply social programs; this, along with adding hours to women's workday, lessens their sense of true participation.

Secondly, municipal government must support collective handling of social problems and encourage women to propose solutions. With this in mind, it should promote ways to meet peoples' needs through group action.

Women's experiences over these last years have made some of their problems public, turning them into social problems, or problems that both men and women must concern themselves with. Municipal government must keep this perspective in mind as it acts, and contribute specifically to correct gender inequalities, and thus to democracy-building.

Thirdly, municipal government must deal with obstacles or barriers within the municipal structure that might impede organized women's participation in practice

In short, this means it must incorporate women's experiences, consider their interests, respect their time needs and give them opportunities to express their expectations and demands as a social group.

Thirdly, municipal government must deal with obstacles or barriers within the municipal structure that might impede organized women's participation in practice.

In Chile, the current reform at least allows for organizations and neighborhood juntas to be represented. Women are present, though circumstances do not always allow them to express "women's" demands and interests, as one is simply invited to speak as "a local resident". The new form of government must truly respond to the new criteria for relationships between the State and women's organizations.

The State should strive to stimulate and legitimize women's organizations (whatever their nature), respect their autonomy and create clear, effective channels for dialogue and participation

Lastly, municipal government must recognize the diversity of women's groups and organizations and respect each group's autonomy. Women characteristically create diverse organizations, with different directions and objectives, responding to different motives. The fact that women have allowed autonomy for each group is a significant achievement. The State, then, should strive to stimulate and legitimize women's organizations (whatever their nature), respect their autonomy and create clear, effective channels for dialogue and participation.

Additionally, it is very important for the State to provide resources, giving priority to initiatives that lead to women's development and to changing their current status: the outgrowth of discrimination and subordination. Policies,

programs and measures with women's interests and expectations in mind are essential to these changes.

Possible examples are: concrete measures that provide services to meet the needs of women, their main users, and schedule them so that both women who work outside of the home and those occupied with housework can take advantage of them; sports and recreation programs; adult education and technical training courses geared to housewives, young women and working women; sexuality and exercise programs; support for creating centers where organized women, working women and/or housewives can have their own, autonomous place in which to train or organize; green (park) areas and town squares; legal advice, psychological support and campaigns to help make problems such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, drug addiction, etc. visible.

The Role of Women and Their Organizations

In this new scenario, there are enormous possibilities for women to participate actively in local planning and action.

In fact, the new municipal scenario gives women some comparative advantages. On one hand, decentralization will make power more visible. Power will no longer be something remote, distant and available only to those of the upper echelon, but will now be more apparent, in a territory more familiar to women.

On the other hand, the local arena, with democratic institutions, is more suited to women, and is therefore a viable setting for them. Women's day-to-day experiences, knowledge and skills can be applied locally, making a visible contribution. Relationships and ties are more direct, and are established with more familiar faces.

Additionally, in the local arena power can be exercised following concrete actions in response to problems or needs having to do with local residents' daily lives, or matters women have experience handling with demonstrated ability and efficiency.

In short, a local setting with the political will to democratize can respond better to women's demands or interests. However, to maximize the advantages offered by modern-day municipal government, women must make proposals and present strategies. Women need to participate actively and purposefully. Women need power, social legitimacy and recognition of their status as citizens and social actors.

Women's day-to-day experiences, knowledge and skills can be applied locally, making a visible contribution.

Relationships and ties are more direct, and are established with more familiar faces

In short, a local setting with the political will to democratize can respond better to women's demands or interests. However, to maximize the advantages offered by modern-day municipal government, women must make proposals and present strategies

Any position that encourages training and education for women political and social leaders, or programs that promote gender consciousness and identity or develop women's capacity to act from a gender perspective, are vitally important

It is also the responsibility of the State and government officials to create favorable conditions and provide concrete support to stimulate participation and deal with discrimination and inequality, which particularly affect women from the poorest sectors

With this in mind, any position that encourages training and education for women political and social leaders, or programs that promote gender consciousness and identity or develop women's capacity to act from a gender perspective, are vitally important.

Our experience shows that certain material and subjective conditions must be met locally in order for development processes that give women legitimacy and social recognition to be more feasible and viable.

These changes and processes do not just emerge and develop naturally and easily. It cannot be solely left up to women to consciously decide to fight for their problems and demands, and make successful inroads in areas which have traditionally been tremendously resistant. **It is also the responsibility of the State and government officials to create favorable conditions and provide concrete support to stimulate participation and deal with discrimination and inequality, which particularly affect women from the poorest sectors.**

Some projects underway in Chile have been highly successful in helping women residents of low-income neighborhoods develop and become leaders, such as: the "Casas de la Mujer" (Women's Centers). As their name indicates, these centers are specifically set up for women from a particular barrio or community -- no matter what their status -- to meet, receive training or instruction, and engage in recreational activities.

The Casas organization, directed and administered by women, receives support and advice from NGOs, and occasionally from municipal governments.

Experience shows that, in barrios where a "Casa de la Mujer" has existed, women's legitimacy and power in the barrio is significant.

Casas give women more influence and, most importantly, reinforce their identity, empowering them. Women get together and feel their strength and importance. They have their own place from which to initiate dialogue with others. They give each other recognition. They pull together and lose their anonymity. In short, they make their presence known in the local setting.

The Casas have also made it possible for municipal government to better channel and implement their programs, talking and working together with women. Relationships are more horizontal. In this setting, women are in a position that engenders relationships of dialogue, where negotiations, demands and conflicts are dealt with under more egalitarian conditions.

Summary

Municipal governments can play a key role in democratizing barrios and communities. They have the opportunity to use their commitment, power and resources to improve the daily lives of the citizens most in need.

However, it is up to both municipal government and women's organizations to find strategies and ways to promote democratic participation and improve quality of life for women and their organizations.

The State must not try to interpret or live and feel for women. It is up to women to present their demands, conflicts and proposals from civil society, from the women's movement. The State -- in this case municipal government -- and women have different interests and motives. Neither can be expected to respond to the other's interests and needs. Conflict and negotiations will naturally be the usual mode of relating, though there will certainly be areas of agreement and collaboration.

To summarize, we would like to reiterate that the community, and especially the barrios, are privileged opportunities to make men and women's lives easier and more humane. This is where it is possible to truly put a stop to the segregation of opportunities that reflects gender inequalities and oppression.

What women can do is to use the experience from their daily lives to build up their barrios, thereby creating other opportunities and realities that express who they are and give them back their dignity.

The job of creating new relationships among men, women and children, that will reflect a more humane, democratic way of living together, calls for women's contributions, above all; for if there is one thing women know, it is how to humanize everyday life.

It is up to both municipal government and women's organizations to find strategies and ways to promote democratic participation and improve quality of life for women and their organizations

Bibliography

- **Teresa Valdés. Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, avances de investigación en Chile. (Flacso).**
- **Teresa Valdés y Marisa Weinstein. Mujer popular y participación: propuestas y desafíos. (Flacso).**
- **Loreto Bravo. Periódico mensual de la Mujer. La mujer en las próximas elecciones.**
- **Gloria Torres "Conociendo Nuestro Municipio". Material para la participación comunal. (CIDE).**

Women in Local Power in Ecuador

María Arboleda
**Directora. "Women and Local Development" Program
IULA-CELCADEL**

Introduction

In 1991, when the "Women and Local Development" Program was beginning to take shape, our efforts to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the presence of women in local power in Latin America revealed that the field we were entering was not so easy to interpret.

Women, as new social stakeholders (which is how we refer to them) were getting involved in public-life networks whose logic is quite different than that of daily life.

Since then, we have had the extraordinary opportunity to begin looking at some traits that distinguish the women who have become local authorities by popular election in South America, and to appreciate the specific qualities of their leadership -- the way they relate to their communities and to political power systems.

In 1991 we came into contact with a group of women council members in Ecuador. A year later we started working with another, larger group of women council members and council presidents, more to provide support than to conduct research.

Even though our purpose was mainly to undertake joint initiatives, the contact stimulated our own work, and that of the IULA-AME team, a volunteer group of fourteen (12 women and 2 men) municipal government specialists in different areas. The team has met twice in the last three years to design and implement some instruments to gather more information on women and local power in Ecuador.

The first report on the findings of a portion of this work was put together and published in 1992.¹ In this paper, I will use some of the findings from that report, evaluate findings from other sources, and introduce certain problems that have come up in the course of our work since then.

Our field of analysis is basically women's participation in formal local political systems of power in Ecuador and, to a lesser degree, some of the informal systems of participation and power in neighborhood community life. Community life has many other socio-cultural areas where male and female leadership are played out, and also includes rural communities, which are not analyzed here, either. In our opinion, adding these elements to the analysis will provide women with valuable input for improving the quantity and quality of local female leadership in Ecuador.

We have had the extraordinary opportunity to begin looking at some traits that distinguish the women who have become local authorities by popular election in South America, and to appreciate the specific qualities of their leadership -- the way they relate to their communities and to political power systems

1. See Palacios, Patricia, *Women's Participation in Ecuadorian Municipalities*, Local Development Notebooks, IULA-CELCADEL, Nov. 1992.

Municipalities in Ecuador: Miniature Nations

To define the power domain under examination, I will begin with a synthesis of what Ecuadorian local communities and municipalities are. I will also summarize some of the guiding principles of a proposal to construct a different type of municipality.

In 1978, when Ecuador "returned" to democracy, there were 117 municipalities. By 1991 there were 177; currently there are 193.

The Ecuadorian Municipal Administration Law defines a municipality as an "autonomous political corporate body, subordinate to national constitutional law".²

The essential components of a municipality are **population, territory and government**. In Ecuador, a municipality's territory is the same as its canton's, and includes all its urban and rural parishes, over which the municipality has full jurisdiction.

Local government is run by the **city council**. Council members are elected every four years by direct, popular vote, with secret ballots. The council is a body of peers. The number of members varies according to the municipality's population.

In Ecuador the **city council and the mayor's office** are not clearly defined as **legislative and administrative** bodies, respectively, as they are in other Latin American countries and in Spain. This means that the city council, in addition to its legislative duties, co-governs. As a result, mayors resort to using alliances and power-sharing to govern.

The city council works through commissions and council sessions. Commission reports must be submitted either to the council itself or the mayor for approval. Either the **mayor or the council president**, depending on the municipality, chairs the city council and is the maximum authority of municipal administration.

Mayors are elected in provincial capitals and county (canton) seats with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Council presidents are elected in other municipalities. Ecuadorian law defines mayors and council presidents differently, which is senseless because they have the same legal powers and duties. (Borja: 1992, p. 53)

A municipality's components -- population, territory and government -- make it, under Ecuadorian law, similar to a nation, but at the local level. The same is true of municipalities in other countries as well, leading many analysts to refer to a municipality as a "patria chica".³ Rodrigo Escobar Navia, a

In Ecuador the city council and the mayor's office are not clearly defined as legislative and administrative bodies, respectively, as they are in other Latin American countries and in Spain. This means that the city council, in addition to its legislative duties, co-governs. As a result, mayors resort to using alliances and power-sharing to govern

2. Borja, Raúl, *Municipal Agenda*, AME, 1992, p. 21.

3. Translator's note: *Patria* means "fatherland", and *chica* means small. This term denotes home-town power, with the idea that a municipality is, in effect, a miniature nation.

Colombian municipal expert, uses the term "matria"⁴, as it is the municipality that gives us our collective identity.

A Country of Municipalities

There are currently 193 municipalities in Ecuador. Twenty-seven are governed by mayors; 166 by council presidents. They may be divided up according to size:

2 large cities (possibly metropolitan cities)

25 medium-sized cities

166 small towns

There are two types of sub-national administration in Ecuador:

Autonomous Sub-National Administration: Prefectures and Municipalities.

Dependent Sub-National Administration, which reports to the federal government: *Gobernaciones, Jefaturas Políticas y Tenencias Políticas*. (Borja, 1992, p.17)

The basic principles of a municipality are **autonomy, decentralization and local democracy**. (Borja, 1992, p.33)

The Municipal Administration Law establishes that a municipality has "operational, economic and administrative autonomy" and can enact its own **ordinances** which are binding throughout the area under its jurisdiction.

As R. Borja points out, autonomy means: the right to self-govern and self-organize (but not independence from federal government); administration of its own resources; control over high-level governmental bodies and community organizations; local democracy; and local development.

Decentralization, in this sense, is nothing more than the true political expression of a change in the way Ecuadorian governmental bodies of central power and bodies of local power interact, as well as a change in the relationship between the municipality and the community. (Borja, 1992, p. 17).

Local democracy "is the essence of decentralization and local autonomy" inasmuch as the community is the beginning and end of municipal action and the mainstay of local autonomy."⁵

Local democracy is only assured if community participation is guaranteed in four fundamental areas. The community should: make requests of local government, cooperate with local government, oversee local government and be the major beneficiary of local public action.

Autonomy means: the right to self-govern and self-organize (but not independence from federal government); administration of its own resources; control over high-level governmental bodies and community organizations; local democracy; and local development

4. Translator's note: *Matria* would be the feminine form of *patria*, denoting "motherland" rather than fatherland.

5. Sanin Angel, Héctor, *Decentralization* USAID-Honduras/Rhudo-SA, 1990, p. 28.

Thus, the principles of a municipality -- autonomy, decentralization and local democracy -- are closely interwoven. The conflict between centralism and autonomy has been present ever since municipalities or *cabildos* originated, throughout their history, and in almost all aspects. This conflict has been manifested and resolved in different ways over the years, but to discuss this further is beyond the scope of this paper.

According to Ecuador's Municipal Administration Law (LRM) the purpose of a municipality is "to achieve local common good and attend to the needs of the city, the metropolitan area, and the rural parishes under its jurisdiction". (Borja, 1992, p. 22).

I am not going to list all the functions that legally pertain to a municipality in Ecuador, but this is another area that has been affected by the dispute between centralism and decentralization over the centuries. In the beginning, municipalities had a wide range of responsibilities, but centralist/authoritarian federal government has often stripped municipalities not only of their political powers but also of their functions.

The LRM gives a municipality the authority to design its community's "development plan". However, as Margaret Schuler wrote, even though development "is a process in which we target and use resources for the social and economic benefit of a society", "unfortunately, the end result of many development processes in the Third World...is the political and economic advancement of certain groups and the marginalization, exclusion and subordination of others".⁶

In Ecuador, this has occurred at both the federal and local levels. The rural population is frequently among these groups that are marginalized by the way development is handled. Municipal "development plans", which should be all-inclusive, are often confused with "physical development regulatory plans" or with "urban development plans".

As everyone knows, a municipality is the governmental body closest to the citizens, to the community. Thus, **local development**, to be substantive, should be the opposite of traditional national development (which is centralistic and subordinates local perspectives to a more general perspective). Local development, on the contrary, should be a political, social and economic process designed to respond to the proposals and initiatives of different **local social stakeholders** (ordinary citizens, laborers, women, peasants, native peoples, professionals, industrialists, merchants, etc.) and, should thus be based on **democratizing, participatory, broad-based processes**.

Local development, to be substantive, should be the opposite of traditional national development (which is centralistic and subordinates local perspectives to a more general perspective).

Local development, on the contrary, should be a political, social and economic process designed to respond to the proposals and initiatives of different local social stakeholders and, should thus be based on democratizing, participatory, broad-based processes

6. Schuler, Margaret, as quoted in Arboleda, María, *Research on Gender in the Local Arena*, Local Development Notebooks No. 9, IULA CELCADEL, 1991, p. 17.

As José Arocena points out, it is precisely different Latin American experiences with self-organizing that have validated the local arena as an appropriate place to develop democratic practices.

Additionally, several analysts (including Teresa Quiroz from El Canelo de Nos, Chile) have demonstrated that, since women have had to be active in managing their habitat and handling their own and their families' survival in order to deal with the different social, political and economic crises that have afflicted our societies in the last two decades, the local arena is precisely where women have been compelled to participate in public life.

Caroline Moser calls women's managing of the habitat and their survival "community management". One part of this concept is division of labor and power along gender lines: even though women are part of the group that handles community management, community leadership is predominately in men's hands.⁷

While the advent of different social movements in several Latin American countries (including the massive presence of women in community life) made us realize that the local arena is the only place within the existing power structure where such participation is possible, the realities of discrimination or subordination that women encounter work against true democracy and local community development.

This is why true local democracy cannot be achieved without combating all types of discrimination, including gender discrimination.

In Ecuador, the municipality is perhaps the governmental body with the best possibility of becoming a true expression of local democracy, of truly representing the community's interests. However, at present, this is true only in principle. Many of today's municipal practices, especially those having to do with managing power, retain certain characteristics of those employed under the colonial and early republican democracies of the dominant *criolla* class, or are the results of populist, graft-filled styles of power management

Women in Elections

In "Sociodemographic Profile of Ecuadorian Women", Silvia Vega confirmed one of the IULA-AME team's initial working hypotheses: the steady increase in Ecuadorian women candidates and women elected to municipal positions in recent years.⁸

Silvia shows how women's participation as candidates in local elections increased: for mayor, from 6.12% in 1978 to 14.81% in 1988; municipal president, from 6.09% in 1988 to 9.30% in 1992; city council member, from 1.01% in 1980 to

While the advent of different social movements in several Latin American countries (including the massive presence of women in community life) made us realize that the local arena is the only place within the existing power structure where such participation is possible, the realities of discrimination or subordination that women encounter work against true democracy and local community development

7. Moser, Caroline, *Gender Planning In the Third World*, undated mimeograph, p. 5.

After three years of working on the Women and Local Development Project, we have come up with some problems with the concept of communal management (triple role); there are other strategic and practical needs which have been part of our work from the beginning. However, we have not yet had the chance to systematize them. The problem with the concept of community management is not only that it pertains to one particular theory, but also the fact that it is only based on the experiences of poor urban women. Still, we believe that the concept is "fictional", with certain limitations, and we will continue to use it in this paper. Further along we will present a different version of the concept, which has been proposed by Brazil's IBAM.

8. Vega, Silvia, *Sociodemographic Profile of Ecuadorian Women: Supporting Evidence for Formulating Municipal Policies that Take Gender Into Account*, Local Development Notebooks No. 10, IULA CELCADEL, 1992, p. 49.

11.60% in 1992 in provincial capitals, and from 0.85% to 8.70% in other cantons.

Additionally: women candidates for positions with a chance to win increased; there were more women candidates for council member (multi-person party ticket) than for mayor (single-person position); and there were more women candidates for council member in provincial capitals than in other cantons. (Vega, 1992, pp. 67-68).

a) **Candidates for mayor and council president**

Women's participation as candidates in local elections increased: for mayor, from 6.12% in 1978 to 14.81% in 1988; for council president, from 6.09% in 1988 to 9.30% in 1992; and for city council member, from 1.01% in 1980 to 11.60% in 1992 in provincial capitals, and from 0.85% to 8.70% in other cantons

Percentage of women candidates for mayor

Elections	% Women
1978	6.12
1984	10.64
1988	14.81**
1992	6.3 *

* All 1992 data are provisional

** This percentage may be inflated because it refers only to women candidates in provincial capitals. (Taken from S.Vega, *Ibid.*)

With the above chart, Silvia clearly shows that women candidates for mayor, a single-person position, increased from 6.12% to 14.81% in the three elections between 1978 and 1988, but dropped drastically in 1992, almost back to the starting level.

Even though this decrease does not necessarily invalidate the noted trend toward increase (unless it occurs again) we believe it is a question to be answered: What caused it? Was it perhaps the limited success of women mayor candidates? This, in turn, could have several causes. For example, women are still thought of as too weak for such a "tough" executive position as mayor, and thus collective consciousness still prefers a male image.

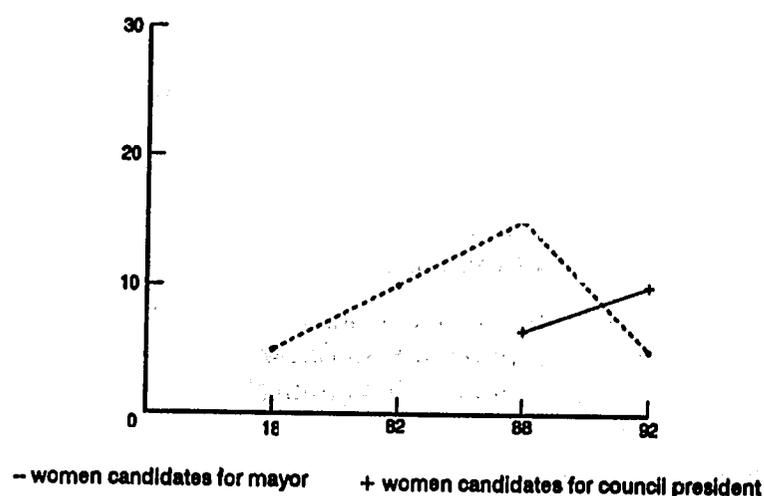
It would also be worth determining if Elsa Bucaram's failure as Ecuador's first woman mayor, of Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil (elected in 1988) had a negative political-ideological effect on female mayor candidacies in the 1992 elections.

Now let's take a look at what has happened with women candidates for council president.

Percentage of women candidates for council president

Elections	% of Women
1988	6.09%
1992	9.30%

(Taken from Vega, S., *ibid.*)

**Women candidates for mayor and council president
(comparative chart) (Taken from Vega, S., *ibid.*)**


Silvia went on to show that **women candidates for council president continued increasing** even in the period when women candidates for mayor decreased: from 6.09% to 9.3% between 1988 and 1992.

According to Silvia, this would indicate that women's **individual leadership** became stronger in rural cantons (or small municipalities, as we refer to them) than in medium-sized or big municipalities. Of course, this observation is limited to the last four years, since the rate of increase in women candidates for mayor after 1978 was greater than in women candidates for council president.

Among the factors that have made this continued growth possible is the fact that disputes within political parties for candidacy to "minor mayorships" (council president) or council member are less intense than for "major mayorships" (in medium-sized and large municipalities), mainly because overall these lesser political positions are seen as secondary, but also because women's political aspirations are seen as secondary as well.

Furthermore, since political parties are required by law to present lists of candidates (party tickets) in at least 11 of Ecuador's 21 provinces to "prove" that they are established nationwide, parties usually have to resort to recruiting candidates from outside party ranks, especially for so-called "minor" candidacies

The position of council member is considered to be a particularly "minor position", and is therefore not cause for fierce dispute among possible candidates the way a position as senator, prefect or mayor is. The mayorships of Quito and Guayaquil are especially important, as the mayors of these cities are seen as potential presidential candidates.

Furthermore, since political parties are required by law to present lists of candidates (party tickets) in at least 11 of Ecuador's 21 provinces to "prove" that they are established nationwide, parties usually have to resort to recruiting candidates from outside party ranks, especially for so-called "minor" candidacies.

Candidates for mayor, on the other hand, seem to be selected as a rule from among active party members or faithful party friends.

It is also quite possible that contemporary female leaders in Ecuador have not yet produced a "strong local figure" that would have a chance of winning in a mayor election.

Perhaps this is why no female mayors have been elected in Ecuador, with the exception of Elsa Bucaram, whose victory, we believe, was due to her family's political leadership rather than her personal reputation. Nevertheless, the fact that there are now some female provincial senators leads us to think that a possibly stronger local or intra-party female leadership is growing.

All these factors indicate that Ecuadorian women must democratize political party life in order to be able to put an end to all the discriminatory practices that affect us.

b) Women council member candidates in large/medium-sized and small municipalities

The following charts, put together by Silvia Vega, show that women council member candidates in large/medium-sized municipalities have increased even more than in small municipalities:

Percentage of women council member candidates in provincial capitals

Elections	% of women
1980	1.01
1984	1.76
1988	5.78
1990	5.75
1992	11.60

Percentage of women council member candidates in other municipalities

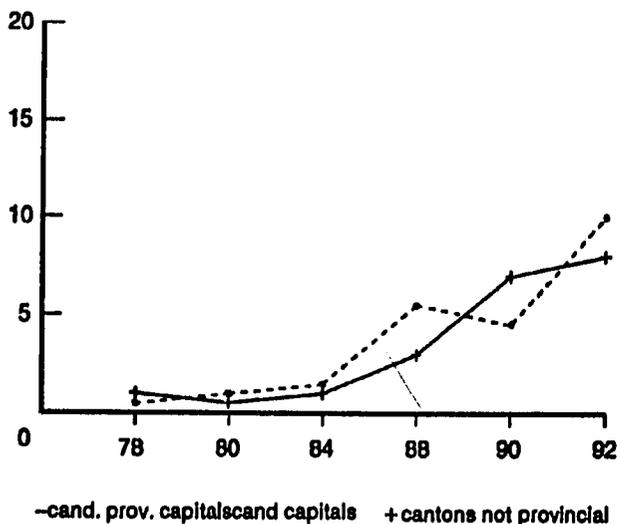
Elections	% of women
1978	0.73
1980	0.85
1984	1.67
1988	3.45
1990	7.88
1992	8.70

In both cases the percentage of women candidates for council member has increased, but it is clearly in **medium-sized and large municipalities where the biggest jump in candidacies occurred --from 5.75% (1990) to 11.60% (1992).** (Vega, 1992)

This jump could be a result of women emulating women: there are more potential women candidates in larger municipalities. Or it could indicate that women in these municipalities have made more progress in claiming their right to social participation, which in turn could be related to the quality and scope of their involvement in all aspects of public life.

The IULA-AME team's work, through surveys and interviews with women council members in office, confirmed that they had all been chosen as candidates due to outstanding community management activity

**Women council member candidates in provincial capitals and other municipalities
Comparative Chart (Taken from Vega, S., lbd.)**



Community Management and Women Candidates: Who Are the Women Who Are Winning Elections?

When the IULA-AME team began its work, we had two other hypotheses in addition to our initial hypothesis of sustained

increase in women taking local positions of power: 1.) **In Ecuador, a municipality is the power arena most accessible to women; and 2.) the increase in female local authorities is due to their extremely important community management activities.**

Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether or not a municipality is, in fact, the power arena most accessible to women, **we will focus on the latter hypothesis.**

In the first place, we should mention that the IULA-AME team's work, through surveys and interviews with women council members in office, **confirmed that they had all been chosen as candidates due to outstanding community management activity.**

In the years before their candidacies, the women said they had participated in community programs such as:

- volunteer work with malnourished children, day care, setting up nurseries.
- programs for literacy, health, and training for rural sectors.
- active participation in artisan-guilds with concrete results.
- support for establishing nursing homes for the elderly, cottage-industry sewing shops, workshops for the handicapped.
- teacher activism.
- university activism with community education outreach activities.
- civic management or leadership in obtaining water, sewage systems and public works.
- construction of communal guinea-pig raising projects, family kitchen gardens, installation of latrines, etc.⁹

By participating in these activities, the future council members achieved prominent positions within their communities: **this individual leadership was the key factor in their being chosen as candidates.**

This is true both for women who were already active in their political parties (50% of the women surveyed) **and for those who joined a party after having been recruited, or offered a candidacy (the other 50% of women surveyed).**

Having gained recognition or leadership based on community management activities was a required condition for being named a candidate, at least among women who were actually elected.

9. Source: Surveys of women council members and council presidents, IULA-AME team, 1991 and 1992.

(We do not know how conscious women are of the political importance of this strategy. As an anecdote we offer the testimony of a women council member who found out, some time before the election, that members of a political party were going to visit her home: "I was very surprised: I thought they were coming to recruit my husband for candidacy, but they came to talk to me", she confessed.)

If we analyze the above list of activities provided by the women surveyed, we see that they really fit in with the concept of **community management** introduced by Caroline Moser, which is part of her concept of the **triple role** urban women play in developing countries' societies.

However, there is a variation on this theory, which we learned of through IBAM's Center of Studies on Women and Public Politics¹⁰, based on a more comprehensive perspective on gender (not just on women). We would like to include it here because in addition to dealing with the roles women play in managing their habitat, it deals with access to urban local power.

IBAM's Angela Fontes and Maria da Graça Neves talk about four gender-related roles that men and women take on. The first is the **reproductive role**, basically associated with women, which includes producing and raising children and maintaining and reproducing the present and future workforce. This role pertains partly to men as well.

Second is the **productive role**, common to men and women, when any job is done in exchange for wages or consumer goods. This includes production for market (with exchange value) and domestic or subsistence production (with utility value and potential exchange value).

Fontes y Neves call the third role **community administration**, which is usually, but not always, taken on by women. This has to do with provision and maintenance of **collective consumer goods** such as housing, water, electricity, health, etc., and corresponds to the concept of community management. (Fontes & Neves, 1992, p. 145).

The fourth role specified by the authors is **community politics**, related to formalizing community organizations as political entities. This role becomes a position of authority with **status and power**, and is performed mainly by men, and occasionally by women. (Ibid.)

The hypothesis we want to present here is that in Ecuador, the women who are being chosen as candidates, and especially those who are being elected to municipal positions, are part of the small group of Ecuadorian women who, thanks to their

In fact we found that women who have been candidates, and especially those who have been elected, are mostly professional women who have practiced community management by becoming directly involved as intermediaries

10. Fontes, Angela and Neves, Maria da Graça, **Municipal Management and Gender Perspective**, conference presentation, IBAM, August 1991. Published in IULA's Local Development Notebook No. 10, 1992.

local leadership, have, by their own efforts, exercised "community politics" alongside men, and that this role as an intermediary or spokesperson is an essential step in the process of gaining access to local power.

In fact we found that women who have been candidates, and especially those who have been elected, are mostly **professional women** who have practiced community management by becoming directly involved as intermediaries.

In addition to fully acknowledging their personal charisma and interest in their community's welfare, we note that these women's community management, in most cases, is more effective because of the power and status our society currently accords professionals such as teachers, architects, health workers, doctors, etc. We maintain that the resources and skills these women have obtained as professionals, which are necessary for public life, place them in a different category than an ordinary citizen, domestic servant, peasant or simple housewife. They are in positions which have trained them better to manage resources, ask to be heard, gain access to authorities, and accomplish other tasks which are necessary to negotiate with those who hold public power.

Popular organizations need to negotiate in the process of getting what they need. These women's position makes them **spokeswomen** for the poorest sectors' interests. These women are often not from those sectors themselves, but are solidary with them.¹¹

Regarding their role as spokeswomen, we offer, as an anecdote, the response of a women council member, a journalist, who described in detail her outreach activities to benefit her region's poorest

Information on women council members' **professions** makes this even clearer. According to data compiled by the IULA-AME team, women council members in Ecuador in 1991 and 1992 held the following professions:¹²

11. We want to make it clear that we do not underestimate these women's merits; quite the contrary, we firmly believe that their successes are helping to shape women's social identity.

12. These data are indicative, not absolute: 1991 data are from a sampling of 28 female local authorities (out of 85 possible), and 1992 data are from a sampling of 44 (out of 80 current female council members).

1991	%
Teacher	60.7
Small or medium-sized businesses	10.7
Doctor	7.0
Health promoter	3.5
Public official	3.5
Journalist	3.5
Housewife	3.5
No answer	7.0
<hr/>	
1992	%
Teacher	61.3
Accountant	6.8
Journalist	4.5
Sociologist	2.2
Psychologist	2.2
Social worker	2.2
Doctor	2.2
Architect	2.2
Secretary	2.2
Seamstress	2.2
No answer	13.6

Note that in both cases there is an absolute predominance of professional women. In the 1992 data, it is possible that within the "no answer" category (13.6%) there are some housewives and other artisans or small-business managers, but that would definitely not change the stated result.

Additionally, in the 1991 group, there was a notable number of women council members who had previously held positions such as local police authority, registry office director, parochial board member, or provincial director of education, which shows that these are women with experience in public life. (Palacios, 1992, p.77.).

In both groups of professional women elected as council members the great majority were teachers: 60.7% in 1991 and 61.3% in 1992. A distant second were artisans or small businesswomen (10.7%), followed by accountants (6.8%) and journalists (4.5%).

Thus we can state that local power in Ecuador has been partially democratized in recent years with increasing access for middle-class women. On the other hand, the same data suggest that low-income women who are participating in community management from the grassroots level do not yet have access to local power in Ecuador. There may be some exemplary cases, but this is another area we need to research and document.

Thus we can state that local power in Ecuador has been partially democratized in recent years with increasing access for middle-class women. On the other hand, the same data suggest that low-income women who are participating in community management from the grassroots level do not yet have access to local power in Ecuador. There may be some exemplary cases, but this is another area we need to research and document

There is also the question of how to increase these women's access to local power. Perhaps a concerted effort could be made for women to contend more often and openly for neighborhood, civic and local community leadership, which is completely dominated by men at present. However, some maintain that since "old-style" neighborhood organizations and guild associations are less open to women's participation, women would do better in new organizations: ecological, consumer groups, etc.¹³

The following question remains: is women's community management or public participation more vigorous and progressive in large and medium-sized cities, where there were more women candidates, than in small towns? Or are the women getting more recognition for their struggles and contributions in the larger cities? We do not have the data to answer this question, but we will show how this phenomenon does apply to women council members, mayors and council presidents who were actually elected.

Even though large and medium-sized cities have more women candidates for all local positions, women are not yet being elected as mayors

Women Mayors and Council Members: Power Poses a Question

We do not have data of the same quality and scope for women actually elected in local elections as Silvia Vega's data for candidates. However, we will use data gathered at different times by the IULA-AME team, specifically Graciela Medina, Lucía Andrade, Norma Faz and Lisímaco Velasco. These data have not yet been systematized or compared to data from other sources.

In 1988, for the first time in Ecuador, a woman became a mayor -- in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city. With this one woman mayor, "women" comprised 4.76% of mayors in office.

Without going into the particular phenomenon of this woman mayor, I will simply say that her ascent to power was due to the most traditional means for a women to obtain leadership in Latin America: the establishment and continuation of a family power dynasty. Did Guayaquil vote for Elsa Bucaram, or for the Bucaram family?

Although we recognize that Guayaquil's mayorship is the most complex and conflictive in Ecuador -- not only because of the city's size, but also because of its wide range of problems historically -- the dynasty factor surely played a role in Elsa's disastrous handling of the position. She does not seem to have even tried any methods of local management other than graft, manipulation, corruption, etc.

13. This phenomenon, which indicates a split between women's neighborhood leadership and local political leadership, has been observed in other countries as well.

Elsa Bucaram was just the exception that proves the rule, of a total absence of women mayors in Ecuador. Even though large and medium-sized cities have more women candidates for all local positions, women are not yet being elected as mayors.

However, in small municipalities five women were elected for **council president** in 1992: 2 in the highlands region, (Oña in Azuay Province and Urcuquí in Imbabura Province) and 3 in the coastal region, (Calceta and Bahía in Manabí Province and Santa Rosa in El Oro Province). Nationwide, this represents 3.01% of all council presidents. In absolute numbers this means that while there have been fewer women candidates for the local executive position in small municipalities, more have been elected.

The phenomenon of recruiting from outside party ranks, which as we have seen is practiced by 50% of political parties to find women candidates, leads us to think that both male and female political leaders who come to be seen as potential candidates for local positions have closer ties with "traditional" local life and are less influenced by party politics. **Research needs to be done on whether the use of recruiting results in more women candidates for these less important positions and if it has anything to do with the greater absolute number of women in small municipality executive positions.**

Regarding **council members**, after the 1988 and 1990 elections there were approximately 1,250 council members nationwide, of which some 85 were women -- 83 council members and 2 council presidents: 6.7% of local authorities in Ecuador. (Palacios, 1992, p. 76). These data should be reconfirmed, because the total number of council members was approximated. In any event, if the data are accurate, there is a higher percentage of women in local office now than at any time in the last ten years.

Additionally, the data collected by IULA-AME team member Lisímaco Velasco on majority and minority-party municipal elections from 1978-86 (used here for want of other data), show that the percentage of women council members went from 3.01% (or 4.04%) in 1978 to 5.27% in 1986.

The IULA-AME team also detected 83 women local authorities in 1992: 77 council members and 6 council presidents. The total number of council members nationwide in 1992 was 1473 (men and women)¹⁴. This means that the percentage of women was 5.22%.

Using the data from these three sources gives us the following chart:

The IULA-AME team also detected 83 women local authorities in 1992: 77 council members and 6 council presidents. The total number of council members nationwide in 1992 was 1473 (men and women) . This means that the percentage of women was 5.22%

14. Note that we are working with the number of council members in office in 1992, not with the number elected that year, which would be a lower number.

Women council members in the last ten years.

Election:	%
1978*	(3.01) or 4.04
1980	4.44
1984	3.64
1986	5.27
1988-90**	6.70
1992***	5.22

* 1978-86: Representative data from minority and majority-party elections.

** Data to be reconfirmed.

*** Confirmed data.

Source: IULA-AME team

If the percentage of women in municipal positions had not yet reached 7% in 1992, but had in Congress, then perhaps municipalities are no longer as accessible as we had hypothesized

Evidently, between 1978 and 1990 (if the 1990 data are accurate) the trend is toward an increase in percentage of women elected as local authorities. In the 1992 elections, however, the percentage of women elected to mayor and council member positions decreased. This did not occur with the position of council president.

Now, initially this increase in women's presence in local power seemed encouraging to us. In reality, after calculations, we have realized that if this trend were to continue with no setbacks (wishful thinking) at the same rate as its growth in the last ten years (barely 2.5%), it would take one hundred years for us to approach our goal of equality.

This phenomenon is one of the factors that motivates women to search for strategies and mechanisms that will accelerate our access to local power. One such device, among the most controversial, is to legally adopt quotas (generally 30%) as a mechanism of reverse discrimination.

Local Power: The Most Accessible to Women?

The 1992 data make us question one of our initial hypotheses: **that municipalities are the governmental bodies most accessible to women.** It would be worthwhile, for example, to compare figures for congresswomen and female local authorities from the last ten years. If the percentage of women in municipal positions had not yet reached 7% in 1992, but had in Congress, then perhaps municipalities are no longer as accessible as we had hypothesized.

Returning to one of the questions posed above, regarding the **jump in women candidates for council member in large and**

medium-sized cities -- from 5.75% in 1990 to 11.60% in 1992 (Vega, 1992) -- more women council members were actually elected in the larger cities: a higher percentage of women council members were elected in large and medium-sized cities (13.33% and 13.39% respectively) than in small towns (4.8%).

Women elected, by size of municipality

Size of municipality	#	%
Large municipalities	4	13.33
Medium-sized municipalities	15	13.39
Small municipalities	64	4.8
Total		83

However, there are other factors to consider regarding the election of women to local positions. Considering both women council members elected and incumbent in 1992 (totalling 77), **Quito** and **Santa Elena** are the municipalities with the largest number of women council members: 3 each.

There are 15 councils with 2 female members each: **Gualaceo** (Azuay Province), **Guaranda** and **Chimbo** (Bolívar), **Biblián** (Cañar), **Montúfar** (Carchi), **Saquisilí** (Cotopaxi), **Puyango** (Loja), **Quevedo** (Los Ríos), **Sucúa** (Morona), **Penipe** and **Chunchi** (Chimborazo), **San Lorenzo** (Esmeraldas), **San Cristóbal** (Galápagos) and **Balsas** and **Santa Rosa** (El Oro). (Santa Rosa actually has one female council member and one woman council president).

Forty-three other municipalities, including **Guayaquil**, have one woman council member. Regarding the fact that **Guayaquil** (Ecuador's largest municipality) has only one woman council member, while **Quito** (Ecuador's capital and second-largest city) has three, it is interesting to consider that a larger percentage of women work in **Quito** than in **Guayaquil**. Additionally, there may be other cultural and political factors, since it seems to us that **Guayaquil** has less mobile gender relations and more traditional party politics than **Quito**.

Six other municipalities have a woman council president: **Oña** (Azuay Province), **Urcuquí** (Imbabura), **Calceta** and **Bahía** (Manabí) and **Balsas** and **Santa Rosa** (El Oro).

If we examine the data by province, we see that **Manabí** has the most women council members and council presidents (9), followed by **Guayas** and **Chimborazo** (8); **El Oro** (6); **Pichincha**, **Cañar**, **Bolívar** and **Azuay** (5); **Los Ríos**, **Carchi**, **Cotopaxi** and **Loja** (4); **Esmeraldas**, **Tungurahua** and **Morona** (3); **Napo** and **Sucumbíos** (2) and **Imbabura** (1).

Patricia Palacios states in her article that in 1991 the Coast had the most women council members. This changed in 1992: the

Highlands had more woman council members -- though it had fewer women council presidents. This occurred again in 1991 -- something else for further investigation.

**Women council members by geographic region 1991
(out of 28 survey respondents)**

Region	#
<i>Sierra</i> (Highlands Region)	13
<i>Costa</i> (Coastal Region)	11
<i>Oriente</i> (Eastern Jungle Region)	3
<i>Galápagos</i>	1
Total	28

**Women council members by geographic region 1991
(out of 77 survey respondents)**

Region	#
<i>Sierra</i>	42
<i>Costa</i>	26
<i>Oriente</i>	7
<i>Galápagos</i>	2
Total	77

This gives us something new and interesting to consider: perhaps there were more women council members in the *Sierra* than in the *Costa* in 1991. Certainly there were in 1992.

Without further analysis for the moment, let's relate this to S. Vega's information that there are more economically active men and women in the *Sierra* than in the *Costa*.

Additionally, the data we obtained regarding women council members' political party affiliation (based on responses from 28 women council members in 1991 and 58 in 1992) differed from previous findings.

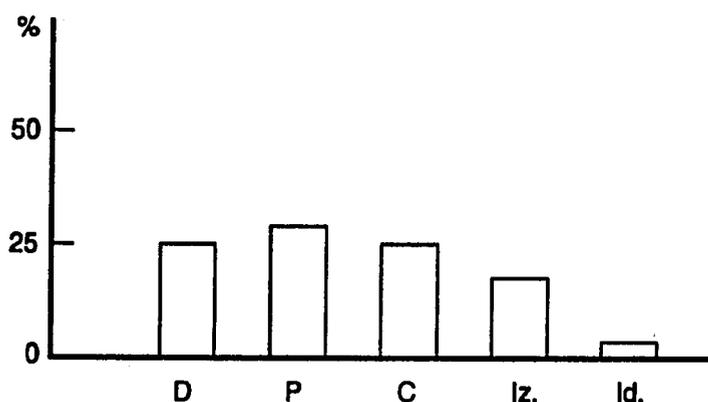
The women council members who responded to the 1991 IULA-AME survey reported belonging to the following political parties:

**Party membership of women council members
Sample of 28 women council members, 1991**

Socialcristiano	7
PRE	5
PSE	5
ID	4
DP	3
CFP	3
Ind.	1
Total	28

Grouping them by political tendency, we have:

Right-wing:	Populist:	Center:	Left-wing:	Indp:
PSC 7	PRE 5	DP 3	PSE 5	1
	CFP 3	ID 4		
7	8	7	5	1
25%	28.5%	25%	17.8%	3.5%



Party membership of women council members
Sample of 58 women council members, 1992

PSC	18
PRE	10
DP	7
ID	6
PSE	5
PC	3
PUR	3
IND	2
No answer	2
Total	58

By political tendency:

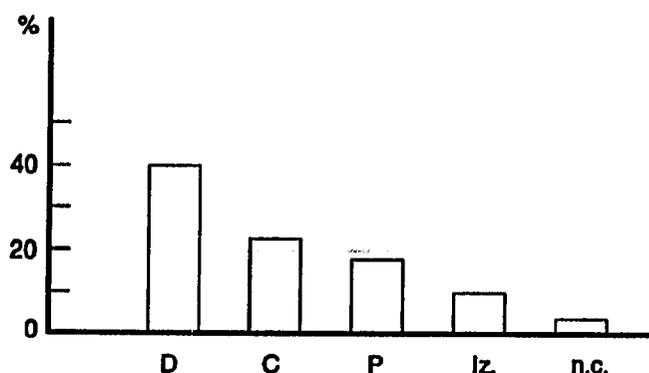
Right-wing:	Populist:	Center:	Left-wing:	Indp:
PSC 18	CFP 1	DP 7	PSE 5	2
PC 3	PRE 10	ID 6	MPD 1	
PUR 3				
24	11	13	6	2
41.37%	18.96%	22.41%	10.34%	3.44%

In other words:

Women council members' political tendency

1992 Political Tendency:	%
Right-wing	41.37%
Center	22.40%
Populist	18.96%
Left-wing	10.34%
No Answer	3.44%

In our contact with Ecuador's women council members and presidents it became evident that most of them are of an age when they would have already raised their children: only a minority still have small children. This brings to mind the difficulties involved in being active in the public arena when all domestic reproductive responsibilities fall on women's shoulders, and therefore how the female reproductive cycle affects women's possibilities for access to public life



Of course, we know that each party's political tendency varies from election to election as Ecuador's political situation changes direction, so this also calls for follow-up studies.

According to the chart below, among female local authorities the right wing is represented with similar percentages in the *Costa* and the *Sierra*. Populism has three times more representatives in the *Costa* than in the *Sierra*. The center, on the other hand, has three times more representatives in the *Sierra* than in the *Costa*. (We are not including data from the *Oriente* here because we believe that they distort the overall picture.) The left wing is represented basically in the *Sierra*.

Classification of female local authorities by political tendency and region

Region	Right-wing:		Populist:		Center:		Left-wing:		Indp:	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
COSTA	12	52.1	7	30.4	2	8.6	---	---	2	8.6
SIERRA	13	44.8	3	10.3	8	27.5	5	17.2	---	---
ORIENTE	---	---	---	---	3	75.0	1	25.0	---	---

Additional Insights

In our contact with Ecuador's women council members and presidents it became evident that most of them are of an age when they would have already raised their children: only a minority still have small children. This brings to mind the difficulties involved in being active in the public arena when all domestic reproductive responsibilities fall on women's shoulders, and therefore how the female reproductive cycle affects women's possibilities for access to public life.

In the 1991 questionnaires, almost all the women said they "had gotten into office without taking a feminist or gender stance. Furthermore, many of them specifically reject feminism, so talking to them about gender, and seeing that they accepted it easily was a positive interaction". (Palacios, 1992, p.81.)

Another characteristic is that they consider it "natural" to work for women's practical needs. This coincides with how women's "practical interests" have been legitimized socially: women's possibilities for social action are determined within the framework of their reproductive needs and responsibilities.

Perhaps because of this, women council members and presidents say they have not felt the need to specifically identify women's demands, because they are "naturally" included in the social needs legitimized by prevailing ideology and different institutions: the National Child and Family Institute (INNFA), the National Women's Office (DINAMU), etc.

As for the problems women face within the council, they emphasized "being in the minority": both in terms of gender and political party

What Obstacles Have They Faced?

The women said that **their families and family machismo** were the main obstacles they faced in carrying out their public duties (Palacios, 1992, p. 82), which -- as everyone knows -- makes them feel guilty. Very few women reported having their husband's support. The survey did not deal with how they manage their domestic responsibilities.

Secondly, they said that **societal machismo** and the fact that their capabilities are underestimated were obstacles. Thirdly, they mentioned the **political party, with its intense internal rivalry; the fact that men dominate party life; and women themselves**, as they are very critical and reject becoming involved in joint undertakings. (Ibid.)

Lack of time to carry out their municipal duties is another obstacle. Council members, in almost all municipalities, are very poorly paid, which affects both men and women. Thus, the

women --mostly professionals, as mentioned above -- have to keep working professionally while they are serving as council members. Council duties, then, are one more activity added to their professional, domestic and public participation responsibilities.

As for the problems women face within the council, they emphasized "being in the minority": both in terms of gender and political party. (Ibid)

Lastly, women (and men, too, though we are not dealing directly with them here) do not have a very clear understanding of the municipality's mandate and jurisdiction when they first join the council.

For these reasons we believe it is urgent to provide Ecuadorian female local authorities with training programs in municipal management, and to address gender issues in these programs

Figuring out how to learn about municipal management while on the job is one disadvantage all new council members have to overcome, and for women it is aggravated by gender bias. Not only do they make mistakes and have to deal with conflicts with their peers, but they are also dealing with a type of municipal management that attempts to standardize women. While this type of municipal management has many respectable practices, it is also, not infrequently, based on manipulation, intrigue, graft, and even corruption. In other words, these women have their hands full as they come up against this "dirty thing", as they refer to real-life politics. They have to do what they can to survive as women local authorities.

One very expressive council member from the *Costa* told me her story in a personal conversation, holding her hands over her eyes. I later reconstructed the story from memory, and will summarize part of it here.

"When I came into municipal government," she told me, "I was blind, I had my eyes closed, I didn't know anything. And no one wanted to teach me. It didn't do any good to ask, 'How is this done?' What is this for?' They just laughed at me. So I said to myself 'Hold on. I'm going to show these guys that I can do this'. So, I kept a close watch over the municipal president. I watched what he did, what kinds of things he asked for, how he went about things. Then when he needed someone to take care of things for him in Guayaquil or in Quito, I offered my help."

"You have no idea how difficult it was: at first I didn't have the least idea what BEDE, SENDA, AME were...I had never even heard of them. But I learned, little by little. Taking care of formalities in the ministries helped me get to know the laws, and, a year later, not only did I know more than many of my peers, but I was able to control the president or the council itself when they were about to make inappropriate decisions. I would cite such and such law or ordinance and prevent them from making bad decisions.

"Then their attitude toward me changed: they no longer made fun of me. Now they were afraid of me and started to try to get me to participate in their negotiations, alliances and blocs. They wanted to buy me off."

This phenomenon in which women feel forced to swing from being underestimated to "striking fear" into their peers is a recurring theme when female local authorities speak of their relationship to other council members. Once they have some experience, they can often be heard saying: "The council president (or the council) has to listen to me, because otherwise I'll go to the radio station and publicly denounce him." Or: "I'll get the people riled up".

For these reasons we believe it is urgent to provide Ecuadorian female local authorities with training programs in municipal management, and to address gender issues in these programs.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to state conclusions here, given the difficulties mentioned above, and given that my intention in writing the article is to encourage debate.

Nevertheless, I would like to point out that until 1991 Ecuadorian women council members handled their responsibilities in complete isolation, with no contact among each other and, with few exceptions, virtually no contact with Ecuadorian women's organizations and centers.

One of our program's successes was to have initiated a process of reflection and self-organization. The establishment of the Association of Women Local Authorities of Ecuador in March is one result of this process. Nevertheless, we realize the process has just begun, and that there are many problems to overcome. Distances between different women council members' cities, leadership problems among women, lack of real support from institutions that should support women, and other problems inhibit the progress these women and their association might make.

Hopefully we all -- they, you, and us -- can provide the resources and means for this fledgling association to grow stronger, and find ways for more Ecuadorian women to participate in local power, on a more equal footing with men.

Quito, October, 1993

Brazil: Women Decisionmakers in Local Government

Center for the Study on Women and Public Policy
ENSUR, National School of Urban Services
Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration, IBAM.
Brasil

I. Introduction

This study is the outgrowth of a signed agreement between the Women and Public Policy Study Center of the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM) and the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA)/Center for Training and Development of Local Governments (CELCADEL), under the Women and Local Development program coordinated by the latter.

It contains demographic profiles of municipalities with female "prefects", their distribution among Brazil's states and regions, and a number of indicators regarding those local prefects themselves, their political party affiliation, and their policies and programs geared toward the female population. An attempt has been made to sketch out some guidelines for reflection as to whether it makes any difference for municipal management to be led by a woman or a man.

The first part of the study aims to associate the significance of local management and the implementation of governmental policies within a context of institutional changes recently undergone in Brazil. Beginning with the 1988 Constitution, municipalities have become the level of government with the greatest permeability to / least exclusion of social groups, being the most accessible to the citizenry. On that basis, ways are indicated to more clearly highlight gender issues in municipal administration.

The second part presents data gathered on Brazil's female prefects (*prefeitas*) and analyzes the policies and programs of some of these woman-headed municipalities.

Finally, some considerations are suggested to support the work of female municipal leaders.

II. Gender in the Municipality

The Brazilian Municipality and Municipal Government under Women Prefects

According to the 1991 census, Brazil had a total of 4491 municipalities.

Most of these municipalities are, according to the census data, small and medium-sized, with up to 50,000 inhabitants. There are 466 large municipalities (just 10.4% of the total number) where most of Brazil's population is concentrated. In fact, twelve of these large municipalities have over a million inhabitants.¹

1. FIBGE data from BREMAEKER, François E. J., *Migração: A marca do censo de 1991*, Rio de Janeiro, IBAM/ CPU/ IBAMCO, 1992. 26 pp. (Estudos Demográficos, 10)

The newest municipalities (created since 1988) which have elected *prefeitas* are generally small ones, under 5000 in population

Moreover, some 73.8% of the population growth occurred (between the last two censuses) in the largest municipalities, especially in the northern and west-central ones, which average higher growth rates than in the rest of the country.²

Therefore, the largest municipalities (cities) have grown the fastest, and this growth has been fed mainly by population displacement.

In fact, urban population has surpassed rural population: in 1970, cities and towns were 56% of Brazil's population, and this figure reached 67.7% by 1980. It is estimated that urban centers accounted for 75% of Brazil's population by 1991. However, the fertility rate has decreased all the while, from 5.75 in 1970 to 4.35 in the 1980s (currently about 3.0).

Data regarding delimitations of regions and metropolitan regions reveal that metropolitan core municipalities do not grow as fast as peripheral ones. This has been the trend for over 11 years³ for all these units of heaviest population concentration.

Two general patterns allow us to categorize Brazilian municipalities: in some, the predominant structure is that of **major urban centers, which may be regional poles of development and/or metropolitan core areas, with industrial or service-related activities**; in others, their activities are **smaller-scale and agrarian**. There are still "urban" municipalities with small populations, but they are nestled into metropolitan or megalopolitan structures.

The 110⁴ municipalities currently governed by women are 2.4% of the total number in Brazil, and account for nearly 9.0% of the country's population.

Blay⁵ has pointed out that the municipalities administered by women prefects cover quite a range of sizes. However, 58.5% have between 10 and 50 thousand inhabitants -- "middle-sized". The newest municipalities (created since 1988) which have elected *prefeitas* are generally small ones, under 5000 in population.

Among the municipal units with over 50 thousand inhabitants, there are the exemplary cases of two capital cities (São Paulo and Natal), three large pole-cities with widely-diversified productive structures (Santos and Araçatuba [São Paulo] and Mossoró [Rio Grande do Norte]) and even sizable cities in states' interior -- such as Barra do Corda and Pedreiras (Maranhão).

Finally, four municipalities cover major metropolitan peripheral areas: Sapiranga (Porto Alegre region), Ribeirão das Neves (Belo Horizonte), Guararema (São Paulo) and

2. BREMAEKER underscores the fact that only 28.72% (1290) of municipalities grew at over Brazil's average (22.87%) between 1980 and 1991. The remainder (44.2%) grew more slowly or (26.85%) simply lost population. BREMAEKER, *Ibid.*

3. FUNDAÇÃO INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, Rio de Janeiro, *Informação para a Imprensa*, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, mimeo. (Textos, 16).

4. This total was the result of a general review of existing data, including even the new municipalities (which have been electing prefects since 1989), and the State of Tocantins.

5. BLAY, Eva. *Enfrentando a alienação: as mulheres e o poder local*. Paper presented to the 12th World Congress of Sociology, International Sociological Association, Madrid, July 1990.

Caucaia (Fortaleza region). Though this last one has under 50 thousand inhabitants, it is worth watching. This was the only one with a significant annual growth rate increase between 1980 and 1991⁶, and is one of the state's industrial centers.

From the standpoint of historical growth in the number of municipalities governed by women, Blay and studies by IBAM's Women and Public Policy Study Center⁷ show that progress has been made. In fact, from 1972 to 1988, the number of women prefects practically doubled (from 58 in 1972 to 110 in 1988). Women are still elected predominantly in the Northeast -- nearly 65% of the total *prefeitas*. Next are the Southeast region, with 16.3%, and the North (10.9%). In the South and West-Center, the percentages are insignificant. Furthermore, the state of Tocantins' four new municipalities administered by women increased Northern representativity from 7% to nearly 11%.

These studies indicate that "agrarian and commercial regions" tend to elect women prefects, and that their size makes them "tend to become urbanized"⁸. The population in these municipalities governed by *prefeitas* is obviously larger in the Southeast (nearly 80%), followed by the Northeast (nearly 17%).

Preliminary findings of the 1991 census put Brazil's population at 72,171,165 men and 73,983,337 women -- 97.99 men for every 100 women. This proportion varies most in the states of the North and Center-West. Table 2 shows that the states of Roraima, Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Amazonas and Tocantins have the greatest male/female imbalances. The male population in Acre, Pará, Mato Grosso do Sul, Amapá and Goiás is significantly higher than the female figure. These states have the country's highest growth rates, especially in the "frontier-regions".⁹ These municipalities have been settled intensely during the last few decades as a consequence of large construction, agricultural and colonization projects (both public and private) and mining and extractive areas.

Although several municipalities remain predominantly rural, there is a major share of both new cities and the rapid expansion of older urban centers. Becker calls this one feature of frontier-regions. The form of occupation and type of migrants to these areas may be factors influencing the higher male-female ratio.

Where the prefects are female, women often outnumber men, most significantly in the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, São Paulo and Ceará. Nearly 33% (36) of the municipalities governed by women have a slightly higher

The population in these municipalities governed by *prefeitas* is obviously larger in the Southeast (nearly 80%), followed by the Northeast (nearly 17%)

6. FUNDAÇÃO INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, *Op. cit.*

7. INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO MUNICIPAL, Rio de Janeiro. National School of Urban Services. Women and Public Policy Study Center. *Mulher e políticas públicas; o papel dos Municípios: relatório*. Agreement between IBAM and the Ford Foundation. Rio de Janeiro, 1992. 134 pp., attachments.

8. BLAY, Eva. *Mulheres em um mundo em mudança: desenvolvimento econômico e político no Brasil*. São Paulo: USP, Center for Studies on Women and Social Relations of Gender, 1992. 25 pp.

9. For more detailed definition and discussion of the meaning of these regions, see BECKER, Bertha. *Amazônia*. São Paulo, Atica, 1990.

number of women than men, with the widest margins in the largest and capital cities.

These studies (especially Blay, 1992) show that the male-female ratio is not conclusive in relation to the election of women prefects. Therefore, they point to the political significance of conflicts and the local context.

At present, there is awareness of "local" public policy implementation

The most significant political parties are PFL and PMDB, with almost equal proportions, about 30% each (Table 3), followed by the PL (9.0%) and the PDS (8.1%). The PDT and PT, considered opposition parties, make up only 5.4% between the two of them. These have, nevertheless, been the parties of the *prefeitas* elected in capital cities (São Paulo and Natal) and in other large cities (Araçatuba and Santos - São Paulo, Mossoró - Rio Grande do Norte, and to a lesser extent Sapiiranga - Porto Alegre metropolitan region). Table 4 shows that only seven municipalities re-elected women incumbents for a second consecutive term: five in the Northeast, one in the North and one in the Southeast, all small municipalities. In three cases, the same party remained in power.

In principle, local governments are the most decentralized political level, the most permeable for civil society and the most accessible for citizens

The idea that "women's votes fall into two groups: conservative and opposition"¹⁰ would seem to be borne out by the above data. Meanwhile, a number of working hypotheses suggest themselves in this connection. For example, it could be questioned to what degree certain conservative characteristics of a micro-regional nature remain a strong influence, even in the case of innovative *prefeitas* in the large cities, especially those of the Northeast or traditionally oligarchical areas and/or states.

Perhaps it may even be necessary to examine the structure of these *prefeitas'* administration: their inward organization and connections beyond the municipal sphere. This would seem the best dimension to evaluate the significance of gender in local government by women. But first, it is necessary to reflect on the significance of municipalities in Brazil.

The Impact of Local Action

At present, there is awareness of "local" public policy implementation. This includes a view of local government as the arena where policy is or can become more democratic, even in regard to gender issues.

In principle, local governments are the most decentralized political level, the most permeable for civil society and the most accessible for citizens. This is precisely why they can and do bear, immediately and directly, the pressure of social demands, both in responding to such demands for services and facilities,

10. BLAY, Op. cit.

and in greater visibility for citizens when political-administrative action uses resources or defines the government's role. These aspects place the municipal executive or legislative roles in a visible, complex position, as the crossroads for the interests of local, regional and central stakeholders. The evolution of alliances and conflicts also reflects municipalities' political-institutional possibilities and bounds. The autonomy of municipal governments is at stake, along with broader questions, that cannot be ignored, regarding the concentration of power in Brazil. Historically, the Federal Constitution of 1988 has benefitted Brazilian municipalities.

In fact, beginning in 1966 (when the Tax Reform was enacted) until the 1988 Constitution, Brazilian municipalities were increasingly dependent on the federal government. Across-the-board measures to restrict local autonomy ranged from drastic reduction of the types of municipal taxes (from seven to two), a smaller share in income tax revenues, earmarking of funds allocated by the federal government, and even direct political restriction. Examples of the latter include the return and increase of federally appointed prefects and federal intervention in municipal affairs.¹¹ Vague definition of jurisdiction and lack of funding lead to an extremely difficult, contradictory situation. The government had to "operate" locally, but depended on a non-local sphere of power, regarding which it was no more than a spokesperson. Politicians and programs had to fit non-local patterns, all the same throughout Brazil's national territory. Municipal affairs and future scenarios were backwards -- viewed from the federal vantage point.

In the late 1970s and early 80s --with the country's political re-democratization and a worsening of economic and social conditions and of urban sprawl-- municipalities were redefined, linking their significance to the possibilities of democracy.

Municipalities' comeback was institutionalized in 1988. Their constitutional autonomy was established, as an integral part of the Brazilian Federation, with the power to organize (e.g. formulating their own organizational laws, previously a state-level power). Another important development was the re-creation of municipal taxes and a larger share in state and federal tax revenues.

Meanwhile, this work was grounded in two basic issues. First, local government's urban policy and municipal planning functions were broadened; further, planning incorporated public action and involvement (Federal Constitution, articles 182 and 29)..

The evolution of alliances and conflicts also reflects municipalities' political-institutional possibilities and bounds

The government had to "operate" locally, but depended on a non-local sphere of power, regarding which it was no more than a spokesperson

First, local government's urban policy and municipal planning functions were broadened; further, planning incorporated public action and involvement

11. For a summary of the evolution of the legal-institutional framework for Brazilian municipalities, see Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration, Rio de Janeiro, "Evolução do Município no Brasil", in IBAM 30 ANOS: 1952-1982. Rio de Janeiro, 1982, 120 pp.

This is a lengthy period in which conjunctural transformations and other factors intensely reshaped the significance and role of municipalities and their administrators

12. See, in this regard, LORDELLO DE MELLO, Diogo, "Descentralização, papel dos governos locais no processo de desenvolvimento nacional e recursos financeiros necessários para que os governos locais possam cumprir seu papel", in *Revista de Administração Pública*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 25, n. 4, pp. 199-217, Oct.-Dec. 1991. For a broader discussion, focussing on the relationship with political parties, see OLIVEIRA, Carlos Alfonso - "Partidos políticos, autonomia municipal e a possibilidade democrática" in *Revista de Administração Municipal*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 38, n. 200, pp. 17-35, July-Sept. 1991

13. Recent research by IBAM's Urban Research and Studies Center on municipalization of health highlighted two aspects, among others: 1) the high proportion of Brazilian municipalities that had already set up municipal health councils (52%). These councils had been understood much more as prerequisites for the release of SUS funds 2) the "reduction of the municipalization question" to the possibilities of obtaining resources for municipal action. Another approach mentioned by interviewees in this survey criticized "municipalization" because -the way it was taking place- it meant "shouldering debts". BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATION, Rio de Janeiro, Urban Research and Studies Center, et al., *Perfil dos municípios na área da Saúde, relatório de pesquisa*, IBAM/FNS Agreement, Rio de Janeiro, 1991, 3v.

14. This section uses the findings of a body of research by CPU/IBAM regarding the profile and perception of Brazilian prefects, covering the 1973-77, 1977-80, and 1989-92 terms. This last period's questionnaires were analyzed separately for male and female prefects.

Thus, municipal governments elected in 1988 were much more important than before. A series of new political possibilities emerged from the mobilization of civil society, and new democratic opportunities were institutionalized by the Constitution.

However, this was all still theoretical. In fact, local democracy obviously did not just happen when the formal institutional changes occurred. "Municipalization" did not always mean political decentralization¹², especially when the concept is developed within the bounds of municipal jurisdiction.¹³

The reality of municipalities' (especially small ones') political and administrative ways and means, was still marked by the decades of subordination. Their programs still depend heavily on funding from states and the federal government. Information is still lacking about the broader issues of decentralization and the options offered by constitutional legislation. Finally, institutional and political progress will require regulations for these new laws.

This is the context in which *prefeitas* must run their administrations. But which features of their administrations can more clearly characterize gender issues? First of all, the way how women cope with their own duties as prefects, their perceptions of a wider overview of their municipalities' problems, their most immediate problems, and the policies and programs that they propose or implement. Comments, especially in regard to program sizing, must involve whether a space will be provided for transformation of women's conditions.

These aspects will be covered in the following section: "Women's Executive Directions".

III. Women in Executive Positions

Male and Female Prefects

It is time to complete the picture of Brazilian municipalities by sketching out how they have addressed their problems and policy priorities.¹⁴ This will make it possible to reflect on women's administrations, policies and programs within Brazil's overall context. Again, this is a lengthy period in which conjunctural transformations and other factors intensely reshaped the significance and role of municipalities and their administrators. The views of Brazilian prefects regarding the impasses and problems of the municipal machinery and the municipality as a whole have reflected the phase of intense

urbanization, political and administrative centralization of resources and mechanisms with the federal government and, to a certain degree, the current fashion in planning ideology, which favors a technocratic approach to reality. 1973 through 1980 were truly years of transition, but these processes seem to have led to a certain permanence and, in some cases, reinforcement of earlier characteristics. This may be seen in surveys by IBAM of prefects' views of the seventies.

Prefects elected in both 1973 and 1977 identified two main problems: i) "lack of financial resources" and ii) "lack of technicians and specialists" (see attached Table 6). The third most important problem was different for these two terms. For 1973-77, they pointed to "inadequate administrative organization"; in 1980, the problem noted in third place was "no municipal planning". Another problem (fifth place) was "the lack or obsolescence of administrative tools such as cadastral records, maps, tax laws, zoning and subdivision laws". Analyses called the 1970s the "decade of depoliticization of prefects"¹⁵ with an eye to obtaining the "technical prefect" who would meet the needs of the system, following "official ideology". Having been a "decade of changes in urbanization", where nearly 70% of the Brazilian population was living in cities, was also evident: urban infrastructure was listed as the prime problem, followed by "loss of population due to the exodus to other cities" and "difficulties with access and communication".

Finally, we will complete the picture with the goals that were the prefects' top priorities for their administrations. The researchers point out that this facet most clearly reveals the limitations of municipal autonomy, the vaguely defined jurisdiction, the lack of their own revenue sources and dependence on allocations.

This is clearest in the 1973-77 results, where the prefects seem to answer not only about local needs, but also about obligations regarding the federal government. Seemingly, high priorities concentrated on education and culture partly because it was mandatory to spend 20% of the Municipal Participation Fund (FPM) for primary education. The same applies in regard to health and social assistance (10% of the FPM), in addition to the awareness of how precarious health care services are in most municipalities; furthermore, medical posts are the most accessible initiative at the local government level.¹⁶ These factors also explain the third most frequent survey response, namely "feeder roads", which goes along with the answers indicating isolation of the municipality and the rate of urbanization due to the country's intense migration during that decade.

Seemingly, high priorities concentrated on education and culture partly because it was mandatory to spend 20% of the Municipal Participation Fund (FPM) for primary education

15. BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, Rio de Janeiro, Urban Research Center. *A opinião dos Prefeitos eleitos, os prefeitos brasileiros: características e percepções (1977-1980)*. Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 42.

16. BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, Rio de Janeiro, Urban Research Center. *Mudanças nas Percepções dos Prefeitos (1973-1977)*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 42.

Despite some rather substantial changes, the perception of municipal problems and priorities changed little from a decade earlier

The 1977-80 prefect survey showed feeder roads as the top goal. The above arguments again voiced the question of how viably the municipal administration could actually intervene in local reality. Roadbuilding proposals were encouraged by the earmarked allocation from the National Roadway Fund¹⁷, which allowed them to override alternatives involving education and health care. Grouping answers more broadly shows that the most frequently mentioned issues were basic urban services (electricity, water, street lighting, etc.). This goes along with traditional concerns for prefects, and reflects the pressures of urban growth during that period.

After ten years' time, what can be said about those prefects in general? Substantial political shifts in the late 80s saw some consolidation of new social movement stakeholders; a new Constitution promised meaningful modifications in the country's legal and institutional matrix. And municipalities became more autonomous, taking their rightful place as "federal bodies".

In 1989, 4424 prefects (the number of municipalities at that time) were elected. Bremaeker¹⁸ says that, overall, they were better educated (52.3% with college-level training), mostly liberal professionals (41.1% versus 11.6% in 1973). For 51.9% this was their first elected position, a change from previous decades, when nearly 65% of all prefects had already occupied some political post, mainly on town councils.

Meanwhile, despite some rather substantial changes, the perception of municipal problems and priorities changed little from a decade earlier: the foremost problem remained the lack of funding and technical staff. The most common responses mentioned "non-existent or insufficient infrastructure" (especially in the southeast and south); "too little or no health care facilities and personnel", and "need to build and maintain feeder roads". Even today, Brazil's prefects have about the same priorities (education, health, and general infrastructure). The only new development is "housing", which took sixth place in the 1989 findings, never having made a showing previously. This is partly explicable in terms of the urbanization process and partly by housing policy.¹⁹

What, now, are present-day *prefeitas* like?

Existing studies of female mayors seem to show, first of all, no significant variation in schooling or age from the above findings. For example, Bremaeker found the majority to be college-trained, most of the rest high-school graduates; most were teachers and public officials, but there was even one female physician, one businesswoman and one housewife. The Ceará study²⁰ of prefects yields almost the same distribution,

17. BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, *ibid.*, p. 79, note 2.

18. BREMAEKER, François E. J. de - *Perfil do Prefeito Brasileiro, 1989-1992*, Rio de Janeiro: IBAM/IBAMCO, 1990, 35 pp. (Special Studies, No. 2).

19. Until the early 1980s, the National Housing Bank pursued housing programs throughout Brazil. As the Bank was phased out, its "territory" was taken over increasingly by municipal initiatives, promoted both by prefects and by social movements. Shelter became a clear, effective demand.

20. CEARÁ, SECRETARIAT OF SOCIAL ACTION - *Mulher e Criança: Realidade e Perspectivas nas Administrações Municipais Femeninas No Ceará*. Fortaleza, 1990.

with predominantly college and high-school schooling: mostly teachers, and also a nurse, a businesswoman, a small-scale entrepreneur, and a housewife. Nevertheless, these findings may not be extrapolated beyond the research universe in which they were obtained. They must be related to more global trends found in female population data, which indicate, among other aspects, a slight increase in female employment in public administration, and a low wage profile.²¹

Further, the above study covered small and medium municipalities, outside the range of Metropolitan Regions (with one exception). Therefore, although at first blush it would appear that some changes had cropped up, the results actually follow right along with the rest of Brazil's prefects. These findings would ultimately seem just as traditional as always (for example, predominantly teachers, an interestingly stable indicator).

As for women prefects' ages, they fall right in with the overall average (36-45 years) for male and females together. There are, of course, well-known exceptions, such as the prefect of José da Penha (Rio Grande do Norte); elected at age 21, she was the youngest in all Brazil. And the Ceará report places *prefeitas*' average age below the average (over 50) for all politicians in that state.²²

Moreover, *prefeitas* seemed to echo the same problem perceptions: "lack of financial resources", and consequently "economic and financial crisis". Interestingly, two women pointed out the issue of "featherbedding" and "graft" as municipal problems, which does not fit so neatly into the overall prefects' priorities. They did, predictably, stress the fields of health care (in general, and specifically "hiring of medical/dental services for the needy", "rural-zone health care", and "basic sanitation"); education (classrooms, better teacher pay, vocational training); and roads (paving and maintenance). Also in line with prefects as a group, they made two references to housing issues, as these demands emerged during that decade. As in the Ceará study, the main planks in their platforms were health and education, although there were a couple of references to "social work" (one municipality directly refers to day-care centers, and care for pregnant women and the elderly).

These indications only begin to outline the policies and programs undertaken in municipalities governed by women. Now, those geared to the female population will be examined in greater detail, to bring gender issues back into the discussion of municipal action.

As for women prefects' ages, they fall right in with the overall average (36-45 years) for male and females together

21. BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, Rio de Janeiro. National School of Urban Services. Women and Public Policy Study Center - *Mulher e Políticas Públicas: O Papel dos Municípios: relatório*. Agreement between IBAM and the Ford Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, 134f, attachments.
22. CEARA, Op. cit.

Policies and Programs

Programs and policies were analyzed on the basis of questionnaires that surveyed municipalities for the 1991 research project on "Women and Public Policy; The Role of Municipalities", by IBAM's Women and Public Policy Study Center. Nearly 4500 questionnaires were sent out early that year to every Brazilian municipality. By that April, 551 local administrations had returned their completed survey forms to IBAM, only nine of them headed by women. This came as a surprise to the survey team, because many of the questions addressed issues regarding the needs of the female population, so they had expected a greater response from *prefeitas*.

Out of the nine female-prefect municipalities that responded to the questionnaire, two belonged to the north (two of them new municipalities in the state of Tocantins); one to the northeast; five to the southeast (including two large municipalities in São Paulo state, on a capital city); and one to the west-center.

A look at the municipal programs for the female population in those local administrations would suggest that most are geared toward women's practical needs.²³ Such actions seek to meet their most immediate demands, expressed in contexts where severe poverty prevails --in the specific case of the prefectures located in Brazil's interior-- where often the local government is the only provider of the resources that will enable the mass of families under their jurisdiction to survive.

Thus, programs include trousseau (baby clothes and linens) distribution to pregnant women and milk for needy mothers (Caririaçu-CE), alternative nutritional instruction to teach housewives to prepare natural, local foods "with high nutritional value at a low cost" (Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG) or support for day-care centers for children of working mothers (Cumari-GO and Januária-MG).

Some of these programs were promoted in partnership with other governmental agencies --especially federal-- or private organizations. Actually, the Bom Jesus do Amparo prefecture actually supports the nutritional guidance initiative started by the Pastoral Action for Children and the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company (EMATER) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Certain municipal administrations make yeoman efforts to meet immediate needs, quite pragmatically, when they use their own resources (e.g. Caririaçu-CE). This would distinguish their actions from those taken by public agencies such as the British Assistance Legion, which works throughout Brazil, often carrying out programs that involve only handouts.

A look at the municipal programs for the female population in those local administrations would suggest that most are geared toward women's practical needs

23. For more on the discussion of "practical needs" versus "strategic needs", see LONDON, v. 17, n. 11, 1799-1825, 1989 and FONTES, Angela M.M. and NEVES, Maria da Graça R. - *Gestão Municipal y Perspectiva de Género*, a paper presented at the International Workshop on Research Methods for Gender and Municipal Policy-Making for Women.

The questionnaires identify programs that also include vocational training and income generation, which is corroborated by available studies on Brazil's *prefeitas*²⁴, who showed great concern for the shortage of jobs in their municipal areas. According to these studies, the *prefeitas* felt that employment for women would buffer the precariousness of the situations for large population segments. Their statements reveal their feeling that women bear the most disastrous brunt of the nation's economic and political straits: "Children and mothers are left home hungry, while the husbands go off to find work in São Paulo or wherever, and never come back".²⁵

Therefore, among the poor, women are the most disadvantaged group, especially those forced to support their households because their husbands migrated or simply left.

In this context, it is not enough to train women so that they can supplement family income. It is critical to integrate training and/or income generation programs into other municipal policies, including economic development policy. These policies must be based on the guidelines set to maximize municipal resources. This can be the first step to enable women to support themselves and their children. Their activities will no longer be regarded as marginal, to earn "pin money", or a mere hobby-like extension of their housework, of little value. Gender and development must go hand in hand for municipal planning.

Training programs in female-governed municipalities might seem out of step with other women's promotion programs that tie together and coordinate municipal administrative strategies (except in two municipalities in São Paulo state, and one small one in Goiás state. Courses in sewing and garment-making "for married women" are widespread in Caririáçu-CE, Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG, and Cumari-GO. The support of the British Assistance Legion for these courses must also be taken into consideration. They often donate the sewing machines so trainees can practice at home what they have been taught in class.

Other courses dealt with upholstery, candy-making, liquor production and embroidery (Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG), and painting on cloth and machine embroidery (Cumari-GO). In this last case, the prefect was concerned with increasing the number of "specialists in this area, because there is a great shortage in this region". This shows interest in matching training efforts with the region's labor market.

In only one of the municipalities that were studied (Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG) was there any mention of family planning. A brief description of that program reveals that it involved

The *prefeitas* felt that employment for women would buffer the precariousness of the situations for large population segments

Among the poor, women are the most disadvantaged group, especially those forced to support their households because their husbands migrated or simply left

24. See CEARA, Op. cit. and BLAY, Eva. *Mulheres em um Mundo em Mudança: Desenvolvimento Econômico e Político No Brasil*, São Paulo: USP, Study Center on Women and Social Gender Relations, 1992. 25 ff., mimeographed.
25. Transcribed from CEARA, Op. cit., p. 24

Birth control is also an aspect of municipal life that has been of constant interest to *prefeitas*, according to Blay's study

"Family counselling" usually means women shouldering responsibilities that could be shared by their partners

"counselling for families through meetings and distribution of contraceptives". Birth control is also an aspect of municipal life that has been of constant interest to *prefeitas*, according to Blay's study.

Despite conflicting views as to how family planning is to be achieved (generally due to varying ideologies) information on *prefeitas* shows that they approach this issue as part of their municipal government's jurisdiction, especially in Brazil's interior. Some of the more enlightened *prefeitas* on the subject of reproduction, who have wished to provide families with family planning information, are eventually put to the test --because of their constituencies' extreme poverty and their own administrations' shortage of funding-- and turn to methods that will provide short-term results, such as the distribution of contraceptives and surgical sterilization. Blay's study quotes a *prefeita* from the northeast (the region with 65% of all current Brazilian *prefeitas*), a physician, in which she acknowledges that poor women should "have their tubes tied". "Regardless of their age. Sometimes, a 20 or 22-year-old woman will have five children already; they get an early start. I know that it would be better to have the operation at a later age, but since they begin bearing children in their early teens, they have no time to spare. I am short on all medical resources within my jurisdiction. If I had more support, I could counsel people, and teach them to plan".²⁶

Brazil's public family planning programs seldom involve husbands in the learning process for the couple to plan their offspring. Programs almost always focus on women as the ones concerned with family and reproductive matters. Therefore, "family counselling" usually means women shouldering responsibilities that could be shared by their partners. Evidently, most contraceptive methods depend largely on the woman to ensure their efficacy.

Although this study cannot go so deeply into municipal policy and programs, we would like to suggest some issues for reflection in regard to gender and local planning. As we have seen, most municipal action pertains to programs that meet women's practical needs, which are already recognized by society and legitimized as collective demand. These needs are clearly associated with the difficult conditions for working family survival in Brazil, and address quality of life for women and men, children and adults.

Many people's victories in recent Brazilian history have originated from women who have risen up in connection with these issues to confront and negotiate with public powers for quality of life and democracy.²⁷ However, not all social movements have publicly expressed specific women's demands:

26. Transcribed from Blay, Op. cit., p. 14.
27. SADER, E. - *Quando Novas Personalidades Entraram em Cena. Experiências e Lutas dos Trabalhadores da Grande São Paulo (1970-1980)*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.

women's movements were the ones to get on the agenda with issues and requirements which, alongside those verbalized by other advocacy movements (and vying for equal status with the rest), made them visible on the national scene. This has even resulted in chapters on women in the national and state Constitutions and, to a lesser extent, in Municipal Organizational Laws.

Feminist strategies --women's strategic needs-- include: abolition of sexual division of labor; relief from housekeeping overburden and from childcare; the end of institutionalized forms of discrimination, such as the refusal of property rights and access to credit; the establishment of political equality and greater employment opportunities; and the adoption of suitable measures against men's violence against and control over women, among others.²⁸ Relationships based on inequality between men and women can run rampant in the private, domestic setting. Such relationships may then spread into public areas, as if they were natural. Hence, the need recognize such phenomena and transform them into legitimate needs becomes a political task.

Meanwhile, since they are not socially recognized, women's strategic needs are often overlooked as problems by municipal government. Moreover, neighborhood movements or other stakeholders addressing municipal administrations seldom include this type of demand. Such a situation is evident even in municipalities led by women, where community access to the prefect is facilitated, according to the concept that the public has of women as more human, "more open to understanding the problems of the neediest".²⁹ Therefore, those municipalities are the exception where understanding or acknowledgement of the female population's strategic needs are a basic element of planning.

In the case of the nine municipalities headed by women that answered the questionnaire, only São Paulo and Santos (in the state of São Paulo, the country's most developed state) presented indications that efforts have been made under their respective *prefeitas* to address women's specific needs by local, public and private agents.

One evidence of such efforts is the development of policies and pursuit of projects by special women's coordinating agencies, directly linked to the *prefeita's* cabinet (Santos) and to the Secretariat of Government and Advisory Support for the Citizenship and Human Rights (São Paulo).

The remaining seven municipalities carry out their programs through bodies such as the Secretariat of Welfare (Cumari-GO) or Educational Secretariat/Sector (Januária,

Since they are not socially recognized, women's strategic needs are often overlooked as problems by municipal government

28. MOSER, Op. cit.

29. CEARA, Op. cit.

Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG and Caririaçu-CE). It is interesting to note that the Municipality of Combinado (created in 1990 in the state of Tocantins) --where no specific programs for the female population were found-- an informant revealed that the Administration is creating a Social Welfare Foundation with the aim of implementing programs to benefit women and children. This form of addressing women's actions corroborates one of the conclusions reached in the research project on "Women and Public Policy: The Role of Municipalities": that local powers see women as linked to the social welfare area.

Local powers see women as linked to the social welfare area

In this connection, there seems to be no difference between the perception of male and female prefects. One factor that makes this pattern of social management ineffective is the sectoral treatment that issues end up receiving when they are customarily women's issues. Another factor is related to mechanisms for distribution of financial resources for different bodies under municipal administration. As a rule, the social development area receives a disproportionately thin slice of the revenues, compared to sectors such as projects and administration, for example, and to sectors that are linked to resources, with earmarked allocations according to the Federal Constitution or Municipal Organizational Laws, in the case of education and health.

Municipalities such as São Paulo and Santos carry out projects for their female population through women's coordinating agencies

However, this does not mean that the best solution is just to create special secretariats within local administrative structure to address specific female affairs. That could make municipal treatment of gender relations even more segmented. The creation of institutional mechanisms, such as municipal councils and women's coordinating agencies, becomes more operational when they can both coordinate women's policy in the municipality (with the main task of integrating the other agencies into the implementation of such policies) and serve as the channel where all organized segments of local society --including, obviously, women's movements-- can be heard and wield influence over the policy definition and priority-setting.

Municipalities such as São Paulo and Santos carry out projects for their female population through women's coordinating agencies. In São Paulo, a program on "Health, Sexuality and Reproduction" aims to "strengthen and encourage the implementation of the Program for Integrated Assistance to Women's Health, which must include the areas of mental and occupational health, in the municipal public network, favoring a feminist approach in regard to bodies, sexuality and reproduction". This program is carried out under the Municipal Secretariat for Health and involves the entire structure of the city's municipal health units. Aside from São Paulo and Santos, only one health program was identified in the other

municipalities responding to the questionnaire: a prenatal care program in the municipality of Januária-MG.

In another project formulated by the coordinating agency in the area of education, actions are promoted to inform about sexual discrimination and prepare on-the-job training programs for teachers and educational specialists, in order to eliminate instructional practices that reinforce sexual and ethnic discrimination. Such programs will not work unless there is strong integration between the coordinating agency and the municipal secretariat of education.

In the Santos municipality, the Special Coordinating Office for Women's Affairs works "together with organized groups from the community, supporting discussions, promoting talks, and fostering the formation of groups for rights advocacy and the solving of shared problems".³⁰ It is possible for these more participatory management approaches to address specific women's issues alongside those other issues that have habitually been discussed when the municipal public power engages other local powers in dialogue. These approaches are the most effective way to smooth identification of women's strategic needs as everyone's problems.

The questionnaires revealed another feature of how municipal public agents understand gender relations. When asked to state in what areas the prefecture should pursue programs to meet women's specific needs (regardless of whether any programs were actually under way or not), most respondents skipped "the prefecture's personnel policy", which was one of the possible choices on the survey form.

Other alternatives, such as "environmental protection" and "administration" were also ignored by most municipalities. However, São Paulo and Santos --despite the progress they have made-- seem to have no perception that a commitment to gender issues also entails looking inward at existing differences among the roles played by municipal personnel.

Moreover, three of the smaller municipalities that responded (Bom Jesus do Amparo-MG, Cumari-GO and Santa Rosa do Tocantins-TO) did include internal staff policy in the areas where the administration should act in terms of women's needs. (The Santa Rosa do Tocantins respondent checked all choices as pertinent.)

In Cumari, a small municipality in the state of Goiás, the respondent showed concern for adapting women's training programs in the prefecture to the region's labor market potential. This alone represents a qualitative leap forward in understanding the hurdles women must face upon entering the job market.

In the Santos municipality, the Special Coordinating Office for Women's Affairs works "together with organized groups from the community, supporting discussions, promoting talks, and fostering the formation of groups for rights advocacy and the solving of shared problems"

30. According to the questionnaire responded by the Municipality of Santos for the research project on "Women and public policy: the role of the Municipality". Also see in this regard, BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, Rio de Janeiro, Center for Urban Study and Research, et al. - Santos: Políticas de uma Mulher. Documentação de uma Experiência. Rio de Janeiro, 1992 (in preparation).

The political party component would seem to directly imply that municipal management accepts different --opposite, complementary-- roles for women and men in society as an official commitment and consequently differentiates their needs in playing those roles

A number of factors must be considered in analyzing the approaches adopted by the above-mentioned municipalities in São Paulo state, and the approaches adopted by the other municipalities. First of all, the size of such municipalities as São Paulo and Santos, the complexity of their urban structures and their national importance. The former is the most important metropolis in the country, with 9,480,427 inhabitants, and the latter, with a population of 428,526,³¹ is the country's foremost ocean port. These two municipalities differ from the other seven governed by women. With the exception of Januária, a major city in the São Francisco river valley, state of Minas Gerais, with 86,871 inhabitants,³² all the rest are small, and located in the interior.

In addition to these factors, the political party component would seem to directly imply that municipal management accepts different --opposite, complementary-- roles for women and men in society as an official commitment and consequently differentiates their needs in playing those roles. The *prefeitas* of São Paulo and Santos belong to the Workers' Party, which includes a programmatic provision regarding gender issues and internally organized groups that address these issues as priorities in the exercise of democratic government.

Pressure from these groups on prefects, male or female, who belong to that party (as a matter of fact, it seems to matter little whether the prefect is actually a man or woman) can greatly influence the municipality's thinking in regard to formulation of women's programs. Nevertheless, this may all depend on the local political moment, particularly the relations between the prefect and his or her party.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension of cities such as São Paulo and Santos is also a major factor, because they have skilled technicians in their administrations. This technical staff can, in turn, access information and experience on the incorporation of gender into planning in other parts of the country, in preparation for their own work. Blay's study has pointed out that one concern of the *prefeitas* elected in 1988 had to do with the municipality's difficulties in obtaining qualified technical support. Such difficulties are greater in the smaller municipalities of poorer regions.

Finally, in addition to having a female chief executive, along with the other factors outlined above, another line of speculation would involve the other positions and mechanisms in the local power network.

So, the presence of women in un-feminized administrative areas (e.g. secretariats of works and finance) would seem important in materializing the progressive course set by the

31. BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND STATISTICS FOUNDATION, Rio de Janeiro, *Dados Preliminares do Censo de 1991. Preliminary Results*. Rio de Janeiro, 1992. 95 pp.

32. *Ibid.*

female chief executive. In Santos, the *prefeita* has called attention to this aspect, emphasizing that a woman heads the Secretariat of Urban Development and Environment ("which is a very powerful secretariat"), traditionally a "masculine" area. The context of this information is a strong presence of women in the structure of the city's Workers' Party.³³

Meanwhile, in Sapiranga, a municipality with nearly 58 thousand inhabitants, in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, the *prefeita* has mentioned a number of women in positions of power. As well as executive posts (e.g. the Secretariat of Works) women occupy major positions in the city, as judges and leaders of banking, postal and notary agencies. The *prefeita* says that one of her goals is to leave the city with a female platoon in the Military Brigade.³⁴

In Sapiranga as well as executive posts (e.g. the Secretariat of Works) women occupy major positions in the city, as judges and leaders of banking, postal and notary agencies

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations for Female

Municipal Executive Practice

The *prefeitas* elected for the 1989/1992 period govern 110 widely differentiated municipalities, with no overall similarity in terms of size, regional role or economic profile, although 58.5% fall in the mid-size 10 to 50 thousand inhabitant range. However, two state capitals (São Paulo, the country's largest, and Natal, with 606,541 inhabitants), three large "pole" cities, some sizable cities in the interior of their states, and four municipalities in the metropolitan periphery --two of them with over 100 thousand inhabitants-- are also governed by women.

Research by Blay and by the IBAM Women and Public Policy Study Center have reported historical growth in the number of municipalities governed by women. Between 1972 and 1998, the number of *prefeitas* nearly doubled. These studies show that female prefects are most numerous in the northeast (65% of the total), followed by the southeast (17.27%) and north (10.9%).

The election of four *prefeitas* in new municipalities of the state of Tocantins (obviously not counted in studies based on data up to 1988/89 only) increased the northern region's share from 7% to practically 11%. In terms of the total population governed by *prefeitas*, the southeast takes the lead (80%), followed by the northeast (17%).

As for political parties, the PFL and the PMDB had the highest percentages of *prefeitas*, 30% each, followed by the PL (9%) and the PDS (8.1%); the PDT and PT, considered opposition parties, account for only 5.4% of the whole. However, they are

In terms of the total population governed by *prefeitas*, the southeast takes the lead (80%), followed by the northeast (17%)

33. See BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, Op. cit. (footnote 17).

34. Interview with the *Prefeita* of Sapiranga (27-03-92) on the "Jô Soares Onze e Meia" program, Brazilian Television System (SBT).

worthy of note because the *prefeitas* elected in the capitals and largest cities belong to these parties.

Another important finding of this study is that seven municipalities have elected *prefeitas* for two consecutive terms (1983-1988 and 1989-1992). Five of these local governments are located in the northeast region, one in the north and one in the southeast.

Significant changes in the Brazilian political and institutional setting, enacted by the 1988 Constitution, include greater autonomy for municipalities, as part of the Brazilian Federation, with the power to organize themselves (for example, they can draft their own organizational law, which was previously the state's prerogative). Another new feature in these changes has been the creation of a group of municipal taxes and an increased share in state and federal tax revenues, which immediately enhanced local powers' income.

Municipal governments are also shouldering new responsibilities in this reordering. They have broader functions in the field of social policy and municipal planning, and must incorporate public participation into their planning and public action.

This has been the context for the female (and male) prefects elected in 1988, as the jurisdiction of municipal administration expands.

Still, these changes all remain, actually, only theoretical possibilities. In terms of political and administrative ways and means, many municipalities --especially the smaller ones-- still experience the effects of previous decades of subordination. They still depend on funding allocations from the states and federal government, and must therefore suit their programs to state and federal criteria. There is also much confusion about decentralization and the possibilities currently offered by constitutional legislation. And some laws do not yet have their regulations in place.

An analysis of the policies and programs implemented by the *prefeitas* elected in some municipalities has shown that most municipal action geared toward the female population in those localities has tended to deal with women's practical needs, those that also benefit men and children; as collective demands, they do not express inequality between the sexes, which is part of their social statements and actual practice. Programs dealing directly with women's strategic needs --those actions geared to transform women's status and, consequently, help overcome male-female inequalities-- have been identified in only two large municipalities out of the ones with *prefeitas* for which information is available.

Municipal governments are also shouldering new responsibilities in this reordering. They have broader functions in the field of social policy and municipal planning

In terms of political and administrative ways and means, many municipalities --especially the smaller ones-- still experience the effects of previous decades of subordination

Most programs are pursued from a perspective associating women and social welfare. Moreover, they are almost always formulated with a fragmented, sectoral vision of women's issues. The municipalities examined in terms of their policies have not been able to break out of this mold. Aside from two large municipalities (São Paulo and Santos), only one other (Goiás state) has a vocational training program with concerns regarding ways to adapt the program to the potential requirements of the region's labor market.

Programs that involve strategic aspects of women's specific needs seem to emerge in relation to variables of political activity, such as the presence and status of women's advocacy movements, the existence in the prefecture of trained technical staff that understands gender issues, or groups within the prefect's own political party that are organized to break women out of the subordinate role (and can pressure the prefect to apply clear proposals in this direction). These factors can decisively influence the local administration's commitment to quality changes in programs affecting the female population. These variables are actually more important than whether the prefect is male or female; it is hard to say which is the most decisive, but all are important.

All these variables are present in the two municipalities that do have innovative programs attempting to reverse women's present-day situation. A small one in Goiás state has a program to improve women's competitive advantages on the regional job market; evidently, their staff understands the role of gender concerns about as well as do the two larger municipalities.

In addition to the above factors, program methodology is also important: how programs are implemented. In fact, it is the methodology that will often determine whether any strategic change is made. It is possible that some traditional welfare-type programs could be actually disseminating new ideas that will help transform women's day-to-day lives, and assist in enabling women to make specific demands on a collective basis.

The considerations of this study cannot be generalized for Brazilian municipal government at large. The enormous complexity of over four thousand local administrations, each with multiple stakeholders and varied contexts, thwarts any attempt to make broad, qualitative statements.

Nonetheless, the study does point to some proposals that may contribute to formulating programs that will build the gender perspective into local administration.

- when dealing with practical needs, it is necessary to determine which of them can further women's strategic needs. For example, in a participatory program to install

When dealing with practical needs, it is necessary to determine which of them can further women's strategic needs

A proposal that may greatly change women's potential for competitiveness on the job market is to change the range of training for women to address those sectors where there are major obstacles to their participation

basic sanitation systems, it is advisable for women (generally the most active members of the beneficiary population in this type of program) to be trained to use the technologies and materials used for the work, rather than restricting their action to the simpler, less-skilled drudgery, such as digging the ditches where the piping will be laid. The program's overall approach must include women in those areas or activities that have previously excluded them.

- a proposal that may greatly change women's potential for competitiveness on the job market is to change the range of training for women to address those sectors where there are major obstacles to their participation. Significant examples include civil construction and mechanical maintenance services (refrigeration, automotive mechanics, and such).
- all programs (not just training, but also income generation) must be closely matched with the reality of the local marketplace.
- internal policy (e.g. personnel, organization of activities) must also be consistent with policies promoted outside the prefecture; the professional staff must be highly trained in maintaining this consistency.

Brazil has many outstanding examples in large capitals and other cities of programs and policies for women that should be replicated

In regard to the last item above, the aim is to build gender concerns into the prefecture itself. Brazil has many outstanding examples in large capitals and other cities of programs and policies for women that should be replicated. This is not so much a matter of municipal administrations' internal official positions, as of their internal administrative policy, treatment of career personnel, of uniform salaries, of technical training in administrative functions, and so on, within the administration. Gender concerns must be a basic factor in all these activities. This will enable the local government to rise above their particular ideological position and internalize gender awareness regarding social relations. Otherwise, how can staff without such understanding of the role of gender perform in public programs that have been specifically formulated on a gender basis?

Finally, programs must be integrated and matched with other sectoral policies and program implementation. It is indispensable for programs to follow the municipality's overall guidelines for action.

Methodological Considerations

I. Female Municipal Executives

This study has been based on readily available data covering its scope and purpose. Therefore, sources chosen by the research team to investigate the relation of gender to municipal planning in Brazil were right at hand.

The first step was to make a basic listing of municipalities with *prefeitas*, including new ones since 1989 (subsequent to the November 1988 elections). The 1988 Nominal Listing of Prefects Elected, furnished by the Superior Electoral Tribunal, the Nominal Listing of Prefects from the IBAM Civil and Municipal Development Center (CDM), and the Listing of Female Prefects Elected prepared by for the Seminar For *Prefeitas* - Municipal Action to Promote Women (IBM, August 1989) were used.

Next, these source materials were compared with each other in order to prepare the final listing. A number of problems arose in this cross-checking, and new municipalities were included that two of the basic sources did not list. The Nominal Listing of Prefects from CDM-IBAM was very useful for this purpose, as it is constantly updated. Other uncertainties were cleared up by telephone contact with the municipalities involved.

Secondary data on *prefeitas'* municipalities were based on forecasts and studies published by the Municipal Data Bank of IBAM-IBAMCO and preliminary 1991 Census data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The IBGE also provided information on municipalities currently governed by women, from the 1985 Economic Census, to examine the previous term of office. A study by Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação y Ação (CEPIA) for FLACSO, outlining existing data on women in Brazil, was also used during this phase of work.

Some research conducted by IBAM during the last few years provided the team with "field data" for qualitative analysis of certain aspects of these issues. These sources included the questionnaires sent to municipalities for the "Women and Public Policy: The Role of Municipalities" research project conducted in 1991 by the Women and Public Policy Study Center of the IBAM National School of Urban Services. Only the questionnaires from municipalities governed by women were examined. The final report from that project was also very useful.

Questionnaires sent to municipalities for IBAMCO's research on the "Profile of Brazilian Prefects" were also used, but again only those pertaining to municipalities with *prefeitas*.

IBAM's expertise in the area of municipalization was invaluable for in-depth understanding of the new meaning of local administration and the hurdles faced by some municipal administrations in decentralizing certain services once handled exclusively by the states and the federal government (mainly health and education). This research is listed in the bibliography.

Interviews in the Santos municipality, which is governed by a *prefeita*, and the other field material collected for the case study (which, along with this study, is the outcome of the agreement between IBAM, IULA and CELCADEL) were crucial to our analyses of Brazil's female prefects.

Finally, studies by Dr. Eva Blay, from São Paulo University, regarding *prefeitas* elected in 1988, presented in her article on "Women in a Changing World: Economic and Political Development in Brazil" helped both in defining the actual number of *prefeitas* and in other questions relevant to this study. The report on research by the government of the state of Ceará with the *prefeitas* of that state was also valuable in this regard. (See bibliography.)

II. Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed in terms of Brazilian municipalities and their practices that might have a bearing on the concept of gender. First, a database was created for political and institutional aspects, to approach municipalities from the standpoint of possibilities and limitations in policy implementation. Secondly, aspects of *prefeitas*' "governance style" and public role were emphasized; in the context of the collective demands being addressed by these administrations, an attempt was made to work with the concepts of women's practical versus strategic needs, as presented in the literature specializing in gender issues (see references in the bibliography).

Bibliography

- ARBOLEDA, María - **Investigación de género en espacios locales: lineamientos metodológicos.** Programa Mujer y Desarrollo Local. Quito: IULA/CELCADEL, 1991. mimeographed.
- BECKER, Bertha - **Amazônia.** São Paulo: Atica, 1990.
- BLAY, Eva Alterman - **Enfrentando a alienação: as mulheres e o poder local.** Paper presented at the 12th World Congress of Sociology International, Sociological Association, Madrid, July 1990.
- **Mulheres em um mundo em mudança: desenvolvimento econômico y político no Brasil.** São Paulo: USP, Study Center on Women and Social Relations of Gender, 1992. 25 pp. mimeographed.
- BRASIL. Superior Electoral Tribunal. General Coordination of Information Management - **Relação dos prefeitos eleitos em 1988.** [Brasília]: Imprensa Nacional, 1991. 109 pp.
- BREMAEKER, François E. J. de - **Estimativas de população para os municípios brasileiros mais populosos em 1991.** Rio de Janeiro: IBAM/CPU/IBAMCO, 1991. 38 pp. (Estimativas, 6.)
- **Migração: a marca do censo de 1991.** Rio de Janeiro: IBAM/CPU/IBAMCO, 1992. 26 pp. (Estudos Demográficos, 10.)
- **Perfil do prefeito brasileiro: 1989-1992.** Rio de Janeiro: IBAM/CPU/IBAMCO, 1990. 35 pp. (Estudos Especiais, 2.)
- CEARA. Secretariat of Social Action. **Mulher e criança: realidade e perspectivas nas administrações municipais femininas no Ceará.** SAS/UNICEF Agreement. Fortaleza, 1990.
- CIDADANIA, ESTUDO, PESQUISA, INFORMAÇÃO E AÇÃO, Rio de Janeiro - **Mulher em dados no Brasil.** CEPIA/FLACSO Agreement. Rio de Janeiro, 1991. 2 vol.
- FONTES, Angela M. M., NEVES, Maria da Graça R. - **Gestión municipal y perspectiva de género.** Paper presented at the International Workshop on Methods for Gender Research and Municipal Policy-Making Geared toward Women. Quito, August 1991. Spanish version by Elena Pires Ferreira. [Rio de Janeiro, IBAM] 1991.
- FUNDAÇÃO INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, Rio de Janeiro - **Dados preliminares do censo de 1991.** Preliminary results. Rio de Janeiro, 1992. 95 pp.
- **Informação para a imprensa.** Rio de Janeiro, 1992. mimeographed (Textos, 16.)
- INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO MUNICIPAL, Rio de Janeiro - **IBAM 30 anos: 1952-1982.** Rio de Janeiro, 1982. 120 pp.
- Civic and Municipal Development Center - **Relação dos prefeitos eleitos em 1988.** [Rio de Janeiro, 1992].
- Urban Research and Study Center - **Elaboração de metodologia para a municipalização dos programas de habitação popular: relatório.** IBAM/CEF Agreement. Rio de Janeiro, 1989. 2 vol.
- **Metodologia visando a municipalização dos programas de habitação popular, relatório final.** Rio de Janeiro, 1990. 2 vol.
- et al. - **Perfil dos municípios na área da saúde; relatório de pesquisa.** IBAM/FNS Agreement. Rio de Janeiro, 1991. 3 vol.

- INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO MUNICIPAL, Rio de Janeiro. Centro de Pesquisas Urbanas - Mudanças nas percepções dos prefeitos (1973-1977). Rio de Janeiro, 1978. 173 pp.
- A opinião dos prefeitos eleitos; os prefeitos brasileiros: características e percepções (1977-1980). Rio de Janeiro, 1979. 144 pp.
- National Urban Service School. Women and Public Policy Study Center - Mulher e políticas públicas: o papel dos municípios: relatório. IBAM/FORD FOUNDATION Agreement. Rio de Janeiro, 1992. 134 pp. Attachments.
- INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ANÁLISES SOCIAIS E ECONÔMICAS, Rio de Janeiro - Experiências participativas. Rio de Janeiro, 1989. vol. 3.
- LORDELLO DE MELLO, Diogo - "Descentralização, papel dos governos locais no processo de desenvolvimento nacional e recursos financeiros necessários para que os governos locais possam cumprir seu papel". Revista de Administração Pública, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 199-217, Oct./Dec. 1991.
- MOSER, Caroline O. N. - "Gender Planning in the Third World: meeting practical and strategic gender needs". World Development, London, vol. 17, no. 11, pp. 1799-1825, 1989.
- OLIVEIRA, Carlos Alfonso - Partidos políticos, autonomia municipal e a possibilidade democrática. Revista de Administração Municipal, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 38, no. 200, pp. 17-35, July/Sept. 1991.
- RIOFRIO, Gustavo - La mujer y las políticas municipales de servicios. Lima: SUMBI, 1986. 20 pp.
- SADER, Eder - Quando novos personagens entraram em cena: experiências e lutas dos trabalhadores da Grande São Paulo (1970-1980). Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.
- SEMINÁRIO PARA PREFEITAS: AÇÃO DO MUNICÍPIO NA PROMOÇÃO DA MULHER, Rio de Janeiro, August 1-3, 1989 - Relatório final. Rio de Janeiro, IBAM/ENSUR, 1989. Irregular pagination.
- SOUZA-LOBO, Elizabeth - A classe operária tem dois sexos: trabalho, dominação e resistência. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1991, 285 pp.
- TABAK, Fanny - "O perfil da vereadora brasileira". Revista de Administração Municipal, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 35, no. 186, pp. 22-37, Jan./Mar. 1988.

Research conducted under the IULA - CELCADEL Women and Local Development Project.

**COMUNAMUJER:
A STUDY OF WOMEN'S
PARTICIPATION IN
MUNICIPAL
GOVERNMENT**

Silvana Bruera
Mariana González
CIESU
Uruguay

Introduction

This study was carried out as part of the Women and Local Development Program which is implemented in several Latin American countries by the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the Latin American Training Center for the Development of Local Governments (CELCADEL), and USAID's Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for South America (RHUDO/SA). The research was conducted by the *Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay (CIESU)* (Uruguayan Center for Information and Studies) from October through December 1992 and is presented as a case study of Uruguay.

The study analyzes different modes of women's participation in the local arena. The first chapter presents the characteristics and evolution of departmental government and an overview of women's status in Uruguay. Research findings are presented in subsequent chapters. The second chapter examines women's presence in the legislatures of Uruguay's nineteen departments. The third chapter looks specifically at women legislators in Montevideo, while the fourth chapter concentrates on women's presence in the decentralized bodies of Montevideo's executive branch, completing the picture of women in municipal positions. Lastly, the fifth chapter refers to women's presence in local organizations, both in Montevideo and in the rest of the country.

Different approaches were used to study each of the different spheres. We were interested not only in knowing who the women who hold positions of responsibility in municipal government are, how many there are and what they think, but also in finding out what role women play in the grassroots organizations that present demands to municipal government. The study also looks at how women perceive their participation and the impact it may have had on them personally.

The study pays particular attention to Montevideo because over half the country's population lives there, and also because Montevideo is currently following a policy of decentralization within a particular political context. Additionally, more than 20% of Montevideo's legislators are women -- which is a record -- and, for the first time ever, the left won Montevideo's municipal elections and must work together with the *Partido Nacional*, which won the last national elections, for the first time in many years.

This study has two central focusses: the local arena and its development, and women's involvement. Problems having to do with the local arena became part of Uruguay's political debate at a relatively late date and have been basically

Since women are among the potential protagonists in this new proposal for development, they should be analyzed specifically. To develop ties between women and local government, it seems clear that the first step, at least here in Uruguay, is to survey the current "state of the art", gathering extensive empirical evidence in order to proceed to analysis and speculations about future prospects

associated with the topic of State reform. Decentralization, as a vehicle for strengthening local autonomy, is at the core of this concern, which is equally held by the entire range of political-ideological positions. When the 1930s' model of state-centered control collapsed, redefinition of the state's roles, structures and ways of dealing with other social stakeholders became a primary issue for political leaders, thereby broadening the areas for reflection. As democracy emerges, decentralization is a strong theme in various fields. "Though some are interested in limiting analysis to political affairs, we must recognize that decentralization is an issue for discussion from different angles. To be precise, this theme has grown in relative importance during recent years in social sciences, urban studies and law, regarding issues of people's daily lives and how to organize the country. It is not always easy to define the conceptual similarities among these different debate forums, and how they interrelate, particularly with the strictly political arena."¹

In addition to these different approaches, it seems clear that the high degree to which the population and economic and social resources are currently concentrated in Montevideo -- where power has been centralized ever since Uruguay became a nation -- requires a search for a new model of development. A plausible alternative to explore is to decentralize and allow local forces to develop their potential. The results of decentralization do not depend, though, solely on the State. They also depend to a large degree on state and institutional agreement with the rest of society. Thus, political-administrative decentralization is necessary, but is not enough by itself to achieve local development. Autonomous local stakeholders must also be present and must interact with local government.

Since women are among the potential protagonists in this new proposal for development, they should be analyzed specifically. To develop ties between women and local government, it seems clear that the first step, at least here in Uruguay, is to survey the current "state of the art", gathering extensive empirical evidence in order to proceed to analysis and speculations about future prospects.

We are aware that this study offers more questions than answers and presents aspects that require further debate.

1. *El debate de la descentralización* (The Debate Over Decentralization) Lombardi y Papadópulos in *Cuadernos del CLAEH*, no. 45/46, Montevideo 1988.

I. How municipal government formed

Historical Background

When Montevideo was part of the Banda Oriental ², from the very beginning of its belated colonization, it was already an important port city. The strongly centralized organization of the colony and its military dependence on Buenos Aires (capital of the viceroyalty) discouraged colonization in areas other than the strategic points of defense against Portugal, and later Brazil. Thus, Montevideo became the epicenter of commercial and political life.

The main income-producing activity has basically always been cattle raising and shepherding, on natural pasture and requiring little manpower. Since producing wool, leather and beef were the main activities for such a long period of time, urban decentralization was not necessary. The country was organized radially, to favor products moving from the interior of the country to the capital for export: railroads and main roadways all went to the capital, with practically no connections between secondary towns.

Moreover, ever since colonial times mid-sized and large landowners had never spent much time in the countryside. Montevideo became ever more important for landowners, as it was where land acquisitions were handled and where they could get information on marketing their products. Since so few people lived in the countryside the social framework was very limited and did not offer much security. Undoubtedly, all the commercial activity in the city lured the population to concentrate there more and more. Later on, the university made Montevideo an even more important center.

Administratively, Montevideo was governed by a *cabildo* (town council), together with a general commander designated by Buenos Aires. Council members were elected by the city's inhabitants and were responsible for practically all government functions.

As time went on, *cabildos* were established in other important towns or villages. During the Artigas period, they became particularly important, expressing local interests and providing a link to central authorities. During the periods of Portuguese, and then Brazilian domination, the *cabildos* retained certain basic administrative functions in spite of the importance placed on the governor and the general captain. The provisional government created after the fight for liberation from the Brazilians fully recognized the functions of the *cabildos*, but the province's *Junta de Representantes* did away with them in 1829.

The country was organized radially, to favor products moving from the interior of the country to the capital for export: railroads and main roadways all went to the capital, with practically no connections between secondary towns

² Translator's note: Banda Oriental was the name of the area under Spanish possession.

From then on, local government changed, as adjustments were made to the concrete political circumstances of each subsequent period.

I.1 City Government During the Turmoil of Centralist Regime

The *cabildos* were the highest authority in each of the country's population centers, being the political and administrative representatives and the center of colonial organization, with governmental, executive and judicial functions.

Their municipal duties were: roadways, street cobbling and lighting, construction, markets, urban order, and regulating and controlling a whole series of activities.

The 1826 Constitution³, which was centralist and unifying, gave each of the United Provinces of Río de la Plata two governmental bodies: the executive (a governor assigned by the president) and the provincial legislature (*juntas económico-administrativas* made up of legislators elected by the people). The *juntas* were to "tend to the province's prosperity and progress", and were charged, among many other things, with developing primary education and other public works.

In the 1830s there were nine departments: Montevideo, Canelones, Maldonado, San José, Soriano, Durazno, Colonia and Cerro Largo (south of the Negro River) and Paysandú (north of the Negro River). The *juntas* did not have political or administrative autonomy in these departments. Compared to the *cabildos*, the *juntas* lost governing functions, as the constitution favored Buenos Aires's interests. Even though governing functions were taken over by political bosses, and judicial functions passed to the central *Poder Judicial*, towards the end of the century the *juntas* were collecting taxes, managing public services (public lighting, cemeteries, streetpaving, transportation), granting construction permits, licensing vehicles, etc.

With the 1903 law (*Ley de Juntas*), the *juntas* became the most important body of municipal administration. This law gave them great autonomy in their assigned duties. They began to function as a deliberative body, with one *junta* member appointed as president. The president's duties and powers became independent from the legislative body, and he was given executive responsibilities. Later on the federal government created the position of *intendente*. The departmental executive branch consisted of the *intendente* and the *sub-intendente*, and was subordinate to the federal executive branch.

Two large groups were then involved in a struggle between centralization and decentralization. The centralists triumphed

The *cabildos* were the highest authority in each of the country's population centers, being the political and administrative representatives and the center of colonial organization, with governmental, executive and judicial functions

3. Referred to as the Rivadavia Constitution.

first with the 1908 law (*Ley de Intendencias*) which gave the federal executive branch the right to appoint the *intendentes* and municipal officials, which kept centers of departmental power from forming. However, as the principles of the 1830 Constitution clearly contradicted this, the "National Party" demanded amendment of the Constitution in favor of municipal autonomy.

In 1917, after a plebiscite, a new constitution was approved, which established that local government and administration would be exercised by two bodies: the Legislative Assembly and one or more Administrative Councils, with administrative and executive duties. In addition to political and administrative autonomy from the central government, financial autonomy was granted through the right to levy some taxes, which later became a determining factor for further constitutional amendment.

In 1934 a new Constitution was established. Abuse of taxation power and administrative scandals created the need to search for solutions. After 1934, the duties of the two bodies elected by direct vote (the *Junta Departamental* and the *Intendente Municipal*) were separated. Additionally, the new Constitution limited local autonomy in budgeting and financing by restricting how budget surpluses could be spent and limiting taxation power.

In 1935, the *Ley Orgánica Municipal* (Municipal Organizational Law) was finally enacted, which implemented the model set out in the 1934 Constitution. This law, approved under Terra's dictatorship, is still in effect in Uruguay today, with some modifications.

Between 1954 and 1967 Uruguay was governed by bodies of peers. After a plebiscite, a new constitutional reform replaced the *intendentes* with a five-member *Consejo Departamental*, and made the *Junta Departamental* the legislative and comptroller body. Political concerns related to this system's capacity to pass resolutions led to a new plebiscite in 1967 and another constitutional reform. This amendment made both the federal and departmental executive a single person, going back to the 1934 municipal structure.

1.2 Current Structure of Departmental Government

The constitution in effect today⁴ states that a *junta departamental* and an *intendente municipal* will govern and administer each of the nineteen existing departments, with the exception of public security services. Municipal government has a broad range of duties, from organizing and publishing departmental statistics (Article 23), constructing roadways

In 1917, after a plebiscite, a new constitution was approved, which established that local government and administration would be exercised by two bodies: the Legislative Assembly and one or more Administrative Councils

4. "Del Gobierno y de la Administración de los Departamentos" (Departmental Government and Administration), Constitution of Uruguay, Section XVI.

"Women's status" is a term frequently used in the field of gender studies to mean, basically, the access women have to socially-valued resources. Women's political participation should be examined in the context of their access to expanded areas of participation such as the work force, education, etc.

(Article 38), and controlling sanitation (Article 24) to promoting agriculture and livestock raising (Article 36), to name only a few. This extensive and varied spectrum of municipal responsibilities and powers was categorized as historical and essential duties, or duties inherent to municipal government.

Both the *junta departamental* and the *intendente* of each department are elected for a five-year term and take office on February 15 following elections. In Uruguay, national and departmental authorities are chosen in the same elections.⁵

Junta Departamental positions are divided up among different political parties, in proportion to the number of votes each party received. But, by legislative order, any party that wins the *intendente* position, even if it has only obtained a simple majority of votes, will be given the majority of *junta* positions, which are divided up proportionately among their candidates. The rest of the seats are divided up according to the proportional representation system.

Each *junta departamental* has 31 members and three times that many deputies. Candidates for *junta* member must be at least 23 years old, a native or naturalized citizen of Uruguay, and have been born in the department or have resided there for at least three years.

II. Women's Status

II.1 Women's Status in Uruguayan Society⁶

"Women's status" is a term frequently used in the field of gender studies to mean, basically, the access women have to socially-valued resources. These resources can vary, and range from access to information to access to decision-making. Valued resources include information, education, disposable income, etc.

Women's political participation should be examined in the context of their access to expanded areas of participation such as the work force, education, etc. In the last two decades there have been rather spectacular changes in women's status in Uruguay in these areas, especially in the notable increase in women's participation in the work force. To evaluate these changes and identify the problem of women and politics in present-day Uruguay, we should refer to some basic background information on women's status in Uruguayan society.

5. Uruguay's complex electoral system combines replacement of incumbents by groups of candidates defined through the elections, with accumulation of votes by parties; some positions are filled by majority vote, some in proportion to totals. This system has been questioned on several occasions, basically with the argument that it limits voters' freedom of choice and distorts the results. However, to date there has not been sufficient support for any reform. See "Reforma electoral. Posible, deseable?" (Election Reform, Possible? Desirable?), compiled by Nohlen-Rial, Banda ("Election Reform and Political Will"), compiled by Angel Cocchi, Banda Oriental 1988; among others

6. This section on women was taken from a paper written by Constanza Moreira on Women's Status in Uruguay, CIESU 1992.

a. The Early 20th Century Modernizing Project

It is generally agreed that the legislation passed in Uruguay in the first decades of this century was relatively advanced in terms of the protection it offered women on the job and in society. The modernizing project in the early 1900s introduced changes that were ahead of their time and had significant repercussions on women's status through some basic long-term reforms. One, the 1877 educational reform, increased access to secular, free, mandatory education for all social sectors, males and females alike. This greater access to education so early in the 1900s provided more "equal opportunity" and had an undeniable role in developing a "culturally homogenous" society. However, the fact is that certain prevalent cultural patterns of discrimination in sex roles kept women from staying in school beyond the primary years until later in the century. Nonetheless, the educational reform did result in decreased illiteracy in Montevideo, with women and men having similar rates, according to a comparison of the 1889 and 1908 censuses⁷.

A very important series of laws conducive to improving women's status were passed in the first decades of this century, including: the divorce law (1907), the maternity leave law for teachers (1922), the "chair" law (1914) and the law for mandatory time off each week, which included domestic servants (1920). These laws were part of the modernizing project carried out by the first two Batlle⁸ governments in the process of expanding citizens' rights. These laws were passed at a time in which the State saw itself as an arena for anticipating and conciliating conflict, laying the groundwork for what would become the "welfare state" tradition in Uruguay. Nevertheless, the true effectiveness of the top-down laws passed under what has come to be called the "anticipatory politics" of the Batlle era has come into question; particularly the effectiveness of the laws having to do with women's status, spawning extensive debate in Uruguay in research papers written on the history of women's status⁹.

Even if equality under these laws was more "formal" than "real", given the structure of inequality and the values and beliefs that sustained and reinforced it, Uruguay was undoubtedly an exception in this respect compared to its Latin American counterparts.

Thus, we underscore that "in Latin America, Uruguay has been characterized as the country in which women had achieved the most equality in early times (late nineteenth century: right to education; 1932: right to vote and to run for election; 1934-38: decriminalized abortion; 1946: civil equality) In the first decades of the twentieth century "women's issues" held an

The modernizing project in the early 1900s introduced changes that were ahead of their time and had significant repercussions on women's status through some basic long-term reforms

7. Pellegrino, A. "Trabajo y fecundidad de las mujeres en Montevideo" "Women in Montevideo: Work and Fertility", CIESU, Documentos de Trabajo, No. 169, Montevideo, 1990.

8. Translator's note: José Batlle y Ordóñez - President of Uruguay from 1903-1907 and 1911-1915.

9. Silvia Rodríguez, Graciela Sapriza. Mujer, Estado y Política en el Uruguay del Siglo XX. (Women, the State, and Politics in Twentieth Century Uruguay) Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, Montevideo, 1984.

Thus, we underscore that "in Latin America, Uruguay has been characterized as the country in which women had achieved the most equality in early times (late nineteenth century: right to education; 1932: right to vote and to run for election; 1934-38: decriminalized abortion; 1946: civil equality) In the first decades of the twentieth century "women's issues" held an important place on the political agenda, and there were several feminist movements"

important place on the political agenda, and there were several feminist movements"¹⁰

Now, what was women's "real" status in Uruguay at the beginning of the century?

In 1908, 17% of Uruguayan women held paying jobs, the majority in the most undeveloped sectors of the work force: 43.4% were domestic employees; almost 30% worked in industry, almost exclusively in the dress, shoe and garment-making industries, in jobs traditionally considered "women's work". However, 7% were professionals (teachers) -- a rather high percentage for the early 1900s.

With such limited data, it is difficult to deduce what women's status in society was like during that period. Hypotheses offered by research papers on women's status indicate that "throughout this whole period, the mentality and the concept of society were predominantly patriarchal. Some were less conservative than others, but they ultimately agreed that domestic life and motherhood were women's main social role and sphere of activity."¹¹

b. Women From the 1980s On

In the 1980s women's political participation became a specific issue. Recent history re-examined the country's democratic, peaceful, permissive traditions. In this context the women's organizations that formed with the return to democracy began to question the popularly held view of Uruguayan society as "egalitarian".

The fact that women's issues became a specific phenomenon is related to women's appearing on the public scene in new ways. This, in turn, happened as women actually did enter the educational system and work force, in increasing numbers -- undoubtedly the point of reference for all research on changes in women's status in the Western world in the second half of the 20th century.

If women's entry into the work force in Uruguay is somewhat singular, it is because it has often been referred to as a "survival strategy" in a time of economic crisis caused by the economy's prolonged stagnation.

In Montevideo, the rate of women's participation in economic activities went from 27.9% in 1968 to 46.2% in 1988. Real salaries decreased 38% in 1988 and 52% in 1984, using 1968 as a base. However, women's entry into the work force differed according to socioeconomic class. Some have suggested that women's entering the work force was predominately a strategy of the middle-class sector. In lower-middle class and

10. Figueira, N. *Crisis y cambio en la sociedad uruguaya: la situación de las mujeres*. (Crisis and Change in Uruguayan Society: Women's Status), GREC-MU, Montevideo, 1991.

11. Rodríguez, Villamil; Sapriza, Graciela. *Mujer, estado...* op. cit. p. 10.

lower-class sectors, women's lack of qualifications denied the access to jobs that would pay well enough to justify working outside of the home.

In any case, the incidence of women's participation in economic activities should have been reflected as well in decision-making power. However, a well-known Uruguayan expert on women's issues points out that "women's low level of social and political influence is so disproportionate to the amount of socially necessary work they have done that the future of our society seems conditioned, precisely, by this invisible contradiction: lack of power for women in a society that depends on them more and more to overcome numerous adverse situations."¹²

c. Notes on Women's Status: Demographics, Education and Work.

A general demographic reference is that Uruguay's population density has always been low. Additionally, changes in Uruguay demographic patterns occurred earlier than in other Latin American countries, which meant that Uruguay's birth rate was comparable to rates in developed countries. Uruguay's lower birth rate is related to changes in marriage and reproduction patterns, and to the effects of migration, which has intensified in the last few decades. The age at which women have the highest birth rates has changed, shifting from younger women to more adult women, and birth rates decrease steadily as women's educational level increases. As a result, approximately 40% of the children born in Uruguay today are born into poorer families.

Let us examine Uruguay's population by sex. A study conducted by GRECMU¹³, analyzed the proportion of men to women in different ways. We have included some of the study's most significant findings. The 1985 Census showed an increase of women over men. This can be seen as the male ratio (number of males per 100 females) goes down (1963-1985, Chart 1, Annex I). However, figures vary according to geographic area. Female population in rural areas is low: it tends to be more concentrated in urban areas. Additionally, it is predominately men in their productive years who migrate, which contributes to the decrease in the overall male ratio. This can be seen in the figures showing number of males per 100 females by ages, with reductions in the 30-44 and 45-59 age brackets (Chart 2, Annex I). Migration is also predominantly from urban centers, particularly from the capital, which is why the imbalance in sexes in Montevideo is particularly marked in 1985.

There is also data on males and marriage, which shows that there are more single men than women, and that while in the

"Women's low level of social and political influence is so disproportionate to the amount of socially necessary work they have done that the future of our society seems conditioned, precisely, by this invisible contradiction: lack of power for women in a society that depends on them more and more to overcome numerous adverse situations"

12. Figueira, N. *Crisis and Change in Uruguayan Society: Women's Status*, op.cit.

13. *Ibid.*

"married" and "living together" categories the general male to female ratio is maintained, in the "widowed", "divorced" and "separated" categories the male to female ratio is significantly lower. One of several factors involved is that men are more likely to form a new home, which means that an ever-increasing number of women are forced to face raising their children alone, with the resulting social and economic responsibilities (Chart 3, Annex I).

Women seem to have increased their levels of education more than men in the last few decades. Illiteracy rates for men and women decreased between 1963 and 1985 from 9.0% to 4.8% for men and from 8.5% to 3.8% for women. As schooling changed, women's participation in the educational system increased more than men's in general (Chart 4, Annex I). The increase is particularly noticeable in higher education: more and more women are studying at the university. In 1980 the ratio of women to men was already 54 to 46. In 1986 the ratio increased to 59:41, which represents a significant feminization of university enrollments.¹⁴ However, it varies widely according to area of study.¹⁵

14. These figures are from "Educación Superior: ¿Opciones Igualitarias?" ("Higher Education: Equal Opportunities?"), an article in *La Cacerola*, a GRECMU Publication, Year 6, No. 7, July 1988.

15. The same article states that "The main areas with more female students than male students are still: social service, library science, dental assistant, medical technology and psychology, with the percentage of women varying between 80% and 90%; and nursing, nutrition and dietetics and midwifery, with almost 100% women. There have been no major changes in medicine, chemistry, music and architecture, with similar numbers of men and women, while in law, social science and dentistry the percentage of women increased significantly between 1980 and 1986. Economics and administration -formerly male-dominated- now have similar numbers of men and women. The only remaining male-dominated areas of study are three: veterinary science, agronomy and engineering." (ibid., p.11).

16. Nea Filgueira, op.cit. p.30.

17. A study conducted by Hintermester showed that during women's main reproductive years, women's rate of activity in Uruguay is significantly higher than in San Pablo and Buenos Aires. From ages 20 to 24 in Montevideo, the rate is 64.3%; in Buenos Aires 60.9%; and in San Pablo 58.8%. From ages 25 to 29, the rates are: 75.2%, 50.5% and 49.9%, and from ages 30 to 34: 72.6%, 40.4% and 46.1%. [A Hintermester "La mujer en la actividad económica" ("Economically Active Women"), *Cuadernos de Marcha*, June 1968]

It might be said that women have certain "comparative advantages" over men in education. According to the GRECMU study¹⁶, the advantages are very relative if we observe the make-up of the economically active population by levels of education: it has not changed in spite of women's increased education. According to the study "this indicates that women and men are valued differently when it comes to supply and demand. Level of education has much less effect on the probability of becoming part of the work force for men than it does for women. Consequently, even though Uruguayan women on the average have higher levels of education than men, continued application of different hiring criteria minimizes this educational advantage for obtaining a wage or salaried job and puts the equalizing effect of education in question."

As for women's jobs, nationally there was an increase in women's participation in the economically active population from 24.8% in 1963 to 28.4% in 1975 to 33.2% in 1985.

While 49% of Uruguayan women said they were "housewives" in 1963, only 35% did in 1985. Moreover, women's entry into the work force during their most fertile years did not descend -- an important phenomenon. In fact, there is a higher percentage of women in the work force between the ages of 20 and 29 than at any other time.¹⁷ This might indicate that job responsibilities are superimposed on domestic responsibilities, in what has been called women's "double-shift workday" and additionally

that entry into the work force and the resulting "double shift" play a role in lowering birth rates.

Lastly, it is important to mention unemployment and income. The percentage of openly unemployed women increased from 1.9% in 1963 to 2.4% in 1985¹⁸. The percentage for men, on the other hand, decreased from 7.9% to 5.8%. Even though more women entered the work force, studies show that "women lose their jobs more readily than men, especially women who are working for the first time."

Moreover, several studies show differences in men's and women's income¹⁹, both comparing the percentages of women and men who earn up to 1.5 minimum monthly wages and comparing men and women in the same job categories. Thus, studies show²⁰ that in a context of great changes (women's rate of participation went from 27.4% to 47.5% from 1969 to 1991 -- a period of time when demographics did not change much) discrimination in salaries is a very significant phenomenon. 48.7% of women in the economically active population (EAP) in Montevideo, and 37.4% in the rest of the country, has ten or more years of education (cf. men, 41.7% and 23.5%). Nevertheless, there are differences in pay for men and women with the same level of education (discrimination in salaries): 75% in Montevideo and 79% in the rest of the country. Discrimination in salary by gender: a) increases with age, b) increases with level of education in Montevideo; decreases in the rest of the country, c) is decreasing in the private sector and increasing in the public sector, where the influx of women has been greater.

Lastly, the same study showed that discrimination in salaries has been decreasing in the last ten years, which would mean better working conditions in Uruguay. This becomes particularly important when we think of productive and technological reconversion, considering that available human resources are undoubtedly Uruguay's best resource.

d. Women and Gender Values

The key variable in defining the concept of women's status is women's access to valued resources, with gender inequality being a crucial factor. The concept of gender inequality refers to the control women have over these socially valued resources: in other words, the degree to which women have control over their own lives vis-a-vis men, or have particular rights compared to those men have.

Safilios Rothschild defined women's status as "the degree to which women have access to valued resources that can increase their access to information and training as well as to political

Lastly, it is important to mention unemployment and income. The percentage of openly unemployed women increased from 1.9% in 1963 to 2.4% in 1985. The percentage for men, on the other hand, decreased from 7.9% to 5.8%. Even though more women entered the work force, studies show that "women lose their jobs more readily than men, especially women who are working for the first time"

18. In Filgueira, N. op. cit., Chart no. 4.24 "Desempleo abierto como porcentaje de la PEA total (12 años y más) ["Open unemployment as a percentage of the total EAP (over 12)"].

19. Pellegrino, A., (in the study already quoted) concluded, from a sample of 800 women from different socioeconomic classes, that women need more years of education to obtain the same income as men.

20. Díez de Medina, R.; Possi, M., "La mujer en el mercado de trabajo uruguayo: participación, dedicación, segregación y discriminación" (Women in the Uruguayan Work Force: Participation, Dedication, Segregation and Discrimination") Oficina de CEPAL, Montevideo, 1989.

Whether or not women work does not seem to have much effect on the values they hold regarding equality between men and women. Work outside of the home increases inclination to more egalitarian values in women from the middle to upper class, but not in women from the middle to lower class

participation and decision-making power at different levels²¹. Mason²² differentiated between two aspects of social structure: gender stratification and class stratification. In understanding women's reproductive patterns, it is different to ask whether a woman has access to and control over resources as a woman or whether her particular social class gives her certain rights and resources. This theory assumes that women's status is determined by a gender stratification system that places man in a privileged group whose superior status is sustained and reinforced by law, policies and institutional mechanisms that give men preferential treatment: man's dominant position is justified by religious, moral and/or pseudoscientific ideology and beliefs.

Gender stratification operates within the context of social stratification. The lower the degree of social development and/or the degree of equality in income distribution, the lower women's status in terms of her access to valued resources. In the Third World these two systems of inequality reinforce each other.

Research conducted in Montevideo under a project sponsored by the World Health Organization²³ found that people's ideas about gender equality vary according to their social class. Women from the middle to upper class are more clearly inclined towards values that assure equality in men's and women's social roles than women from the middle to lower class are. (Chart 5, Annex I) Additionally, whether or not women work does not seem to have much effect on the values they hold regarding equality between men and women. Work outside of the home increases inclination to more egalitarian values in women from the middle to upper class, but not in women from the middle to lower class.

The same is true for many other values related to gender inequality. The degree to which a woman asserts herself with her husband when it comes to limiting the number of children, abortion, planned parenthood, information on birth control methods and rational decision-making on reproduction are all functions of a woman's social class and not whether or not she works outside of the home.

To summarize, findings of this research project are consistent: having a wage or salaried job increases women's access to socially valued resources for middle-to-upper-class women, but not for middle-to-lower-class women. Therefore, access to valued resources and possibilities for personal realization, and making one's own decisions seem instead to be directly related to socioeconomic class.

21. Rothschild Saffios, C. (1985). "The Status of Women and Fertility in the Third World in the 1970-1980 Decade." *Working Papers*, No. 118, Center for Policy Studies, The Population Council, New York.

22. Mason Oppenheim, K. (1984) *The Status of Women. A Review of its Relationship to Fertility and Mortality*. The Rockefeller Foundation, New York.

23. Moreira, C.; Niedworok, N.; Pellegrino, A. *Ideología de género, roles sexuales y prácticas anticonceptivas (Gender, Sex Role and Birth Control Ideology)*, Informe de Investigación No. 150, CIESU, Montevideo, 1992.

Middle-to-upper-class women work in jobs that allow them to develop personally, while middle-to-lower-class women take jobs because they need to contribute to family income: jobs that don't seem to result in personal rewards. On the contrary, work outside of the home increases the workload of lower-class women who are already overworked on the domestic front and increases stress due to role diversity.

II.2. Women's Political Participation in Uruguay

To examine women's political participation we should first examine political participation in Uruguay in general and, based on that, determine to what degree and in what ways women are included, or rather not included.

Uruguay's political system is in the general category of Western democracy's "democratic pluralism": political parties, each representing more than one social class, formed before Uruguay was consolidated into a nation-state²⁴. The traditional parties (the *Partido Colorado* and the *Partido Nacional*) monopolized the political scene in a two-party system until a third force appeared on the scene in 1971 (*Frente Amplio*, a coalition of the left and the center-left), forming what was called a two-and-a-half party system²⁵.

The two traditional parties always ran the government. Their characteristics led them to be called "catch-all" organizations²⁶, since they linked together many factions representing a wide range of contradictory interests. The channels of communication they established with civil society were based on the "high permeability of state bureaucracy".²⁷ Thus, the mode of interaction between the political and civil spheres, whether in terms of participation, pressure and/or coopting, hindered the evolution of social stakeholders who were independent from the State and political parties.

Under these circumstances, social participation was a possible form of political action. The groups that dominated the public scene were the political parties and some other "traditional" groups: the labor and student movements. These groups were not precisely paragons of women's participation, especially the political and labor groups.

The suspension of the institutions of democratic pluralism (political parties, elections, parliament) in 1973 led to a search for alternative channels of participation. Thus, in the early 80s we saw social groups and movements emerge which, in their opposition to the State, made demands closely related to people's quality of life problems. Soup kitchens appeared in different barrios of Montevideo; several consumer cooperatives emerged in different areas of Montevideo; certain

In the early 80s we saw social groups and movements emerge which, in their opposition to the State, made demands closely related to people's quality of life problems

24. González, Luis E.: "Los Partidos Políticos y la Redemocratización" ("Political Parties and Redemocratization"), in *Cuadernos del CLAEH*, 2nd Series, No. 37; 1986, Montevideo, Uruguay.

25. In the elections before the coup, the *Frente Amplio* coalition obtained 18% of the votes nationally, and 30% in Montevideo, making it the second strongest political force in the capital, after the *Partido Colorado*.

26. González, Luis E.: op. cit. 1986.

27. Filgueira, Carlos: "Estado, política y movimientos sociales en el nuevo orden" ("The State, Politics and Social Movements in the New Order"), in *Los conflictos por la constitución de un nuevo orden* (*Conflicts in the Making of a New Order*); CLACSO, 1987.

It was during this time that groups or movements that concentrated exclusively on gender issues emerged, such as the feminist movement, and a whole range of organizations in which mostly women participated ("women's" movements) gained strength

A 1988 bill introduced quotas to correct the situation that the more important the public office, the fewer women candidates were nominated by political parties

organizations having to do with housing (*FUCVAM, MOVIDE*, etc.) made a strong reappearance; there was a human rights movement; etc. It was during this time that groups or movements that concentrated exclusively on gender issues emerged, such as the feminist movement, and a whole range of organizations in which mostly women participated ("women's" movements) gained strength. Some authors maintain that the characteristics of these organizations during a time of authoritarian rule (less specialization required to operate, domestic roles extended to the community level) made it easier for women to participate.

When democracy returned, so did the traditional collective stakeholders (political parties, labor unions, student unions); those that were either founded or redirected under the dictatorship, and had been more active during that period, either readjusted or disappeared.

A brief assessment is that there was a rebirth of Uruguay's classic participatory framework. However, there were basically two differences: Uruguay was now specifically an arena for citizen participation and women's presence in different collective or public spaces was somewhat recognized and became somewhat of an issue. For example, as political parties reactivated they set up specific commissions on women's status. Additionally, numerous grassroots organizations formed whose demands had to do with barrio needs, basically in infrastructure (sanitation, garbage, etc.), and what we might call "social rights" (health, housing, needs of children, etc.).

Currently we have a participatory model that combines the predominating "classic" structures of participation, from which women are largely excluded, and the new channels of expression, where women are very involved.

a. Women's Participation as Candidates in Elections

There is no data on women's participation in political organizations. However, no political party has ever nominated a woman candidate for the two highest national offices -- president or vice president. Only in the most recent elections were there women candidates for department *intendente*, nominated by the *Frente Amplio*.

A 1988 bill introduced quotas to correct the situation that the more important the public office, the fewer women candidates were nominated by political parties. Some authors point out that "the proposed affirmative action ('positive discrimination') has been considerably rejected based on the argument that any discrimination is unconstitutional and that women should "earn" political office"²⁸. Moreover, this same study pointed out

28. Aguirre, R. *Participación socio-política de la mujeres en Uruguay (Women's Socio-Political Participation in Uruguay)*, 1991, op.cit., pg. 10.

the reasons that allegedly keep women from participating politically: family and domestic responsibilities on top of jobs and lack of interest to participate in a context that is highly masculine and not very receptive to feminine style.

In response to the proposed "quotas" for women's participation, the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (Socialist Workers' Party) approved quotas for women candidates in 1984, the *Frente Amplio* voted against quotas as a means of increasing women's participation in 1991 and shortly thereafter the *Partido Socialista* voted in favor of quotas, with the percentage to be determined.

A group of women in public office who met together recently in Uruguay reached the following conclusions, among others²⁹.

They recognized that women's participation has mostly been in local organizations, or tied to these organizations, and that this arena has provided women with very important learning experiences, but concluded that permanent connections to NGOs should be formed so that the information and training women need to be able to hold public office can be continually updated. They also concluded that women who hold political office must continue to pay attention to gender concerns.

"Perhaps many of them forget that they are in those offices because of the efforts of women's organizations" or that "simply getting in office does not solve the problems women have in gaining access to the political arena". Lastly, they agreed that the problems of women's political participation are not strictly local, but are of a more general nature.

b. Women as Voters

Until 1966, there were more men than women registered to vote in Uruguay (Chart 11, Annex I). By 1971 there were more women than men registered to vote in Montevideo, although not in the rest of the country.

In 1966, percentages of men and women registered to vote in Montevideo were almost even, but later on women voters became a clear majority. In the rest of the country, the percentage of women voters is lower than the percentage of men voters, even today. However, beginning with the 1984 elections, more women have voted than men, nationally.

The next question is "How do women vote?"

Since voting in Uruguay is mandatory, abstentions are minimal, so we can't analyze "political apathy" -- in terms of voting -- by sex. Neither can we analyze voter behavior by sex, since women and men vote in the same election circuits.

Women's participation has mostly been in local organizations, or tied to these organizations, and that this arena has provided women with very important learning experiences

29. Encuentro de mujeres con cargos políticos convocadas por el Consejo Nacional de Mujeres (CONAMU) (Meeting of Women in Public Office convened by the National Women's Council) on July 23 and 24, 1992. *La República de las Mujeres*. Aug. 9, 1992, Montevideo, Uruguay.

The "anticipatory" laws of the modernizing project helped strengthen a political culture based on extending citizens' rights, with very important equalizing components both in terms of class and gender. But to what degree have these cultural components resulted in true equality? Or, to what extent are women involved in decision making?

We do have the findings of public opinion surveys that measure men's and women's choices on a left-to-right continuum of different party factions and their activities.

A survey conducted by *CIEDUR* in Montevideo in May, 1990 (Chart 12, Annex I) had two categories: the "progressive" vote and the "traditional party" vote. The "progressive" vote included some factions of the traditional political parties, the coalition of leftist parties under the *Frente Amplio* banner, and a fourth party split off from the *Frente Amplio*. According to this survey of 70% of "active" men and 62% of "active" women vote for "non-traditional" options. Percentages of "inactive" (retired) men and women who vote for "non-traditional" options are 40% and 30% respectively. In another category, 58% of housewives vote for non-traditional options. Survey findings support the "classic" view of women's political predisposition: overall, women make more "conservative" choices than men.

II.3 Women in Federal Government

As we said in the introduction, understanding the federal government is central to understanding women's status in Uruguay. The "anticipatory" laws of the modernizing project helped strengthen a political culture based on extending citizens' rights, with very important equalizing components both in terms of class and gender. But to what degree have these cultural components resulted in true equality? Or, to what extent are women involved in decision making? These questions lead us to the topic of women in federal government.

a. Women in Public Administration (Executive Branch)

A study on women in public administration stresses that "from an ideological point of view, public administration is a good place for examining all the concepts that link women to power, to a career in "public service", etc."³⁰

The federal government administration consists of all the executive power offices and services, including the ministries. This is where social demands are handled and decisions on public policies are made. Although the number of federal employees decreased by 26.7% between 1969 and 1990, the percentage of women employees increased from 26.6% to 41.9% over the same period of time. Furthermore, the women employed by the federal government are younger than the men, overall: 50% of female employees are between 25 and 40 years old.

Female employees are by no means equally distributed throughout federal government: the rate of female employees varies, with the highest rate in the Ministry of Public Health

30. In I. Da Silveira, M. Hermida, N. Nazarenko "Presencia de la mujer en la Administración Pública" ("Women's Presence in Public Administration") in *Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya (Women and Power On the Fringes of Uruguayan Democracy)* GRECMU, Montevideo, 1990.

and the lowest in the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works (Chart 6, Annex I) This correlates clearly with the ratio of men to women in different areas of university studies, as mentioned above.

Regarding what rank position women hold within the central administration (Chart 7, Annex I), more than 50% of female public officials are in three job levels: *technical*, *administrative* and *judicial* personnel. People working at the *technical* level have either completed their coursework, but not yet graduated from the university; are in their first years of university studies; or have not yet completed their studies. Most female public officials are at the *administrative* level. *Judicial* personnel are professional lawyers, with a higher proportion of women. The lack of women at the *political* and *top security* levels is notable. Thus, the abovementioned study points out that "We make frequent references these days to (women's) exclusion from political life. The lack of women at the *top security* level -- if we consider experience at this level to be a necessary step in a truly political career -- shows how slow progress is in women's participation in decision-making"³¹.

The same study indicates that women's participation in decision-making takes place mostly in the first stages of the process: searching for and recognizing situations that require decisions, and developing and analyzing alternatives. Choosing among alternatives for action seems to still be a predominately male area, even though the same study says that we are currently seeing more and more "a growing desire on the part of women to participate in all stages of decision-making, to have a say in complex decisions that would allow them to have an effect on the organization's operations and on the public policies determined by those decisions". The study also says there is a "tendency to equalize distribution of men and women at other levels of administration"³².

b. Women in the Poder Judicial (Judicial Branch)

There seem to be relatively more women in the judicial branch than there are in the legislative branch. A study conducted in Uruguay³³ shows that women predominate in the *Poder Judicial*, with 54% of the positions held by women. If we look at the distribution of women in different jurisdictional positions (Chart 8, Annex I) we see that there are many women in all categories, with the exception of Justices of the Peace outside of Montevideo, which has fewer women (37%). Nevertheless, the higher the position in the judiciary, the lower the percentage of women. Only 16% of Courts of Appeal Judges are women and there are no female Supreme Court Justices (Chart 9, Annex I).

A study conducted in Uruguay shows that women predominate in the Poder Judicial, with 54% of the positions held by women

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 92.

32. En I. Da Silveira, M. Hermida, N. Nazarenko "Women in Public Administration", *op. cit.*, pg. 96.

33. G. Cabella, G. D'Alessandro, C. Mallada, H. Pérez "Participación de la mujer en el Poder Judicial" ("Women in the Judicial Positions") in *Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya*, *op. cit.*

c. Women in the *Cámara de Diputados y Senadores* (Legislative Branch)

From research conducted in 1991³⁴, we can track women in both chambers from 1962 to the present (Chart 10, Annex I). From 1962 to 1966 there were three women in the *Cámara de Diputados* and one in the *Cámara de Senadores*. From 1966 to 1970 there were no women in the *Cámara de Diputados*, but there were several in the *Cámara de Senadores*. The 1970 to 1974 period was interrupted by the coup d'état, so the figures shown are only for the first three years: there was one woman in the *Cámara de Diputados*, but no female senators. Nor were there any women in the *Cámara de Senadores* in the periods following the return to democracy. However, the *Cámara de Diputados*, with six women members for the 1989-1994 period, has the highest percentage ever of women.

II.4. Women in Civil Society

a. Women in Labor Unions

The growing number of women in the work force should be considered in relation to the numbers of women in the labor union movement. This "sphere of action" for women, which is one of the "classic" arenas for citizen participation, is very important given the weight of the labor union movement overall in the political arena in terms of "typical" stakeholders in Uruguay.

While there is no data on women's overall participation in the labor unions, we do know something about women's involvement in different work categories -- "typically female" areas³⁵. Women are the majority in unions in areas like teaching, health and the garment making and leather industry. However, men have a major percentage of leadership positions in these unions. In primary education, while 92% of the teachers are women, only 33% of union leadership positions are held by women. In the garment industry, the percentages of women employed and women in decision-making positions are 88% and 55% respectively; in the textiles industry the percentages are 71% and 22%; in the fishing industry, the ratio of employee to leadership participation is substantially higher, with percentages of 65% and 50% (Chart 13, Annex I).

Additionally, studies show that women participate more when union decision-making is handled by broader-based groups as in assemblies and plenary sessions and lower when handled by more restricted or high-level groups. The same studies show that *Consejos de Salarios* (tripartite meetings, with representatives from the federal government, management and

34. Lissidini, A. Participación sociopolítica de las mujeres en Montevideo (Women's Socio-Political Participation in Montevideo), Unpublished Report of Research from the Programa de becas de CLACSO (CLACSO Scholarship Program), Sociology Department, School of Social Sciences. Quoted in *Women and Participación socio-política de las mujeres en Uruguay, Serie INVESTIGACIONES*, No. 92, CIEDUR, Montevideo, 1991.

35. Ibid.

the union, that make decisions on salaries) have just 7% female participation (estimate based on forty-seven *consejos*).

It should also be taken into account that a large portion of working women are employed in informal sectors. It is estimated that 25% of economically active women are domestic servants, while just a few hundred belong to the union representing this sector.

There have been new developments in the last two decades. The topic of "women" has emerged as a specific issue and a Women's Commission was formed by the union movement. Created in 1987, its goal is to promote women's participation in unions. Women's Commissions were then formed in different unions (*AFE*, *UTE*, University Employees, the textiles industry union, *FUNSA*, the health-care industry union, etc.) and gatherings of women workers took place in Montevideo and the rest of the country.

The National Seminar of Women Workers, held in May 1987, was a milestone³⁶. "For the first time in the history of Uruguay's labor union movement more than one hundred women delegates put together a document of women's specific demands. The document was presented and unanimously approved by the *Congreso Extraordinario* (special session of congress) of *PIT-CNT*" The demands presented ranged from general concerns (work conditions, unemployment, salary discrimination) to specific concerns (day-care centers, half-time leave for breastfeeding, breast and cervical cancer prevention, dining halls, laundry areas, etc.)

b. Women's Participation in Social Movements

Research conducted on social movements in Uruguay³⁷ detected a significant increase in women's organizations in Uruguay³⁸. The new organizations seem quite different than the ones that existed from the late 1800s up to the 1940s. In fact, most of the feminist movements that focussed back then on extending civil and political rights to women fell apart or no longer had any purpose after the laws passed in 1932 and 1946.

The new organizations of the 1980s were different, and the difference is related to the changes in Uruguay's political system. To a large degree these groups can be seen as civil society's reaction to years of authoritarianism. However, they are also a response to what is thought of as the "formal" equality set up by legislation in past decades. In terms of the civil and political rights actually exercised by women, real inequality still existed: thus, the old gender demands of past decades were revived.

Research conducted on social movements in Uruguay detected a significant increase in women's organizations in Uruguay. The new organizations seem quite different than the ones that existed from the late 1800s up to the 1940s

36. See "LAS MUJERES TRABAJANDO: desafíos y respuestas" ("WOMEN WORKING: Challenges and Responses") in *La Cacerola*, GREMU, Year 5, Nº 7, July 1988.

37. "Movimientos sociales en la restauración del orden democrático: Uruguay 1985" ("Social Movements in Democratic Reconstruction: Uruguay 1985") Filgueira, C. in *Los movimientos sociales ante la crisis* (Social Movements in a Time of Crisis), compiled by Calderón, F. UNU, CLACSO, IISUNAM, Buenos Aires, 1986.

38. These groups have basically been classified into: housewives' organizations; working women's organizations; human rights organizations; research and action groups; well-established feminist organizations and groups of women politicians.

Of the movements identified in this period, three were highlighted by the study as a second-story organization that consolidated several initiatives: the *Plenario de Mujeres Uruguayas* (Uruguayan Women's Plenary - PLEMU), the *Federación Uruguaya de Amas de Casa* (Uruguayan Housewives' Federation - FUADEC) and the *Comisión de Mujeres Uruguayas* (Uruguayan Women's Commission - CMU). While these three were not grassroots groups with large numbers of members, their role in getting women together and providing learning experiences is by no means insignificant in the history of women's movements. Without stopping to analyze this any further, it is interesting to note how gender concerns became an issue as a result of reactions of resistance to the authoritarian regime. A declaration made by PLEMU in 1984 at the Seminar on Popular Organizations illustrates this point:

While traditionally there have been few women in leadership positions in Uruguay's political parties, women have had a significant presence at the grassroots level

"A second stage (..) is the one we are in now, in which, with traditional channels of participation reopened, women's issues emerge as a concrete concern and there is more awareness of the need for twofold feminine militancy: the general demands of constructing a new society, plus specific attention to women's place in that movement, to assure that the new society does not include the discriminatory modes of behavior which some women were already aware of, and which others became aware of as they began to participate."

Lastly, let us review women's involvement in political parties. While traditionally there have been few women in leadership positions in Uruguay's political parties, women have had a significant presence at the grassroots level. As we pointed out in the section on women and public administration, after the return to democracy women's level of participation decreased drastically in the senate, although at the same time it increased in the *Cámara de Diputados* and there are more women *junta departamental* members. To summarize, everything seems to indicate that there is an invasion of women's presence, from the ground up, that has not yet consolidated at the highest levels of decision-making.

It should be emphasized that these movements have been women's movements rather than feminist movements. Feminist demands are more a part of middle-class women's movements. This coincides with what was said in the section on women's predispositions in terms of attitudes and values. Research in this area has demonstrated that "egalitarian" concepts of men's and women's roles come largely from the middle class culture. Thus, we could say that pressure for equal opportunities for men and women is concentrated in the

middle class: women who work and have fewer children, especially the younger and more educated ones.

But it is interesting to observe what happens "down below"; in organizations where women feel continuity with their domestic roles; in local, neighborhood organizations; where women's movements are more movements by women than movements for women.

c. **Women in local organizations and neighborhood commissions**

Beyond the "classic" features of the political system, an analysis of social movements shows us that women's participation was revitalized. Let us now examine an area even more peripheral to decision-making systems: local-level collective action, where female participation becomes very important.

In a study on neighborhood commissions in the department of Montevideo, an interesting feminine "phenomenon"³⁹ was detected, i.e. the broadening of women's "natural" concerns regarding their living conditions to include the neighborhood; although this is not new, it has increased greatly in the past decade. This is directly related to a "politicization" of daily life, to take the place of the traditional channels of political participation, which were proscribed during the years of authoritarian regime.

Involvement at the neighborhood level was perceived as an extension of the domestic role, but also placed women in contact with public administration. Even if these participation mechanisms were not worth analyzing for other reasons, they have provided the "natural" stepping-stone for the move from private to public affairs.

This study centers its attention on the operation of neighborhood associations with female majorities, compared to those in which most members are men. The study found that the more depressed the neighborhood, the higher the number of mostly-women organizations. This shows the "impact of economic problems and how they affect women, as managers of the household".⁴⁰

Perhaps the most interesting point is how these associations' mode of organization varies depending on the majority gender. Apparently, among women the hierarchical relations blur, becoming more egalitarian, with more collective leadership. These organizations also reflect greater instability, with fewer formalities (by-laws, legal procedures, etc.) but greater flexibility.

In a study on neighborhood commissions in the department of Montevideo, an interesting feminine "phenomenon" was detected, i.e. the broadening of women's "natural" concerns regarding their living conditions to include the neighborhood; although this is not new, it has increased greatly in the past decade

39. *La participación de las mujeres en las comisiones vecinales de Montevideo: ¿un camino de cambio? (Women's Participation in Montevideo Neighborhood Commissions: A Pathway Toward Change?)* Bruera, S., González, M. Paper presented to the Seminar on Women and the Municipality: A New Community Presence in Latin American Local Development, Quito, March 1991.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Beyond these early -- and largely "formal" -- rights won for women, they have actually swelled the working and educational ranks, in numbers and participation, during the last two decades. However, the weight of women's presence is not reflected in their decision-making power

The most interesting process may be the trend toward "bottom-up" invasion: women who are getting in at the ground floor

II.5 Some final considerations

In the context of the changes that have occurred in the last two decades in Latin America, the gender issue has appeared with unexpected force as a specific concern. Does this focus reflect differences in women's status now compared to their peers in previous decades?

Uruguay doubtlessly merits special attention because of its extremely favorable starting-point, with laws enacted so early this century to improve the equality of women and men in political and social rights. This "formal" equalization of rights surely coexisted with *de facto* inequality in their enforcement, but their influence cannot be ignored. The modernization attempted at the turn of the century contributed to making society culturally homogenous and basically "egalitarian" in its beliefs.

Beyond these early -- and largely "formal" -- rights won for women, they have actually swelled the working and educational ranks, in numbers and participation, during the last two decades.

However, the weight of women's presence is not reflected in their decision-making power. Though women have completely "taken over" some fields of activity, their input in the labor union movement, for example, is minimal. Similarly, there are more women than men voting, but political positions are the other way around. Finally, though women in the economically active population are better-educated than men, there is overall salary discrimination, and more so among mid-level, educated workers.

However, the most interesting process may be the trend toward "bottom-up" invasion: women who are getting in at the ground floor. Examples are:

- 1) growing advances by women in the labor market and education (e.g. the "feminization" of university enrollment) increases women's sway over the training of the country's most skilled human resources.
- 2) Increased lower-level political activity (more female *edilas* in the *intendencia*, more congresswomen in the *Cámara de Diputados*).
- 3) Women in the broad-based labor-union bodies (assemblies, plenary meetings).
- 4) More women at the political grassroots (local, neighborhood and such movements). "Women's" movements are also growing in those organizational areas in which women see continuity with their domestic affairs, in local and neighborhood organizations and positions.

However, women's access to decision-making is considerably delayed, due to a number of factors:

1. Women's own predisposition to participate or not in decision-making cannot be ignored. Beyond "actual discrimination" there are also values and attitudes whereby women themselves support gender/role differentiation. Some studies have shown that "feminist" demands (concerning gender inequality as a specific problem) has been basically a middle-class women's movement concern. Moreover, the most "egalitarian" concepts regarding male/female roles are largely of interest to the cultured middle class. Hence, it seems to be that the middle-class, working, youngest, best-educated women who reproduce the least are the ones who pressure most strongly for equal opportunities.
2. Doubtlessly, women's participation in decision-making is affected by their overload of work and family obligations, which limit their access to power and prestige. The burden of family and domestic responsibilities, plus work, largely explains why women themselves feel they cannot participate. Though this is not a "specifically Uruguayan" situation, it does find particularly little organized support (day care, etc.).

However, there may be a more interesting angle:

3. Some studies have shown that women have input in decision-making in the early stages: recognizing situations and seeking alternatives. However, the actual "decision" remains predominantly a male prerogative. How much does this depend on women's own unwillingness to take the risks involved?

Studies have generally shown that women participate more in broader mechanisms (assemblies, plenary meetings) and less in more restricted, top-level decision-making. Similarly, women's political proving-grounds have largely been grassroots movements, local organizations, etc. Furthermore, in "women's organizations" hierarchical relations seem to blur, with more equality among members and more collective leadership. This tells us that women's decision-making, as they have developed it, is definitely not "managerial" (highly centralized, quick and ready to take risks).

Studies have generally shown that women participate more in broader mechanisms (assemblies, plenary meetings) and less in more restricted, top-level decision-making. Similarly, women's political proving-grounds have largely been grassroots movements, local organizations, etc. Furthermore, in "women's organizations" hierarchical relations seem to blur, with more equality among members and more collective leadership. This tells us that women's decision-making, as they have developed it, is definitely not "managerial" (highly centralized, quick and ready to take risks)

In summary, although women are now more involved in grassroots decision-making, they have not yet made decisive strides there. The problem is that managerial-type decision-making has developed in a way that is largely alien to women. In view of the ways women have been participating, it

would not seem likely that they would drastically change their decision-making input in the short term. However, changes during the last few decades point to major modifications in the "structure" of participation in the medium term. This leads us to think that new attitudes and values (for men and women) will take root deeply on this new structural foundation.

The above panorama shows a number of levels on which there are obstacles to women's incorporation in public life. However, there is one particularly relevant issue: formal vs. actual rights. This area of contradiction and/or conflict applies to women in public positions and the population at large. The state created an imaginary "citizen being" decades ago, ignoring gender differences, but civil society has also reaffirmed this fictional creation which, being a cultural construct, has remained unchanged over time.

The above panorama shows a number of levels on which there are obstacles to women's incorporation in public life. However, there is one particularly relevant issue: formal vs. actual rights. This area of contradiction and/or conflict applies to women in public positions and the population at large

ANNEX I

CHART 1

RATIO OF MALES BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA (PER 100 FEMALES)

	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	MONTEVIDEO
1963	99.0	92.9	129.6	91.2
1975	96.5	90.5	132.0	87.8
1985	94.9	89.6	138.5	86.9

SOURCE: "CRISIS Y CAMBIO EN LA SOCIEDAD URUGUAYA: la situación de las mujeres" (CRISIS AND CHANGE IN URUGUAYAN SOCIETY: Women's Status) Nea Filgueira, GRECMU, 1991, elaborated from DGEC census data.

CHART 2

RATIO OF MALES BY AGE. TOTALS FOR THE COUNTRY (PER 100 FEMALES)

AGES	1963	1975	1985
0-14	102.9	103.2	104.0
15-29	97.9	97.8	98.6
39-44	99.3	97.0	96.0
45-49	102.2	97.4	93.4
Over 60	87.8	82.1	76.7

SOURCE: "CRISIS Y CAMBIO EN LA SOCIEDAD URUGUAYA: la situación de las mujeres" (CRISIS AND CHANGE IN URUGUAYAN SOCIETY: Women's Status) Nea Filgueira, GRECMU, 1991, elaborated from DGEC census data.

CHART 3

MEN FOR EVERY 100 WOMEN WITH THE SAME MARITAL STATUS

YEAR	SINGLE	MARRIED	WIDOWED	DIVORCED	LIVING TOGETHER	SEPARATED
1963	122.6	99.0	25.1	60.5	95.7	---
1975	121.4	99.0	21.4	58.8	97.5	71.4
1985	120.9	99.8	18.2	54.9	97.6	66.7

SOURCE: "CRISIS Y CAMBIO EN LA SOCIEDAD URUGUAYA: la situación de las mujeres" (CRISIS AND CHANGE IN URUGUAYAN SOCIETY: Women's Status) Nea Filgueira, GRECMU, 1991, elaborated from DGEC census data.

CHART 4

CHANGES IN EDUCATION LEVELS OF THE POPULATION FROM 1963-1985, BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS (over age 15)

EDUCATION LEVEL	WOMEN		MEN	
	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL
No schooling	-38.4	-67.4	-42.0	-60.2
Primary	-4.6	-42.6	-8.5	-17.7
Secondary	81.9	94.5	57.1	85.3
Technical	298.8	355.1	261.3	246.5
Secondary/ Post-Sec.	307.0	208.2	256.9	188.4
Higher	336.3	274.7	60.6	91.8

SOURCE: "CRISIS Y CAMBIO EN LA SOCIEDAD URUGUAYA: la situación de las mujeres" (CRISIS AND CHANGE IN URUGUAYAN SOCIETY: Women's Status) Nea Filgueira, GRECMU, 1991, elaborated from DGEC census data.

CHART 5

INCLINATION TOWARDS PATRIARCHAL VALUES IN WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN AND BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS

IDEOLOGICAL PATRIARCHALISM %	MID-HIGHER CLASS		MID-LOWER CLASS		TOTAL
	WORKING	NON-WKNG	WORKING	NON-WKNG	
VERY HIGH	8.8	15.6	24.7	35.6	21.6
MEDIUM HIGH	12.2	19.6	26.8	19.4	19.4
MEDIUM	28.8	24.6	16.0	18.0	21.8
MEDIUM LOW	20.5	19.0	14.9	18.9	18.4
VERY LOW	29.8	21.2	17.5	8.1	18.9
TOTAL	25.6	22.4	24.3	27.8	100

SOURCE: "Ideología de Género y roles sexuales" ("Gender Ideology and Sex Roles") Research Report No. 52, C. Moreira, N. Niedworok, A. Pellegrino, CIESU, December 1990.

CHART 6

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT AGENCIES OF THE ADMINISTRACION CENTRAL, 1990

AGENCY	% of Women
Presidential Office	38.1
Ministry of Defense	28.8
M. of Economics and Finances	37.9
M. of Foreign Affairs	49.8
M. of Livestock, Agriculture and Fishing	26.3
M. of Industry and Energy	31.4
M. of Tourism	48.0
M. of Transportation and Public Works	13.4
M. of Education and Culture	41.0
M. of Public Health	69.9
M. of Labor and Social Security	42.1
TOTAL	41.9

SOURCE: "Presencia de la mujer en la Administración Pública" ("Women in Public Administration"), by I. Da Silveira, M. Hermida, N. Nazarenko in Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya (Women and Power on the Fringes of Uruguayan Democracy), GRECMU, 1990.

CHART 7

PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ADMINISTRACION CENTRAL BY RANK

Rank	Men	Women
A. Professionals	62.0	38.0
B. Technicians	43.5	65.5
C. Administrators	47.6	52.4
D. Specialized Personnel	51.5	48.5
E. Skilled Labor	91.6	8.4
F. Auxillary Services	58.7	41.3
N. Judicial	45.9	54.1
P. Political Personnel	100	----
Q. Top-Security Personnel	87.9	12.1

SOURCE: "Presencia de la mujer en la Administración Pública" ("Women in Public Administration"), by I. Da Silveira, M. Hermida, N. Nazarenko in Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya (Women and Power On the Fringes of Uruguayan Democracy), GRECMU, 1990.

CHART 8

WOMEN IN JUDICIAL POSITIONS. *PODER JUDICIAL*. 1990

	TOTAL (Absolute #)	WOMEN (%)
Supreme Court Justices	5	—
Court of Appeals Judges	43	16
Judges in Montevideo	85	51
Judges in the rest of the country	74	41
Justices of the Peace in Montevideo	42	86
Departmental J. of the Peace in the rest of the country	36	75
Justices of the Peace in the rest of the country	205	37

SOURCE: "Participación de la mujer en el Poder Judicial" ("Women in the Poder Judicial") G. Cabella, G. D'Alessandro, C. Mallada, H. Pérez in *Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya (Women and Power On the Fringes of Uruguayan Democracy)*, GRECMU, Montevideo, 1990.

CHART 9

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION BY POSITION. *PODER JUDICIAL*. 1990

Judges outside of Montevideo	55%
Judges in Montevideo	51%
Court of Appeals Judges	16%
Supreme Court Justices	0%

SOURCE: "Participación de la mujer en el Poder Judicial" ("Women in the Poder Judicial") G. Cabella, G. D'Alessandro, C. Mallada, H. Pérez in *Mujer y Poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya (Women and Power On the Fringes of Uruguayan Democracy)*, GRECMU, Montevideo, 1990.

CHART 10

EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMARA DE DIPUTADOS Y SENADORES. Uruguay 1962-1989.

YEARS	CAMARA DE DIPUTADOS	CAMARA DE SENADORES
1962-1966	3	1
1966-1970	0	1
1970-...	1	0
1984-1989	0	0
1989	6	0

SOURCE: Lissidini, A: "Participación socio-política de las mujeres en Montevideo" ("Women's Socio-Political Participation in Montevideo") (1991) in Aguirre, op.cit.

CHART 11

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN AND MEN IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY: ELIGIBLE VOTERS 1958-1989

YEAR	MONTEVIDEO		URUGUAY	
	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN
1954	46.5	53.5	46.0	54.0
1958	47.5	52.5	46.9	53.1
1962	48.2	51.8	47.7	52.3
1966	49.4	50.6	48.5	51.6
1971	51.4	48.6	49.7	50.3
1984	52.8	47.2	51.0	40.0

SOURCE: LA REPUBLICA DE LAS MUJERES, ¿Cuántas mujeres votamos? (WOMEN IN URUGUAY, How many of us vote?) 11/26/89 by Venturini, Angel R., "Estadísticas Electorales 1917-1989" ("1917-1989 Voting Statistics") Banda Oriental, Editor

CHART 12

VOTING IN THE 1989 ELECTIONS BY ACTIVITY CATEGORY AND BY SEX, MONTEVIDEO

VOTING IN ELECTIONS	MEN		WOMEN		
	ACTIVE	RETIRED	ACTIVE	HOUSE-WIVES	RETIRED
Voted for "traditional parties"	30	60	38	42	70
"Progressive" vote	70	40	62	58	30
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

SOURCE: CIEDUR, Second Survey in Montevideo, May 1990. "Progressive" vote includes Fernández Feingold in the Partido Colorado, Pereira in the Partido Nacional, and votes for Nuevo Espacio and the Frente Amplio.

CHART 13

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PREDOMINATELY FEMALE AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES

AREA	% OF WOMEN	% OF WOMEN IN ADMINISTRATION OR MANAGEMENT
Teaching (Primary)	92	33
Teaching (Secondary)	73	—
Clothing	88	55
Textiles	71	22
Health	—	40
Fishing	65	50

SOURCE: CIEDUR, Rosario Aguirre "Participación socio-política de las mujeres en Uruguay" ("Women's Socio-Political Participation in Uruguay"), Serie INVESTIGACIONES, No. 92, based on the Household Survey, 1st semester 1990, interviews with union leaders and voter registration lists, March-April 1991.

III. THE "EDILAS"⁴¹ OF THE 19 DEPARTMENTS

III.1 Working methodology

In October 1992, each "edila"⁴² for each of the 19 departments of Uruguay was sent a self-administered questionnaire.⁴³ Available resources made this the approach of choice, sending and receiving the information by fax.

This form was, first, to contact these women and gather pertinent information, in order to prepare a profile of the country's female legislators. Variables included age, marital status, number of children, children's ages, educational background, occupation, family political background, etc. The survey also elicited the *edilas*' opinion on *junta departamental* attention to gender issues and their knowledge of and contact with organizations and demands involving women's status.

Since self-administered surveys often have a low response rate, the form was designed to sensitize respondents to the study's contents, with the understanding that these data would later be complemented by a final meeting of women who are active in municipalities.

Better than expected, half the *edilas* answered by the deadline.⁴⁴ All *edilas* responded in the departments of Montevideo, Canelones, Cerro Largo, Maldonado, Rocha, Salto and San José. By contrast, we heard nothing from Artigas or Rivera.

This quantitative description of communal legislators was fleshed out using information from two types of sources: interviews, and data taken from official records.

Interviews were held with four *edilas* of the department of Montevideo in November and December 1992. Cases were chosen for a broad assortment of political parties⁴⁵ and consideration -- at least -- for differences in age and previous occupation. The first round of interviews were private and semi-structured. The second round, however, was filmed, with a script covering issues for a working video.⁴⁶

III.2 What political sectors do they represent?

Out of the 60 women elected, nationwide, more belong to the *Partido Nacional* than the other parties. This does not necessarily mean that the *Partido Nacional* is more open to female representation than the others, just that, as a party, it carried most departments and thereby won more seats overall.

Proportionally, by parties, the *Frente Amplio edilas* are 20% of their party's representatives in the 19 departments; the *Partido*

Out of the 60 women elected, nationwide, more belong to the *Partido Nacional* than the other parties. This does not necessarily mean that the *Partido Nacional* is more open to female representation than the others, just that, as a party, it carried most departments and thereby won more seats overall

41. Translator's note: These local legislative representatives are called "edil" (singular masculine/generic), "ediles" (plural/generic) or "edila/edilas" (feminine singular and plural).

42. See listing of municipal representatives from the entire country, Annex II.

43. See survey form, Annex II.

44. After we had closed our data files, some forms were received belatedly, for various reasons. They were subsequently processed, and indicated no differences in comparison with the universe first analyzed.

45. Each belongs to a different party in the *junta departamental* of Montevideo: *Frente Amplio*, *Partido Nacional* and *Partido Colorado*.

46. The project produced the "Comuniquer" video using these interviews.

Colorado edilas are 10% of their party's elected representatives and the *Partido Nacional edilas* are 8%.

Excluding Montevideo (discussed separately), *Nacional edilas* were 13.3% of their party's representatives, *Colorados* 11.2%, and *Frentists* 7.4%. Evidently, a higher overall number of places makes it possible to include more women. However, it is also clear that women are not equally represented, even then.

Number of *Edilas* elected, divided by the total for each party, by departments

Department	Titular <i>edilas</i>	P.Colorado Total/women	P.Nacional Total/women	F.Amplio Total/women
Artigas	3	16	1	13
Canelones	0	9	0	16
Cerro Largo	3	9	0	20
Colonia	3	11	3	16
Durazno	3	8	1	21
Flores	3	10	0	18
Florida	2	10	0*	16
Lavalleja	7	12	4	17
Montevideo	7	6	1	6
Maldonado	2	10	1	16
Paysandú	5	11	4	16
Río Negro	6	16	4	12
Rivera	4	14	1*	16
Rocha	1	13	1	16
Salto	0	12	0	16
Soriano	0	11	0	16
San José	2	8	0	16
Tacuarembó	5	12	3	17
Treinta y Tres	4	12	2	18
Total	589-60	210/21	314/24	53/10
	11%	10%	8%	20%

* Numbers with an asterisk show where we are sure that more women are involved because there are female deputy representatives.

This chart does not include the *Partido por el Gobierno del Pueblo* because it has no female *edilas*.

III.3 The search for a common territorial framework

It may be assumed that women are incorporated into party lists for essentially political reasons, but it is interesting to pose some hypotheses regarding the territory and the election of women to legislative positions, without taking those political factors into account. Our first categorization of the country's

departments is women/territory, without party considerations. Despite the supposed homogeneity of Uruguay's territory, the departments may be differentiated in various ways. Their location divides them⁴⁷ as indicated below.

The southeast (Canelones, Maldonado and metropolitan Montevideo) has a privileged position nationally because of its high socioeconomic development. The region faces southward, toward the River Plate and its ocean outlet. This region elected 12 titular *edilas*, averaging four per department, one of the country's highest figures.

The southwest is a dairy, fruit and grain-producing area. The percentage of Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) is 21%. This region comprises Colonia and San José, which are a zone where these farming activities are expanding. Here we find five women elected as *junta departamental* representatives, for an average of 2.5/department. It is interesting that these two first regions, among the country's richest, are so dissimilar in their number of female legislators.

By contrast, in the region defined by the departments of Artigas, Rivera, Treinta y Tres, Cerro Largo and Rocha, called the northeast, 35% of the homes have high UBN rates, some up to 50%. This region was hardest hit in the 70s and 80s by agroindustrially-based economic diversification. It has drawn population migration, especially because of its favorable price structure along the border with Brazil. The female representatives in this region number 15, for an average between those of the first two zones.

The country's central region, long behind in UBNs, has been further undermined by decades of outward migration, which has forestalled any socio-economic transformations. This region comprises Tacuarembó, Durazno, Flores, Lavalleja and Florida. (This last department is somewhat different from the rest of the region, due to its dairy development.) There are 20 *edilas*, the highest number in both absolute and relative terms, averaging five per department.

Finally, the coastal region, where the departments of Salto, Paysandú, Río Negro, and Soriano are located, has backslid since the 60s, losing jobs due to reduction in farm production for export. Its population is dwindling due to emigration. However, its proximity to Argentina gives it better prospects under MERCOSUR. Here, 11 *edilas* have been elected, 2.7/department.

This first look discloses no clear trends in terms of regional characteristics and greater or lesser feminine representation on the *juntas departamentales*. However, some particularly department-level features may reflect more structural demographic, economic and social elements. The chart shows

This first look discloses no clear trends in terms of regional characteristics and greater or lesser feminine representation on the *juntas departamentales*

47. Following the regional division proposed by a CIESU study conducted by Danilo Velga.

the departments with 10% or more titular female representatives on their *juntas*, with some other indicators. The first two departments have nearly 23% women in their local legislature. Numbers 3 through 4 range from 16% to 19% and 6 through 12 run from 13% down to 10%.

The first indicator is the percentage of women in the total population, to see if there is any relationship between higher female populations and their female representatives. Nationwide, according to the last population and housing census, women are 51.3% of the entire population, which must be taken into account to understand the chart's figures. Two departments where women are the majority (Salto and Canelones) are not listed because they have zero and two *edilas*, respectively. In other departments with higher male ratios (e.g. Río Negro) female representation was much higher.

The second indicator is each department's urban population. Though 87.3% of the nation's population is urban, it seemed reasonable to check for any relationship between this variable and women's representation, hypothesizing a positive ratio. The chart shows that there seems to be some correlation, but it is by no means perfect.

The third indicator is the proportion of urban women in each department. Nationwide, 52.6% of the urban population is female, which also makes the impressive figures in this column somewhat relative. This initial check does show low feminine representation for those departments with low urban female population (e.g. Maldonado, Canelones and San José). There is also a strong link between higher rates of Unmet Basic Needs and high percentages of urban women, a meaningful situation in other respects.

Characteristics of Departments with the Highest Numbers of *Edilas* elected in 1989⁴⁸

Department	Female Pop.	Urb. Pop.	Urb. WOM.	UBN
1. Montevideo	53.4%	95.6%	53.7%	19.0%
2. Lavalleja	49.2%	77.5%	52.2%	30.9%
3. Río Negro	47.5%	78.8%	50.4%	34.1%
4. Paysandú	49.5%	86.3%	51.8%	34.4%
5. Tacuarembó	49.2%	73.1%	52.1%	42.0%
6. Treinta y Tres	49.5%	79.8%	52.4%	37.2%
7. Rivera	50.9%	81.8%	53.0%	46.2%
8. Cerro Largo	49.8%	80.9%	52.5%	43.7%
9. Flores	48.9%	80.0%	52.1%	28.5%
10. Durazno	48.8%	81.7%	52.1%	36.7%
11. Colonia	49.9%	81.1%	51.5%	25.2%
12. Artigas	48.8%	81.1%	52.6%	44.2%

48. See attached maps in Annex.

IV. The Edilas Themselves

IV.1 Who are the *Edilas*?

Many of the *edilas* are mature women; their ages average 40 to 50 years. Only 6% are under 30 and one quarter are in their thirties. One third are over 50. Most are married, with families; 56% are married, 19% single, 8% divorced, and 15% widowed.

Most of the mothers are in line with the Uruguayan norm: 8% have had only one child, and 22% have over 3. Also following national averages, there are some differences between the *edilas* from Montevideo and those from elsewhere, who seem to have more children. There are quite a few whose children are still small, and most have at least one underage child.

Many are past their children's greatest physical dependence, but still must be limited by family obligations.

Most *edilas*, nationwide, have been trained as teachers, both elementary and graduates of the Artigas Institute for Teachers (for secondary-school teachers). However, there are some differences if we compare the *edilas* from Montevideo with those from the interior: half of the former are university women and half high-school graduates, whereas the overwhelming majority elsewhere are teachers. This is partially due to the possibilities for post-secondary studies in the interior. Teaching studies are the most common and least demanding (personally and financially) since they do not require moving to Montevideo.

In the interior, 19% have pursued or completed university studies (13% are actually professionals), 3% have studied technical skills, and 16% are only high-school graduates.

No *edil* receives any remuneration for his or her work, so they may have to do other work aside from their legislative duties. Some parties pay their members a stipend. Very few of the women queried have no other activity than the *junta*, and more have jobs in the interior than in Montevideo. As one might expect from their training, 52% work as teachers or university professors. Another 14% earn their incomes as employees or officers of their sectors or parties; 10% are public servants; 5% are businesswomen; and 19% do a variety of other activities, not always wage-earning.

Most women in these positions did not change occupations when elected; now they do both jobs. In the interior, teaching is the most frequent line of work.

Their first political activities began at a young age, under 16 years for 20%; 35% between 16 and 18 years; 20% between

Many of the *edilas* are mature women; their ages average 40 to 50 years. Only 6% are under 30 and one quarter are in their thirties. One third are over 50. Most are married, with families; 56% are married, 19% single, 8% divorced, and 15% widowed

reaching legal age (18) and 35; 15% between 35 and 45 years; and 10% began their political lives at over 45.

Even considering the context of the times, this does not seem sufficient to explain the earliness of political entry age. Many of these women were teenagers in the 60s, a period of turmoil in Uruguay. However, if this spirit of the age was an influence, this is not so likely for women from the interior: the youth uprisings centered in Montevideo and the University. Therefore, their early start may be due to their families' political ties and activity.

Such family influence on public behavior in general is undeniable. 39% of the *edilas* from the interior do not have families involved in collective action. Those who do, name their parents and other adult relatives. Although this may reflect an influence, it may also conceal filial rebelliousness

Such family influence on public behavior in general is undeniable. 39% of the *edilas* from the interior do not have families involved in collective action. Those who do, name their parents and other adult relatives. Although this may reflect an influence, it may also conceal filial rebelliousness. It may be easier for a women to get involved in politics when there is a family example to show them the ropes. However, background of this type -- at least among survey respondents -- is not directly related with the age at which they began their political activities.⁴⁹

The 18% of female legislators country-wide whose husbands are politically active is interesting. However, since the survey was conducted via fax, it is not clear whether the husbands are influenced by their political wives, or vice versa. Potential influence of and by children was mentioned by only 3%.

IV.2 How to become an *edila* without dying while trying

Almost three fourths of women elected in this period for *juntas* outside Montevideo had never been elected to any similar position before. They are novices; this is the case for the capital as well.⁵⁰

Most *edilas* of the 19 departments have worked in some type of social organization besides their political parties. This has seemed to be the stepping-stone to politics for at least three fourths of the respondents from the interior. These activities, covering a wide range of interests and concerns, are these women's first political exercises. Many have engaged in social and political activities related to their department, which placed them in the public eye as potential *edilas*.

The testimony of one respondent who began political socialization under the dictatorship is illustrative of political entry through territorial orientation: "The young people would get together -- we had no idea what party each of us belonged to -- and we would do all kinds of things. We would talk about the year of preparations for the International Year of Youth, we formed our preparatory committee, we sent our delegates,

49. See the chart of political entry age and relatives involved in politics, in Annex II.

50. Interestingly, no pattern is apparent between family politics and those *edilas* who have been elected to similar positions before. One third of all experienced *edilas* are the first persons in their families to become involved with politics; another third have activist husbands, while the rest mention older relatives (uncles/aunts, grandparents). A higher percentage of the novices were their families' and the group of women with partners in politics is also growing.

and we planned lots of activities, we put out a newsletter, we gathered signatures for FUCVAM... I lived in the Bulevares neighborhood, and the first marginal squatter settlements began forming there -- we called it the *cantegril* -- then a group of us decided to go see what was going on (...) Then we prepared for Mayday commemorations with the people living there. That famous May 1st, we took several truckloads out of that area, which was quite peaceful. Everyone recognized us as the ones stirring up the neighborhood. This went along with a little party politics and lots of social politics. Next, we celebrated International Youth Year, and there we were, busy political militants, always at the neighborhood level".

Practically none of these women now acting in the *juntas* got involved through women's movements. On the contrary, most have made any such contacts since taking office. However, their candidacy and its implications are influenced by their status as women.

"I didn't join any women's commissions, because of very peculiar circumstances. In my political party, the women's commissions had been the ladies' auxiliaries, with older folks who didn't leave much room for younger people there. I started to work when I was young, but it wasn't easy, to work being a woman... it wasn't so bothersome, but it was necessary to make a great effort to prove my worth". Then she adds, "But I never imagined I would be an *edil*; I had actually planned to do other things. And when I found out I was going to be an *edil*, ... when they read the list and my name was on it ... It looked like a pile of trouble for me, because we all know that the business of lists creates trouble. It made trouble for me. Trouble, but also satisfactions, because you learn a lot. First of all, I learned that politics is tough and is something that women -- when we talk about power and women -- will have to shoulder. Criticism is very tough, especially if you are young. You are very naive about how things happen in what they call the "kitchen" -- a real beginner. Then you realize that it is much more difficult, that you have to negotiate in politics, and that no one is born knowing how to negotiate -- you have to learn. It's not bad to negotiate ... and that is something that women don't usually see -- they think it's bad. You learn to be detached, to see things from above, and to try to see things as they really are... and where you really have support, and where support is fictitious".

The mechanisms used to promote these women's *edil* candidacies are much like those used for men. In general, sector leaders, or a group with shared purposes, express their interest; the nomination is made public later, and there may be collective ratification by some mechanisms of the grouping or

Practically none of these women now acting in the *juntas* got involved through women's movements. On the contrary, most have made any such contacts since taking office. However, their candidacy and its implications are influenced by their status as women

party. 46% said their candidacies were ratified by a vote of their political bodies.

As already mentioned, women have gender-specific obstacles to becoming candidates and accepting positions. The following testimony highlights, from another perspective, the commitments that women from different groups face when called upon to fill positions like these. "I felt obliged to accept because I was convinced that there had to be female candidates, really obliged ... but I did not feel prepared to assume responsibility for an electoral campaign, which keeps you away from home for hours. I had always been a militant, which enabled me to maintain a balance. Being a militant is different from being a public figure, you can arrange things differently. This gave me a completely different responsibility, which got worse when we won. When your party is the opposition party, you can have a different attitude. But I suddenly went from never having run for anything, to being elected, and by the party that carried the presidential elections as well. I felt obliged because I was convinced that my personal life should keep pace with what politics was demanding of me. I agreed because I was convinced that women had to be involved, and I didn't have the nerve to say 'no', because I would have felt hypocritical. I had fought hard for women to participate in leadership positions, and not just the places they had always had ... at the bottom. (...) I had the feeling that a group of people were promoting that same idea, but they were a minority. The majority were even questioning whether women should be involved, with that old story about choosing the best, the most popular, who were men because they were better-known. However, there was a large group of men and women who understood that women had to be in legislative positions, that this was important".

Women have gender-specific obstacles to becoming candidates and accepting positions

The information on the questionnaire describes situations dispassionately. Without questioning the information, it is possible to contrast it with what was learned through the personal interviews with *edilas*. They clearly expressed their awareness that they belong to parties for which the female vote was important in the last elections. This awareness did not mean that such a need entailed -- at least among those interviewed -- any sense of being used as female pawns. On the contrary, they all expressed the (advocacy-oriented) need to represent the interests of those who did not have the chance to govern, and the tacit mandate to fill such a visible position with a woman.

There is a certain duality that *edilas* face, based fundamentally on the roles their parties assign and they assume. As defined by one interviewee, that role is as a "soldier for the cause", which

overshadows other loyalties through strong identification with the party.

That role imposes discipline, on not only behavior, but also opinions. For that reason, when asked in general whether there is discrimination against women in our society, 75% answered in the affirmative. They are not so worried about their own political groups. When asked if in their own experience with those groups, they feel that women are spontaneously placed in positions of responsibility, 52% said "yes". Although there is a slight difference here between Montevideo and elsewhere, the change in opinion that goes with the shift in perspective is impressive. Interestingly, when asked to give examples from their personal experience, only 17% answered that they had been discriminated against in their community legislatures because of being women.

These women, who recognize the difficulties entailed in reaching positions of responsibility because they are women, end up repeating the same old story that paradoxically segregates women by including them without any particular concern for their specific needs.

IV.3 How and where do the *edilas* work?

The work of each *junta departamental's* commissions is one of its life centers. These commissions specialize in specific issues; some function on a regular basis, some *ad hoc*. Women participate actively in them, averaging about four standing commissions each.

Most *ediles* work with the task forces most closely linked to the community; few are with the Internal Affairs, International Affairs, and such commissions.⁵¹

36% of the *edilas* state that there are procedures for coordinating different types of activities among the women from different sectors represented on the *junta*. Where there is coordination, all *edilas* participate.⁵² When there are such arrangements, women's status is one theme they address. However, aside from their departments' concrete situation, and the possibilities for implementing such arrangements in the *juntas* where they work, 83% felt that these coordinating mechanisms were positive or very positive.

Evidently, this formula that the *edilas* apply gives a special flavor to their work, which distinguishes them even from their fellow party members. The *edilas* themselves acknowledge this, stating (72%) that men and women do politics differently, and outlining some specific differences: sensitivity, pragmatism, interest in social matters, and contact with daily life, among others.

There is a certain duality that *edilas* face, based fundamentally on the roles their parties assign and they assume. As defined by one interviewee, that role is as a "soldier for the cause", which overshadows other loyalties through strong identification with the party

51. See the listing of commissions that the *edilas* belong to, in the Annex.

52. 42% are not coordinated with other *edilas*, but this is not by their choice. In various cases, they are the only female representatives, or they are alone because their female colleagues have been replaced by their deputy *ediles*.

Does a woman represent women's interests better than a man can? 64% say they do. The minority who answered "no" may be interpreted various ways. A negative reply regarding direct representation does not entail the rejection of their identification with female interests

As one interviewee stated, "I think there is a way, that not all women use, but there is a difference ... For instance, here in the *junta*, something that differs is our way of talking. (...) We are much more practical. There is a lot of inertia, which we could try to get over, but society is accustomed to it. It seems like men have all the time in the world, but women don't have so much... There is inertia here, too, and I think the fact that you have to split yourself into a thousand pieces makes you more practical, with no time to waste. I also think that the presence of women gives things a social sense. Some fellow *junta* members recognize this, and think about problems that way. Partly, it's what we do. We don't have a women's commission but there is a tacit agreement -- those things you talk about in the hallway -- that when a problem comes up we will look at things differently. (...) We have talked this over -- as much as we can -- there may be some disagreements, but ... it is much easier to coordinate work among ourselves, leaving political games and strategies aside, to get down to business. I suppose it's easier for us because women have been in politics for fewer years. It takes less effort to be detached, and hopefully it will stay that way. We are planning and doing, playing less of that old chess game (...) It's easier for us because we can put aside our disagreements and get to the common points ... work on what we have in common. That is easier for us: working to get something done".

IV.4 Women's work?

Does a woman represent women's interests better than a man can? 64% say they do. The minority who answered "no" may be interpreted various ways. A negative reply regarding direct representation does not entail the rejection of their identification with female interests. When asked if they can do something, from their legislative position, to improve women's status, almost all answered "yes", which indicates at least an initial intention to do so. At the same time, a sizable majority said they have taken concrete actions in this regard, which augurs well for their work in this direction.

It can be assumed that, underlying the negative response of 22% and the silence of 14% in regard to whether they better represent women's interests, there is some hidden agenda involving other prevailing issues, such as a quota system for political positions, by gender. This would seem to be confirmed by the answer to the question whether it is necessary to discriminate in women's favor in municipal policies: 39% felt that this is incorrect, 14% did not answer, and the remaining 47% answered "yes".

However we read this, most *edilas* state that they have never received such demands in any field in which they have acted.

Finally, the community legislators, asked about women's participation in community issues, feel that it is growing. In most cases, this increased involvement is due to women's entry into the labor market, their nearness to existing problems, and better circulation of information.

Political Involvement and Relatives in Politics

Family members in politics	Age of entry into politics				
	under 14	15-18	19-25	26-40	over 40
none	17	60	53	43	50
parents	34	0	17	28	0
other adults	33	0	14	0	17
whole family	16	10	0	0	0
brothers & sisters	0	0	0	0	17
husband	0	30	16	29	0
children	0	0	0	0	16
total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

WOMEN AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA
Notebook of the Local Government Training and Development Center

The "Women and Local Development" Project was implemented in Latin America over the last three years with the joint efforts of USAID-RHUDO/SA, USAID-WID and IULA/CELCADEL. It was an ideal period for the project, because by the end of 1990, the return to democracy in many countries had once again moved formal politics and party systems to the forefront. Social and women's movements faced the challenge of making their presence and platforms known in an unfamiliar setting.

Thus, the "Women and Local Development" Project set out to determine how sensitively, openly and professionally municipal governments can respond to women's demands and participation. The project gathered information on the most significant experiences in this arena in the last decade.

In addition to the activities, research projects and events undertaken by the program these last three years, the Latin American Women and Municipal Government Network was formed and it has been strengthened by the program. It consists of women in municipal entities, research centers, NGOs and municipal governments throughout Latin America.

The publication "**Women and Local Democracy in Latin America**" brings together some of the most important papers, articles and summaries of research findings produced during the program's implementation.

The different authors' focusses and analyses highlight the need to work towards increasing female citizens' participation in local communities, and the need for political and technical efforts to effectively overcome the obstacles to this participation.