

FINAL EVALUATION

WOMEN AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Sponsored and executed by

IULA-CELCADEL
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with the support of

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Abstract

This document contains the final evaluation of a Program focused on "Women and Local Development", which was carried out between October 1990 and September 1993 by the Latin American chapter of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA-CELCADEL) and USAID-RHUDO/SA (Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for South America). USAID/WID supplied a major part of the Program budget of \$635,000.

The Program sought to diagnose the participation of women in local government in the South American countries, promote their broader access, and make municipal governments more responsive to the needs and demands of women. To this end it sponsored four studies and numerous seminars. Other activities served to install new capacities in IULA and cooperating institutions, and to disseminate the research and debates. The Program involved a broad spectrum of participants and linked over 400 institutions and individuals in a regional network.

The Program was highly successful, especially as a means for sensitizing a wide range of publics and setting an agenda. Some of the difficulties encountered were the limited involvement of men, the diversity of interests and commitment of the participants, little progress towards producing practical tools, and a focus on social programs in preference to local economic development.

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Executive summary

Between October 1990 and September 1993, the Latin American Chapter of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for South America (RHUDO/SA) of USAID developed and carried out a program concerned with "Women and Local Development". The entity charged with direct management and administration of the Program was CELCADEL (Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo de los Gobiernos Locales -- Latin American Center for Training and Development of Local Government), the executive branch of IULA at its South American headquarters in Quito, Ecuador. The Program enjoyed financial support from USAID-RHUDO/SA in Quito, Ecuador, and from USAID/WID in Washington. IULA-CELCADEL and numerous participating institutions also made significant contributions in services and in kind. Together these comprised a total budget of \$635,000.

Several elements of the contemporary South American context provide a background to the Program. Democratization and the growing importance of decentralization and government reform as political projects create a favorable setting for raising the issues of women's access to local government. While women make up a very small percentage of mayors and municipal council members, some women leaders are highly visible. This has coincided with the maturing of the women's movement and an awakening of its interest in new issues such as local development. Meanwhile, certain theoretical tools have been disseminated for assessing the gender sensitivity of local planning and governance.

The Program was designed to encourage the participation of women in local government and to increase local governments' capacity to respond to the needs and demands of women and gender equity. Its specific objectives were (1) to document the achievements and difficulties of recent years in relation to women's role in local development, (2) to build a capacity for dealing with gender and local development in IULA-CELCADEL and selected institutions from its network, (3) to influence local leaders in the public and private sector towards promoting greater equity, and (4) to produce practical tools for promoting the consideration of gender in local development planning and in the policies and programs of local governments.

One of the central activities of the Program was constituted by four studies of women and local government in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay. The studies examined the problem of women's access to municipal government and the way women's interests were reflected in decision-making in several municipalities selected for case studies.

Another central activity was a series of seminars. These took place in eight South America countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The seminars served as a forum for disseminating the studies as well as for debating papers and commentaries prepared by a wide variety of participants. Ecuador was the site of four special seminars: two that served as initial framing actions for the Program and two that brought together women elected officials in Ecuadorean municipalities. A final, closing seminar in Paraguay was also exceptional in that it was convened to debate the research projects as a group and to discuss ways of improving the regional research capacity on topics of women, gender equity, and local government.

Over 1600 persons participated in the seminars overall. The participants came from very diverse institutions. These include NGO's, local governments (both elected and career officials), universities and research centers, central government entities, community organizations, agencies of international cooperation, political parties, and the feminist movement, among others. Representatives of NGO's led the list of those who presented papers, a situation that reflects the concentration of intellectual resources in these organizations. In this sense it was especially important that a bridge was laid between municipal governments and NGO's connected to the women's movement.

The Program also sponsored a number of actions that served the ends of institution building, dissemination, and networking. An internal seminar and a bibliographic collection helped to raise the capacity of IULA-CELCADEL itself to consider gender issues. Six issues of IULA-CELCADEL's notebooks series "Local Development (Desarrollo local)" were devoted to disseminating the studies and discussions at the seminars, and notes and papers were published elsewhere by other institutions, in English and in Spanish. Over 400 individuals and institutions were connected in a regional network.

One of the major impacts of the Program lay in creating occasions to bring together a number of different "communities" that do not normally meet. Many of these were at a point in their own development when they were receptive to new ideas. An example are local government officials, many of whom were aware that gender equity was moving onto the public agenda but were unclear as to the practical implications of that fact. The Program explored a number of frameworks for thinking about gender and local government and, although no consensus was reached, advances were made in clarifying the issues.

The impact on institutions in the region, though difficult to measure precisely, was probably quite important. The women municipal officials who participated were notably strengthened and have established or are in process of establishing

associations in several countries. The fact that IULA-CELCADEL committed its resources and publications to the Program set an example for its associates throughout the region.

No project or program is without difficulties. The quality of the research on women and local government was occasionally a problem in the present case. The studies produced tend to be diagnostic rather than explanatory, and the relevant variables do not emerge with clarity. The Program also fell short of its goals in relation to the practical tools it sought to produce for attacking problems of gender equity at the local level. Instead, it was most effective as a mechanism for sensitizing a range of players and setting forth the issues.

The lessons to be learned from the Program were also several. A very low proportion of the participants were men, suggesting that specific measures should be taken to involve them in future projects along these lines. The great diversity of audiences for the seminars, with greatly varied demands, suggests the need to differentiate among the communities being reached and consider different "treatments" more precisely in accord with their needs.

Stimulating the production of high-quality research on gender issues in governance and local development depends in part on strengthening a tradition of empirical studies in political science and related fields in the region as a whole. Efforts could be made to encourage training of women with these interests and publication of their work in mainstream scholarly journals. Here as on other points, country differences are important. A more differentiated vision of the situation of the different countries involved in the Program might have permitted a greater impact on each of them individually.

Finally, more thought should be given to sharpening the capacities of those concerned with gender equity to connect that concern to development issues at the local level. The audiences in the seminars were more expert on social service and assistance questions than economic development. Women's livelihoods and related issues of interest to local development were not prominent in the papers and discussions or in the programs of women local officials. These, together with questions of the organization and procedures of local government in a perspective of reform of the State, are issues that should be raised in follow-up actions to the present Program. Its great virtue lay in preparing the way for precisely this sharper focus on the more difficult issues of gender equity in local development.

I. Introduction

This report constitutes the final evaluation of a program entitled "Women and Local Development". The Program, of three years' duration, ran from October 1990 to September 1993, whereon a small amount of complementary financing was provided to make possible an extension of the publications program and for the executing organization to produce an evaluative summary of the activities. The Program was carried out by the Latin American Chapter of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). Sponsorship, technical and financial support, and monitoring were provided by the Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for South America (RHUDO/SA) and the Women in Development Office, both of USAID. Both institutions are headquartered in Quito, Ecuador.

The evaluation seeks to give an overall idea of the objectives of the Program and the activities it sponsored in fulfilment of these objectives. It draws out the very real achievements of a Program that, as a pioneering effort, caught the interest of important actors in local governments of the South American countries and engaged the regional women's movement. The evaluation also points to what were some of the Program's difficulties and the areas in which it fell short of its goals. In analyzing both its achievements and its shortcomings, the evaluation attempts to set the Program in the larger context of the debate on local government, local development, and the current state of initiatives for gender equity in the Latin American region.

II. Background to the Program

Local government and local development are relatively new topics of interest in Latin America. The political systems of the region have traditionally been highly centralized. With the exception of the largest and most visible cities, local mayors have had very restricted powers. This was more a consequence of their meager budgets than of limitations in their legal mandate, which tends to be broad and vague. But, in countries where financing the activities of the central government is a perennial conundrum, local governments' powers of taxation or access to other sources of income have been severely restricted. Under military regimes and even during many periods of civilian government, mayors have been appointed, not elected.

This situation changed with the wave of democratization that began in the late 1970's and early 1980's. One after another, military dictatorships came to an inglorious end. Interest turned to the question of how to fashion democratic reforms that would help prevent such episodes in the future. Strengthening local governments and making them responsible to an electorate

was an obvious means to this end. Plans for regionalization or decentralization were also developed as a means for reducing the concentration of power in the central government and bringing democracy closer to the people.

These initiatives coincided with the maturing of the women's movement in the region. In countries such as Chile and Paraguay, women's groups were actively involved in the campaigns to end military rule. Poor women became engaged with the political system through their participation in emergency health and feeding programs, human rights groups, and other self-defense organizations, especially as the economic crisis deepened. Researchers and professionals in non-governmental organizations were drawn along with them into rethinking the issues of women's participation. Meanwhile, at international conferences and through reading, Latin American feminists were influenced by the active discussion of women's citizenship, gender and democracy, and the gender gap in politics in North America and Europe. These factors, too, pushed women towards a new interest in local communities and in local government as an arena for promoting participation and reorienting development priorities in favor of women's interests.

At the same time, women were beginning to breach the barriers of prejudice, discrimination, and self-doubt that had kept them from aspiring to office in local elections. Ironically women began to occupy posts as local mayors and council members under the military regimes, which probably saw them as pliable appointees. But with the return to democracy and the reinstating of local elections, women began to run for and be elected to local office. By the late 1980's, women mayors and municipal council members constituted between 5% and 10% of mayors and council members in the various countries of the region.

In this context, USAID-RHUDO/SA and IULA-CELCADEL¹, with the support of USAID/WID, decided to extend a long-standing agreement of cooperation in order to carry out a program focused on women and local development. This would continue for another three years (1991-1994) an agreement signed in 1988. Prior to this, in a variety of ways, both institutions had been working actively towards strengthening local government capacities.

¹CELCADEL (Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo de los Gobiernos Locales -- Latin American Center for Training and Development of Local Government) is the technical and executive organ of IULA in Latin America. Its mandate is to work in programs of training, technical assistance, and networking among local governments and municipalist non-governmental organizations in the region. For these purposes it may receive international cooperation. CELCADEL is accountable to IULA's board of directors.

CELCADEL, established in 1983 as the executive arm of IULA in Latin America, had sponsored numerous training courses and provided technical assistance to municipalities throughout the region. It had core institutional funding provided by the Dutch government. CELCADEL brought to the program its extensive network of municipal governments and non-governmental organizations involved with the municipal cause as researchers, consultants, and technical advisors. CELCADEL also had proven experience in organizing seminars and in editing and distributing publications. The program, as it was designed jointly by the two institutions, capitalized on these abilities at the same time as it sought to expand IULA-CELCADEL's capacity for exercising a leadership role on questions of gender in relation to local government and development.

III. Description of the Program

The Women and Local Development Program had a relatively simple design, based on a limited number of activities with clearly defined objectives. Its complexity lay in the difficulties of implementing the activities in a wide range of countries, each of which presented a complicated panorama in various dimensions that were relevant to the Program's success. The variables included the nature of local municipal politics, the relation of local to central government, the state of development of the women's movement and popular organizations and their presence on the local scene, and the accumulation of research on these issues. The Program design sought to provide similar opportunities and achieve similar results in many different national contexts; thus, it had to be flexible and adaptable.

A. Objectives

The Women and Local Development Program sought to respond to a situation in which local governments were "not prepared to introduce and sustain the changes demanded by women" (original project proposal). The overall objective of the Program was to promote the full participation of women in the municipal governments of the region and to enable those governments to include considerations of gender equity (1) in their programs and (2) in their representative and administrative structures.

More specific objectives of the Program were to document the achievements and difficulties of the past years in relation to women's role in local development, and to build a capacity for dealing with gender and local development in IULA-CELCADEL and selected institutions from its network. In addition, the Program sought to influence local leaders in the public and private sector towards promoting greater equality for women. A final objective was to produce a number of practical tools for promoting the consideration of gender in the activities of local

governments.

These objectives were ambitious and far-ranging. The Program sought to initiate a process of institutional change in IULA-CELCADEL itself, in the organizations that would become its counterparts as executors of the Program, and even in institutions lightly touched by it, such as those that sent representatives to the seminars or that read about it in CELCADEL's publications. The Program also sought to induce changes in attitudes on the part of local leaders: municipal officials, to be sure, but also the decision-makers in NGO's, popular organizations, and actors in the private sector. The diagnoses of the experiences to date of women trying to put their issues on the local agenda were expected to contribute to that end. Finally, the Program would make available a number of practical instruments that might be used in local planning and in efforts to rethink the role of the municipalities in relation to the goal of gender equity.

B. Activities

A set of activities was developed to respond to these objectives. The most important and visible were two: diagnostic studies in four countries, focused on the participation of women in local government, and seminars in eight countries to present the research results and discuss relevant issues. In practice, the seminar series was lengthened and its purpose was broadened in the course of implementing the Program.

A notable characteristic of the activities included in the Program is their reiterativeness. A basic strategic decision was made to cover the entire South American region, however lightly, and put essentially the same information and stimuli at the disposal of the various countries included. Thus, the seminars were designed to have a similar structure and purpose wherever they took place. We shall see that variations crept in. Above all, the country contexts determined important differences in both the diagnostic studies and the seminars. Despite the intention that all countries be given the same "treatment", there were variations in each national context that determined different levels and kinds of impact.

The following discussion reviews each of the five major lines of activity of the Program.

1. Building institutional capacity

Recognizing limitations in its own capacity to deal with questions of gender and local government, IULA-CELCADEL undertook several actions intended to strengthen its expertise in the field. First, it organized an internal seminar on gender concepts and issues. This seminar functioned regularly with

weekly or bimonthly meetings throughout the first year of the Program. The discussions were structured with readings and presentations by designated discussion leaders who served on a rotating basis. All CELCADEL staff were invited to participate together with the staff of the Ecuadorean Association of Municipal Governments (Asociación de Municipios Ecuatorianos -- AME), housed in the same building.

Though men comprise slightly under half of the CELCADEL staff, the membership of the internal seminar was overwhelmingly female. The men tended to consider that their curiosity was sufficiently satisfied by attending a meeting or two, though there were exceptional male staff members that persisted to the end. An AID consultant also participated in the seminar in its first stages, and her contributions were highly appreciated by the other members.

Further in its effort to increase its own institutional capacity, CELCADEL began to accumulate bibliography on topics of women, gender, local government, and local development. This process involved some purchase of books and documents, but it relied primarily (as it continues to do) on exchanges of IULA-CELCADEL publications for publications principally of NGO's in the region. The bibliographic collection at present contains over 250 titles of overall good quality. The collection is quite specialized, and it is particularly useful in connection with gender and local planning.

A third set of actions was directed to strengthening the capacity to deal with gender and local development issues in a small group of institutions that offered the promise of serving as leaders in their respective countries on into the future. These institutions had especially active communication with CELCADEL and the Program director and received the benefits of her technical assistance. They include the institutions that produced the studies of women's participation in local government, those that co-sponsored the seminars in each country, and many that sent representatives to the seminars, especially on more than one occasion. These actions involved a certain concentration of the resources of the Program in a limited number of institutions (most of them NGO's with a known track record in gender issues), with the objective of inducing real and lasting change.

A final set of actions, however, sought to raise the overall level of interest, information, and expertise of a broad community of actors in relation to the issues dealt with in the Program. IULA-CELCADEL considered the Program to be an initial exploratory phase of a long-term effort to induce change in local governments and other institutions associated with it in its regional network. The Program maintained correspondence with, and also provided some technical assistance to this broad

audience. Most of the capacity-building at this level, however, took place through the publications that the Program gave rise to.

2. Studies

The Program produced four studies of women and local government. These refer to Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay. Except for the study of Uruguay, which was presented and discussed at the seminar in Chile, each was submitted to discussion before an audience of the country of origin and later presented again in a "replication" seminar in a neighboring country.

A comment is in order about the selection of countries and researchers for the studies. IULA-CELCADEL solicited research proposals from 19 institutions out of its usual network of municipal governments and organizations in the region. This selection method was adopted in preference to the method originally planned, which called for contracting individual consultants, not necessarily residents of the countries under study. Again, IULA-CELCADEL directed the Program's actions towards installing capacity in local institutions.

Unfortunately, only seven proposals were submitted such that the selection process did not really succeed in setting up an open competition. (The proposals rejected were a second one from Colombia, one from Chile, and one from Bolivia.) The low rate of response suggests that the topic was unfamiliar and possibly unattractive to most of the institutions that received the invitation to participate. The selection among the seven proposals received depended on a combination of criteria that included the quality of the proposed study design, the solidity of the institution making the proposal, IULA-CELCADEL's interest in strengthening the institution's capacity to deal with gender issues, and the priority of the country based on a pre-defined list.

The four institutions that carried out the research are very diverse. One -- IBAM (Instituto Brasileiro de Administração Municipal -- the Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration) -- is an institute created specifically to provide support to local governments. It has a long history of activities in relation to municipal affairs including training, research, and technical assistance. When the Women and Local Development Program began, IBAM had already created a special group for gender concerns within its organization, and it had done some preliminary research on women in local government that complemented that of Fanny Tabak, a Brazilian political scientist.

In Colombia, PROCOMUN (formally, the Corporation Promoter of

Local Communities -- Corporación Promotora de las Comunidades Locales) is a well-established if younger municipalista institution that has carried out some of the same activities as IBAM on a smaller scale. PROCOMUN was just beginning to interest itself in the problems of women and local government, so the research was seen as an opportunity to engage one of IULA-CELCADEL's firmest allies in Colombia in this new endeavor. What was not known to the Program director, however, was that the woman that was asked to prepare the proposal and later made director of the study was hired specifically for that purpose and had no real decision-making power in the organization. At last notice she was involved in other work and, although she may be drawn back into the PROCOMUN orbit should a new project involving women come up, her capacity to influence the organization is limited.

In Argentina, the research was carried out by the Center for Research and Training in Public Administration (Centro de Investigaciones y Perfeccionamiento en Administración Pública -- CIPEAP) of the Administrative Sciences division of the Catholic University of Cordoba. This center was particularly attractive as a location for the study because of its specialization in public administration and its direct links to the government of the Province of Cordoba, which cooperated fully with the research besides contributing generously to the seminar where it was presented. The choice of Cordoba also permitted an analysis of the issues in a major regional urban center.

Finally, the study in Uruguay was carried out by a two-women team from CIESU (Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay - Center for Information and Studies of Uruguay). CIESU is quite representative of Latin American NGO's that combine a program of research with applied work in development projects or social advocacy. Some of its leaders are connected to left-leaning parties although they maintain their political opinions scrupulously separated from their research activities. But politics and governance are priority topics of study and debate within the institution. Social science training is strong in Uruguay, and collegial exchange helps maintain standards high. All these factors helped to ensure that the study of the municipal government of Montevideo was of good quality, and that CIESU as an institution was fully identified with the research.

At the outset, the idea for the research was to produce case studies of local governments and the ways in which they have or have not taken women's needs and demands into account. The four case studies would use a common methodology. This idea was discarded in favor of a more ambitious plan that involved collecting data on the presence of women in local government at the national level; a characterization of their participation; and case studies, which in Colombia and Argentina took more than one local government as their subject.

The research proposals and strategies were discussed at a special seminar devoted primarily if not exclusively to methodological questions (August 1991). To facilitate this discussion the Program director prepared a theoretical paper that served as a basis for forming working groups and that constitutes one of the basic documents of the Program. It is a state-of-the-art paper that reflects current thinking about the problems of gender and local development as of 1991.

3. Seminars

A series of international seminars was projected as the central activity of the Program. These were intended to bring together representatives of local governments, NGO's, women's community organizations, and other sectors of civil society. They sought to satisfy a number of objectives simultaneously: to sensitize these individuals and the institutions they represented to gender issues in local development; to exchange information; to clarify thinking about women's participation in local government; to impact on wider circles of public opinion in the countries where the seminars took place; and to strengthen the hand of women local officials.

Three types of seminars were envisioned initially. First, there were to be four seminars for presentation of the research results in the four countries where the studies took place. Three of the "presentation" seminars were held as planned in Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina, while the study of Uruguay was presented and discussed in a seminar in Chile, as noted above. Second, four seminars were planned as replications of the seminars presenting the research. They were "replications" only in the sense that the studies were described and discussed a second time; the rest of the agenda was new and tailored to the countries of venue. Three "replication" seminars took place, in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Paraguay.

The third type of seminar was conceived to give support to the Program itself. Three seminars fall into this category. The first was a kick-off seminar held in Ecuador (March 1991), which constituted the first activity of the Program. The second, also held in Ecuador (August 1991), was the methodology seminar already mentioned in connection with the research projects. The third, held in Paraguay (July 1993), focused once again on the completed research studies and reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of their design and execution. To a degree, this seminar permitted an assessment of the state of the art in research on women and local government in Latin America.

Finally, two seminars sponsored by the Program were additions to the original design. Held in Ecuador, both these seminars brought together, in June 1992, women recently elected to municipal office, and, in March 1993, women officials

interested in organizing an association of women local authorities. This special privilege extended to Ecuador reflects the fact that the Program was headquartered in that country, as well as the close relationship between IULA-CELCADEL and AME.

The internal documents of the Program suggest that the actual form the seminars would take was not envisioned in great detail at the outset. The number of participants expected to attend, the relative presence of men and women, the agendas (beyond the research presentations), the type of speakers and the topics they would treat: these and other elements were left undefined, except insofar as the budget assigned for each seminar -- \$15,000 -- set some parameters.

In practice, the seminars turned out to be very different from one country to the next. This is clear even from the number of participants, which ranged from 48 in Chile to 680 in Cordoba, Argentina. Most of the seminars had between 80 and 130 participants. The local institution that acted as co-sponsor was given a relatively free rein to decide about the number of participants, but in all cases the applicants were more than the number accepted for participation. In the case of Chile, for example, there were 100 local applicants, of whom 20 were accepted. Altogether, the participants in the seminars totaled 1608 persons.

While nationals of the country always predominated both among the presenters and in the audience, the seven presentation-replication seminars included the participation of between 11 (Bolivia seminar) and 31 (Colombia seminar) persons from other countries. Many of the out-of-country participants had their travel wholly or partially financed by the Program, at a cost that varied between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per seminar. In some cases the number of non-national participants who financed their own travel and lodging was considerable (for example 5 at the seminar in Argentina; 12 at the seminar in Chile). If all the seminars are considered together, 97 persons attended with their expenses entirely covered by the Program; 73 were partially covered. The seminars in Ecuador and Colombia had the largest numbers of participants with their expenses partially or fully covered. These were notably fewer in Brazil and in the Southern Cone countries, where distances and the cost of airfares did not permit stretching the budget to cover many outside participants.

The participants that received support for travel and lodging were usually but not always presenters. They acted as panelists discussing the experience of their countries, or they shared in panels on substantive topics, contributing commentaries or contrasting points of view together with nationals of the host country. The panels presenting the experiences of other countries of the region were an important feature of the seminars. In the seminar in Argentina, for example, the

presentations by the representatives from Brazil and Colombia changed the tone of what started out as a highly formal and somewhat stilted discussion of women and local government.

A majority of the presenters in the seminars came from NGO's, followed by local governments (Table 1). Clearly, insofar as the seminars advanced in defining the major issues and in developing a set of propositions about women and local government, these two sectors had the strongest voice. The very low participation of spokeswomen (or men) from popular or community organizations is especially noteworthy.

Roughly 10% of the seminar participants were repeaters: that is, persons who had already attended at least one other of the seminars sponsored by the Program. A handful of persons attended three or even four of the events, often funded out of the Program budget for travel and lodging. This responded to a conscious decision of strategy. It was seen as desirable that there be an acumulative effect between one seminar and the next. At the same time, in the course of implementing the Program certain presenters were discovered that had special knowledge, a special outlook, or special skills of communication that constituted a vital contribution.

The one seminar that had no participation of non-nationals was the meeting of women municipal officials in Azogues, Ecuador (March 1993). This seminar was exceptional in other ways as

Table 1

Institutional base of the presenters Women and Local Development Program seminars		
	Number	%
NGO's	90	35
Local governments	74	29
Universities, research centers	27	10
International organizations	17	7
Central governments	16	6
Popular organizations	15	6
Regional governments	7	3
Political parties	2	1
Not classified	9	3
Total	257	100

Source: Adapted from Anexos de la sistematización, Proyecto Mujer y desarrollo local: una mirada al proceso.

well. All the participants were self-financed, most by the local governments they represented. The agenda was focused on the creation of supporting links among the women, municipal council members and presidents of councils (mayors). An immediate result was the creation of the Association of Women Local Officials which has since been recognized by, and received the support of, the Association of Ecuadorean Municipalities. This seminar was preceded by a preparatory seminar in Quito in June 1992 that brought together what were at that time newly elected women municipal officials. The agenda, however, included a number of presenters from the Ecuadorean NGO community and from other Latin American countries.

Overall, less than 5% of the presenters in the seminars were men. Many of these did not make substantive presentations but rather spoke as representatives of institutions or projects they directed and that happened to relate to gender and local development issues. In general the participation of men was minimal, even considering that all the seminars permitted a certain number of drop-in participants that came and went. All of the local sponsoring institutions are mixed institutions; nonetheless, the male researchers or promoters affiliated with them did not interest themselves in attending even sporadically.

The seminars were co-sponsored by local organizations in addition to USAID-RHUDO/SA, USAID/WID, and IULA-CELCADEL. The "presentation" seminars were co-sponsored by the local counterpart that carried out the research: IBAM, PROCOMUN, and CIPEAP, with, in the third case, important support from the Provincial Government of Cordoba and the participation of the Cordoba municipal government. The "replication" seminars were co-sponsored, in Bolivia, by the mayor's office of La Paz in collaboration with UNICEF and PADUM, an office of United Nations; in Chile, by Sur Profesionales and Canelo de Nos, two local NGO's, and CLACSO, the Latin American Social Science Research Council headquartered in Buenos Aires; and, in Paraguay, by the Municipality of Asuncion (Paraguay). The Ecuadorean Association of Municipalities (AME) co-sponsored the two exceptional seminars that grouped women local officials from Ecuador, jointly with USAID/Ecuador in the case of the June 1992 seminar, and the municipal governments of Azogues and Biblian in the case of the meeting in Azogues.

4. Dissemination

A central objective of the Women and Local Development Program was the dissemination of new understandings about women's participation in local government and about ways of taking into account women's needs and demands in local development planning. In a sense, the seminars served as a pretext for staging discussions and debating points of view that could later be radiated to a large public. Dissemination through the printed

word is one of IULA-CELCADEL's usual strategies of action as a regional organization that seeks to impact on several countries simultaneously.

IULA-CELCADEL publishes a "notebook" series, Desarrollo local, a quarterly magazine Democracia local, and occasional papers related to its different projects. In addition, it makes occasional use of the pages of the quarterly magazine, Poder municipal, published by AME. All these publications are very attractively produced, on good quality paper, with eye-catching lay-out, and with abundant graphs and illustrations. Throughout the over three years of its progress, every issue of Democracia local carried news of the Program, while Poder municipal carried two major articles.

The Women and Local Development Program occupied six volumes in the notebook series, Desarrollo local: Nos. 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15. Notebook No. 7 is the report of the kick-off seminar in Ecuador. No. 9, titled "Methods for Research on Gender and the Formulation of Local Government Policies for Women Beneficiaries", contains material discussed in the second, special methodology seminar. The remaining four volumes report on the seminars held under the Program: No. 10, the meeting of women municipal officials of Ecuador, No. 12, the seminar in Brazil, No. 14, the seminars in Colombia and Venezuela, and No. 15, the seminars in Chile and Argentina. Each of these volumes is some 200 pages long, professionally edited, with topics conveniently grouped and notes in the margins that help the reader to extract, reference, and remember the main ideas.

In addition, a publication co-edited with ISIS International in Santiago, Chile, appeared as No. 19 of the ISIS series, Ediciones de las Mujeres, titled El espacio posible: mujeres en el poder local. ISIS selected a set of papers presented at the seminars. One of the notebooks (No. 7) was translated to English and has been published and distributed by USAID-RHUDO/SA and the USAID WID office in Washington. A second English-language volume currently in process of publication by USAID also reproduces a selection of the articles that appeared in the notebooks.

Even leaving aside the English-language publications, not contemplated in the original proposal in any form, the Program surpassed its goals in the area of dissemination. It also went beyond its original objectives in producing some video material. Three video programs were developed, two in conjunction with the research on women and local government in Uruguay and Argentina. The Argentine co-sponsors of the seminar in Cordoba produced a video record of the event.

5. Networking

The Women and Local Development Program grew to involve a

network of over 400 institutions and individuals. It took as its base the existing IULA-CELCADEL network, the USAID-RHUDO/SA network, and networks of municipal governments. To announce the kick-off seminar of the Program, for example, brochures were sent to local governments and organizations already connected to IULA-CELCADEL (270), organizations connected to USAID-RHUDO/SA (30), 160 local governments in Ecuador, local NGO's (40), and a number of personalities associated with local governments in Ecuador, the host country. The persons who actually attended came from all these groups, in addition to universities, agencies of international cooperation, FLACSO (the Latin American Social Science Faculty, Quito division), and community organizations.

Initiating a relationship with women's NGO's in the region was particularly important. Most of these organizations probably had no knowledge of the existence of IULA-CELCADEL prior to the Program, and many of them had never concerned themselves with questions of local government. In this sense the Program gave IULA-CELCADEL a channel for outreach to a new public with very great potential for innovative work on issues of local government and development. At the same time it gave the women's community of the region a new set of questions and a new arena for action as well as links to a set of local governments and to a number of outstanding women officials in local governments.

C. The budget and its use

The Women and Local Development Program had a total budget of \$635,000 over 3 years. Of these, \$340,000 were supplied by USAID, \$197,000 were provided by IULA-CELCADEL, and an estimated \$98,000 were contributed by local counterpart institutions that participated in various ways.

IULA-CELCADEL's contribution was in kind. It consisted of personnel, office space and equipment, utilities, office material, and accounting services. In practice these were covered by funds that were provided by IULA-CELCADEL's core institutional funder, the Dutch government.

The contributions of local counterparts undoubtedly exceeded the initial estimate of \$98,000. The institutions that co-sponsored seminars provided space, personnel, communications, local publicity, and other services beyond the \$3,000 transferred to them out of the Program budget. The institutions that carried out the research projects also drew on their own resources for such items as office space, equipment, materials, and administrative support. A major contribution from the many institutions that sent presenters to the seminars is the time and effort involved in the preparation of papers. None of the presentations was paid. If the value of the 257 presentations is taken into account, the contribution of counterpart and

participating institutions was considerable.

In terms of central costs, the funds from USAID-RHUDO/SA and USAID/WID covered the salary of the Program director and her assistant, some of the costs of communications and logistics, and the cost of publications. Beyond this, there were \$15,000 budgeted for each of the seminars. As indicated, of these some \$3,000 went to the co-sponsoring local institution to help defray the costs of meeting space and local services, while approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000 covered the airfares and housing of out-of-country participants. In addition, each of the studies was underwritten with an amount of \$15,000.

IULA-CELCADEL's financial management was careful when not austere. As noted, the institution stretched the funds such that ten seminars were held instead of eight, and publications were produced that had not been planned originally. All of the seminar budgets were calculated in great detail in order to make the best possible use of travel funds. The financial support that was available tended to be distributed among participants living in neighboring countries in order to save on airfares -- possibly at the sacrifice of valuable contributions that participants from more distant countries could have made.

IV. Achievements and impact

The information we have reviewed to this point leaves no doubt about the achievements of the Women and Local Development Program in quantitative terms. This was a project that more than met its goals. With the sole exception of a change of venue for one of the seminars, all of its major activities were executed as planned. An evaluation of the Program, then, must delve deeper into questions of its significance and impact, considering the state of affairs before its appearance on the regional scene. The following section, then, will explore the Program's achievements and impact from a more qualitative perspective.

A. Creating occasions to meet.

This Program was a first effort to bring together several "communities" that normally (in the Latin American context) have little to say to each other: the community involved in the women's movement, the community of local government officials, NGO's and technical organizations that relate to local governments as advisors and contractors, and the community of popular and civic organizations that channel women's demands at the local level. The design of the Program had to consider the fact that these different groups have very little habit of

talking together and no common language. This made it advisable to use a strategy of making a wide sweep -- touching many countries (all of South America) and issues -- at the risk of some superficiality.

There can be no doubt that this Program was a first occasion for many of these groups to meet and talk together. The statistics cited with respect to the institutional base of the persons who made presentations at the seminars makes it clear that the audiences for the Program were very diverse. If the same statistics were available for the participants in the seminars (as opposed to presenters), the diversity would be even more striking. Women's NGO's, mixed NGO's, political parties, popular organizations, international cooperation, university faculties, traditional women's beneficence societies, local government administrators, elected officials of local governments, representatives of municipalities that might vary in size from a few hundred inhabitants to the capital cities of their respective countries: all were involved in the Program.

The achievement involved in simply pulling off the seminars cannot be too strongly stressed, and, in general, the meetings came off very well. The programs at each of the seminars were well designed, with the research presentations balanced by panels of municipal officials and panels of women from community organizations. On a few occasions there were problems where one group was not sufficiently tolerant of another. An example is the seminar in Chile, where the panel of women from popular organizations had to compete with a book presentation scheduled by a local women's NGO, and the women from the NGO world were largely absent from the audience. But the fact that these problems were kept to a minimum must be credited to the diplomacy of the Program director and her wise selection of local counterparts with a notable capacity for assembling participants from many different networks and "worlds".

It is worth noting that the composition of the audience for the seminars was not always subject to the control of IULA-CELCADEL or even of the local counterparts that were directly responsible for organizing them. In the days before each of the seminars there was often an avalanche of requests for participation beyond the lists agreed upon between IULA-CELCADEL and the local organizer. This includes even the methodology seminar that was intended to be closed to researchers but that ended up with a large audience of Ecuadoreans from NGO's and even popular organizations. All of the seminars, then, were a test of IULA-CELCADEL's capacity to adapt to unanticipated circumstances, and they constituted proof of the very great diplomatic skills of its staff.

Not the least of the Program's achievements, in relation to building links that were weak or non-existent before, was

establishing new connections between USAID -- specifically RHUDO/SA -- and the Latin American women's movement and women's NGO community. Very few members of these communities have prior experience in working with USAID. This is highly unfortunate, since the experience of local governments in the United States is undoubtedly one of the most relevant inputs into discussions of gender, governance, and local development available anywhere in the world. This Program created a brilliant opportunity for USAID and local women's NGO's to converge on a platform of their shared interest in broadening women's participation and strengthening democracy in the region.

B. The pertinence of the Program

The Women and Local Development Program was the proverbial "idea whose time has come". On reading the materials, one senses that all the different sectors that participated were waiting for the opportunity to explore new lines of action and coordinate initiatives with new allies. Local government is one of the most attractive topics in Latin America at present. In a context of democratization, decentralization, and redefinition of the role of the State, it is a compelling topic. It was, then, an inspired idea to tie it to another compelling issue: changes in gender relations and policies for increasing gender equity.

Gender has been in the air in Latin America for nearly two decades now. Even the most retrograde of local administrators have to be aware that some change is afoot. Yet there is still much confusion about basic concepts and about the rationale for certain political choices that promote gender equity. In these conditions, the Program strategists were undoubtedly right to think that a first round of activities aimed at sensitizing a diversity of potential actors was necessary.

The Program was brilliantly designed to fill its role as a detonator of action. Just as certainly, it would have to change in a second round. It placed its bets on once-over actions that would start people talking to each other. Because it did its sensitizing job well, a continuation of the Program will have to take a slightly different form.

C. The intellectual output: how to think about gender and local government.

The intellectual product of the Program is considerable. This is evident primarily in the notebooks series, which is, aside from the notes and memories of those who were present, the most lasting record of the seminars. The publications are replete with information, ideas, observations, and lived experience. All this material serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it provides a basic orientation for readers who have little or no knowledge of recent thinking on gender questions. On the

other, it educates and motivates readers who do know the issues concerning gender equity but had not thought of them in relation to local government and development.

The publications undoubtedly select some of the strongest presentations at the seminars, yet many more could have been included with little loss in quality. The editing tends to be excellent, so that the strongest parts of the strongest presentations are those that appear. Overall the notebooks give the impression of an enormous breadth of issues in connection with gender and local government/development. Although open contradictions among them are few, there is also little sense of closure. The issues are put on the table in a highly digestible form, but it is up to each reader to put them in order.

The advances that were made in developing frameworks for thinking about gender and local development appear to justify the selection of participants in the Program and the strategy of repeated invitations as well. Prior to each seminar the IULA-CELCADEL Program staff had to make difficult decisions about distributing scarce funds for supporting the travel of out-of-country participants. To judge from the level of discussion and the quality of participation of those that were accepted, these decisions were made wisely. It is likely that the best presentations were the second and third presentations of the women who attended more than once. Having already shared in one seminar, they were fully engaged with the topic and could anticipate the type of audience they would be addressing.

D. Impact on institutions: local governments and other actors

Though indicators are not readily available to prove it, it is likely that the Program had a very large impact on the local governments that sent direct representatives (women mayors and municipal council members). Local officials have few opportunities for broadening their knowledge and experience. Women in such posts have even fewer opportunities than men, since they are usually consigned to positions (secretary of culture, welfare, protocol) that offer few horizons. The comments that could be overheard from the women coming from local governments (especially from small municipalities in the interior of their countries) during the seminars bear witness to the great significance of the Program for them.

The creation of a women's local government officials' network in Ecuador was a direct result of the Program. This would also seem to be the case of another such network in Paraguay. Peru is moving towards the same result, stimulated by one of the women who attended the seminar in Colombia. IBAM in Brazil is likely to take action in that direction. The possibilities of using these networks for channeling mutual support and for training and technical assistance that could be

provided by NGO's and other actors, are clearly very great.

There is no way of measuring precisely the impact on local governments of the information circulated in the IULA-CELCADEL notebooks series. It would be necessary to know just who reads the notebooks in local governments that receive them: the mayor? the council members? career administrators? the mayor's wife? The fact that the topic of gender and local government and development was featured not in one but in six notebooks helps make it likely that there was an impact. At the very least IULA-CELCADEL projected a powerful model to municipalities in the region: if IULA was taking up the issue of gender and local government, it was something they should be alert to.

E. Special impact in Ecuador.

Ecuador, as the host country for the Program, was especially favored by it. The two initial seminars took place in Quito, and two seminars for women elected to office in local governments were organized as special events of the Program. This evaluator's interviews with representatives of Ecuadorean NGO's that participated in the Program suggests that the impact on them was very great. One (CEPLAES) is working with five local governments in a pilot project and seeking funding from the Interamerican Foundation to expand its scope to several more. It has developed a framework for training and technical assistance in gender planning at the local level that directly derives from some of the discussions in the seminars.

The success of the Program in Ecuador, with direct impacts on both local governments and NGO's, raises the question as to whether the impact would have been as great in the other countries if they had been the recipient of more than one seminar or research project. The answer is unknowable, although it is clear that at least some of the NGO's involved in other countries intend to continue working closely with municipalities (CIESU, for example, in Uruguay; Canelo de Nos in Chile; Alternativa in Peru).

As a side note, the meeting of elected women local officials in Azogues, Ecuador, in 1992 was, of all the seminars, the most homogeneous with respect to the composition of the audience. Only a few women from local NGO's participated in addition to the officials. This, then, was the only occasion in which there was differential "treatment" for one of the audiences of the Program. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that this is the only occasion when a seminar ended in a concrete proposal for organizing an ongoing network or association. As of this writing, the association is flourishing.

V. Principal difficulties

No project is free of problems. In the present case there were none so serious as to occasion changes in the Program's basic strategies or its management. Nonetheless, there were some factors that may have reduced its impact and effectiveness. This section reviews some of the difficulties that were encountered and attempts to suggest how they might be avoided in similar projects in the future.

A. Quality of the research.

The four studies sponsored under the Program vary widely in the focus they bring on women, local government, and local development. They also differ greatly in quality. Of the four, probably only the studies of Uruguay and Brazil stand a chance of entering the regional political science canon (if that conservative establishment can overcome its prejudices against topics related to women). It is certainly true that the studies were not planned as academic exercises but were meant to serve other, more practical ends. Nonetheless, achieving the highest possible academic quality was important for at least three reasons: (1) the "truth value" of the study results -- their capacity to reflect the true reality of women's relation to local government -- is contingent on their use of reliable methodologies; (2) more sophisticated methodological designs permit going beyond description to propose causal relations; and (3) the studies had to be persuasive to a critical audience not necessarily sympathetic to the cause of gender equity.

The problem of achieving quality in research on issues related to women, governance, and politics is complex. To begin with, there is no strong tradition of empirical social scientific research in political science in Latin America; thus, the women that directed the studies were being asked to do something that is (outside of Chile and Brazil) not usual in the region. Furthermore, women social scientists tend to have lesser training than men. This is a reflection of the gender discrimination that has traditionally existed in the university system and in access to opportunities for advanced study outside the region. Especially in the studies of Colombia and Argentina, the researchers had trouble delimiting their area of concern and focusing on a few issues that might have permitted them to establish firm relationships among variables.

In the original design of the Program, it was anticipated that the studies might be problematical. The strategy that was adopted for ensuring the best possible quality was that of organizing a special seminar around the study proposals. Thus, the entire second seminar, held in Ecuador in August 1991, was devoted to discussing methodological issues as well as the variables that would be considered. The seminar did not fully

satisfy its objectives, however, for various reasons: (1) the research designs that were presented were very diverse; (2) it was clear from the outset that the interests and capacities of the institutions proposing them were very different; (3) the participants in the seminar had very different kinds and levels of research training and backgrounds, and most of them were not really in a position to critique the proposals and suggest improvements; (4) the format of the seminar was excessively rigid and did not promote free exchange of ideas in relation to the research proposals. There was little time for discussion after the presentations, and the discussion in small workshops was programmed for other topics.

Finally, the broad range of issues the studies were expected to cover created problems. They had the double mandate of evaluating women's access to local government and evaluating the policies of local governments from a gender equity perspective. This spread was encouraged by the background paper prepared by the Program director, which took the then-dominant framework of women's practical and strategic gender interests as its starting point. It was also encouraged by the legacy of the Program's opening seminar, where most of the discussion had turned on women's needs and demands. The agenda there covered topics as diverse as women in informal urban settlements or shanty communities and their access to housing; women's microenterprises and the impact of local government policy; local government involvement in social programs; and forging gender equality at the level of local government.

Given certain problems in the selection of the proposals and in the methodology seminar, the sponsoring institutions should have been a final line of defense for imposing standards of quality in the research. The four institutions, however, seem not always to have found ways of giving their researchers needed feedback. These problems might also have been alleviated had there been a person on the IULA-CELCADEL staff with excellent research skills and experience, or had the Program hired a high-level consultant that could have operated as a circuit-rider among the four research sites. As it was, the IULA-CELCADEL staff had strong skills in other areas that were vital to the Program -- networking, dissemination, the diplomacy necessary to stage productive meetings with very heterogeneous publics. It was too much to ask that research experience be added to that list.

The Program director, recognizing that the studies had weaknesses, proposed a special seminar to evaluate their methodologies and substantive results and to think through ways in which the sponsoring institutions could continue to work along similar lines. This seminar was held in Paraguay in the last months of the Program. Ana Falu and Rosario Aguirre (one of the most experienced and competent gender researchers on the

continent) were asked to comment formally on the design of the studies, the research process, the results and the interpretation of the findings. Their comments, which were taped and transcribed and form part of the patrimony of the Program, point to the many suggestive contributions of the studies as well as to many areas where they could have been improved.

Falu and Aguirre emphasize the need to integrate the findings that were obtained on different levels: women's presence as municipal officials and administrators; local government policies and their impact on gender equity; and the case studies of specific municipalities. They also confirm the need for more subtle analyses of the subjective dimensions of women's roles in local government and their participation in political life. They comment on the limited usefulness of the practical-and-strategic gender needs framework, a point that the researchers themselves made in the same seminar. In practice trying to categorize different local government policies according to the type of "interest" they reflected proved to be difficult and forced. With the possible exception of the Brazilian case, this framework does not really emerge as an important conceptual tool in the finished studies.

B. Demands for practical tools.

IULA-CELCADEL's evaluation of the Women and Local Development Program ("Proyecto mujer y desarrollo local: una mirada al proceso", January 1994) cites the comments of several participants and heads of institutions involved in the activities of the Program. Many of those from local governments express their gratitude for the opportunity to come into contact with new ways of thinking about women and local government but call for more practical tools for use in their day-to-day tasks. They praise the publications of the Program -- one organization (Canelo de Nos, in Chile) has used them systematically as discussion papers in internal seminars -- but ask that they be translated into materials directly applicable in local planning and for use in interpreting the effects of policies on women. From the point of view of many of the beneficiaries of the Program, the first three years of studies, seminars, and publications constituted an initial phase that should be followed by a phase of hands-on applications that would be of immediate help to women in decision-making posts in local governments and in agencies associated with them.

In effect, the Program directors had to choose between two goals. One was achieving clearer thinking about women and local government and development. The other was serving the immediate, practical needs of local government officials. Although not unconcerned about the second, the Program gave priority to the first. It saw a first need to advance on a conceptual level, producing new ways of thinking about gender and its relation to

local government and development problems. This choice of priorities reinforced the decision to involve NGO's heavily in the Program's activities. This is so because NGO's in Latin America concentrate intellectual resources and research capabilities coupled to an ideology of service to the community (though cynics might say that they tend to get caught up in research and analysis and do not do sufficient service).

Nonetheless, it is clear that IULA-CELCADEL had hoped to advance farther than it did towards developing practical instruments for local planners and administrators. One of the initial objectives speaks of producing tools -- philosophical, legal, technical, and administrative ("instrumentos filosóficos, jurídicos, técnicos y ejecutivos") -- and disseminating them to users in the region. By hindsight, the Program director states that this goal was overly ambitious and that it was the objective that was least satisfactorily addressed over the three years. In her opinion, in the opinion of respondents to the evaluation questionnaire, and in the opinion of some NGO leaders interviewed in Ecuador, fulfilling this goal would be the next logical step in the continuation of the Women and Local Development Program.

C. Continuing confusions: how to think about gender planning, women and local development, and women and local government.

Tapping into the best thinking in the region and promoting clarity about how to conceptualize the issues that group themselves around gender, local government, and local development was a central objective of the Program under review. It was a very ambitious objective. It is doubtful that, in the United States, for example, one could demonstrate a broad consensus with respect to the relation of women to local government or point to established frameworks for calibrating the degree of gender awareness present in local government policies.

It should come as no surprise, then, that -- after the studies and the many seminars, with informal discussions late into the night and thoughts shared through letters and E-mail upon returning home -- no consensus was reached about how to interpret the participation of women in local governments in the South American countries. The issue of a framework for analyzing the appropriateness of policies from a gender perspective is probably even more hotly disputed than it was before the Program began, in part due to a natural process of identification of problems with the "practical and strategic gender interests" framework in vogue when it began. But in an important way the Program itself played a role in stimulating critiques of this framework as of others. The issues were sharpened and put on the table so that an orderly and productive debate could begin.

It is likely that, based on the stimulus that many women received through their participation in the Program, they could

have been encouraged to develop further a set of ideas about the conceptual issues that were central to it. Having a budget to support the preparation of sessions presented in the seminars, or to underwrite a set of working papers, might have helped to push towards this kind of product. It may still occur, but it will depend on the support one or another of the participants can obtain from their own local institutions. IULA-CELCADEL could best encourage this result by offering the pages of its workbook series to circulate ideas.

VI. Lessons from the Program

A. Drawing men in.

Clearly, this Program faced very great obstacles in attempting to interest men in its activities and/or in the issues it addressed. The director of the Program insists that the preponderance of women at all the events constituted a kind of affirmative action: if men occupy 80% of places in the events sponsored under every other IULA-CELCADEL activity, this Program at last gave women access. The proportion of women in the seminars was, however, at least 95%, as noted earlier. Most of the activities involved women talking to other women about women's access to local government, and the Program lost opportunities to bring men along in a new way of thinking about gender and local development. Three groups of men would have been especially important to have as participants: (1) researchers and thinkers on governance issues and political scientists in general, (2) local government authorities, and (3) decision-makers in NGO's.

According to conversations with NGO's, the decision to send a woman rather than a man to the seminars was made at the level of each NGO (and probably each local government as well). The invitations were extended to the institution, which was free to choose the representative it deemed appropriate. The directors acted on the basis of old prejudices in choosing to send women staff. A meeting on gender, they would have thought without further reflection, must be directed to women.

Perhaps the only way to change this pattern would have been to extend personal invitations to men that were identified as having contributions to make to the discussions. In all the Latin American countries there are a few men that are known to be interested in gender issues. There are many who are expert in issues of local government and local development. It is also possible, however, that male presenters -- given that they tend to sense less of a personal motivation to participate in discussions of gender equity -- would have required some payment or other incentive.

B. Differentiating audiences.

A question remains as to whether it might not have been useful to give some degree of separate "treatment" to the different audiences that participated in the Program. We have pointed out that only the elected municipal officials from Ecuador had a separate seminar for themselves; on all other occasions, the audience was extremely heterogeneous. This meant that the groups that gathered for the seminars had very different levels of information about the topics under discussion and that their demands were very diverse. Some were there out of curiosity; some were seeking a basic orientation to gender issues; some came with the expectation of receiving a systematic training course; some expected to participate in a theoretical discussion; while yet others hoped to cull ideas useful in their practical roles.

The heterogeneity of the audience for the seminars had great benefits, yet there may be valid reasons for designing actions in the future that would be specifically calibrated to meet the needs of different segments of the spectrum of persons and institutions that participated in the Program. The segments that might usefully be differentiated include elected local officials, administrators, NGO's, community organizations, men interested in promoting gender equity in local government, and even mayors' and council members' wives in countries where "patronatos" or "comités de damas" are important parts of municipal governments.

Separating groups would be especially pertinent in a second generation Program that moved beyond sensitization into a training mode. There are obvious differences in background and experience that would make it difficult to maintain the same great diversity in the audience for training courses. At the same time, ways would have to be found to overcome the resistance of some NGO's to listening to practical administrators. Perhaps putting local officials and administrators in a role of trainers of researchers and NGO's would balance out what tend to be unequal terms of exchange. Another possibility, presently under study by IULA-CELCADEL, would be for NGO staff to do internships in local governments.

C. Stimulating high-quality research.

The problem of stimulating the production of high-quality research on women/gender, municipal government, and local development is difficult to resolve. In part it depends on a qualitative and quantitative leap in the production of empirical research in political science, political sociology, and political anthropology in the region as a whole. This process is underway, but it will take some time before it is completed.

Meanwhile there might be room for scholarship programs or

for seminars and working groups that would circulate information and help researchers to support each other. As noted, women social scientists in Latin America have not had the same opportunities as men for advanced training or for access to the "old boys' networks" that exchange notes and constructively critique the research of their members. Another useful action would be to encourage women to pursue aggressively the publication of their work in what few scholarly journals exist in the region. The need is clear to integrate research on women and governance questions, and gender and development, into mainstream circuits of scholarly exchange.

D. Country differences matter.

The great differences among the research projects sponsored by the Women and Local Development Program, and among the seminars held in different countries, suggest that national contexts are important determinants of the response to programs such as the present one. The audience for the seminar in Chile was far more interested in issues of democracy than in concrete municipal programs. This reversed the order of priorities that emerged in the discussions in Colombia, for example. Not only were there palpable differences in the major concerns of the participants from one country to the next, but countries differed in the amount of support that was available in terms of previous research or the disposition to take the issue of gender and local government seriously. The study and the seminar sponsored by IBAM in Brazil had not only the advantage of drawing on a body of previous research on women and local government in that country, but of the legitimation of the topic as well. In some countries -- Argentina and Uruguay -- it might have been important to give more consideration to women in administrative as opposed to elective posts in local government.

These kinds of differences in context and response suggest, too, that a second round of the Program might do well to consider more differentiated activities. They would have to be precisely tailored to the needs of each country and probably to the panoply of local actors as well.

E. Focus on development

As its title suggests, local development was a concept of fundamental importance in the design of the "Women and Local Development Program". It was understood that women's access to local government was an end in itself but was also a means to another end: that of improving the levels of living, augmenting human capacities, strengthening the web of social institutions, and increasing levels of social equity in the local jurisdictions where municipal authorities are mandated to act. Though the connections were not drawn out in detail in the original Program proposal or the agreement between USAID-RHUDO/SA and IULA-

CELCADEL, it was taken to be an implicit truth that the "business" of local governments in the countries of Latin America, especially after the economic crises of the 80's and the structural adjustment programs that were the almost universal response of national governments, was to promote development.

A serious and sustained attack on the issues of gender and local development would have implied various things for the Program under review. It would have implied that the discussions in the seminars address questions of the role of local governments in stimulating economic activity, examining alternatives such as training, developing and disseminating new technologies, investment programs, the provision of infrastructure and basic services, environmental protection, and the regulation of business pursuits, especially those involving large numbers of women. It would also have implied a profound debate on urban and rural poverty and, in particular, on the "feminization of poverty" in both these settings. Seriously addressing the issues of gender and local development would have broadened the focus of the four diagnostic studies sponsored by the Program. It would have suggested certain changes of emphasis in the contents of the articles that disseminated the Program and its activities.

Most of the questions related to local development were in fact touched on at one time or another in the Program's discussions and activities. They were forcefully introduced in the initial seminar which, not coincidentally, included the presence of some strong popular leaders from the region. But from there on the issues of concern tended to concentrate in the areas of social services and social programs, not always related systematically to the requirements of local economic development. There was ample debate on local government's role in the provision of social services, especially in urban municipalities, and even consideration of some gender specific services such as shelters for battered women. Local government's role in promoting economic development in ways of particular interest to women was a lesser theme. For many of the participants the influence of local government decisions over economic life and, as a consequence, over the economic opportunities of women seems not to have been clear.

What, then, can be said about the Program's impact on the poorest women in tens of thousands of local municipalities of Latin America? In general the connection between increasing women's participation in local government and resolving problems of poverty did not emerge with force in the discussions at the seminars, although it was probably implicit in many people's minds. Addressing it would have demanded a more systematic consideration of the differences among women and the various places they occupy in the organization of the economies of the countries of the region. Yet poverty and anti-poverty policies

are leading issues on the political agendas of many Latin American nations at present. Here an opportunity was missed to direct the debate to specifically female poverty -- or to the relation between poverty and gender discrimination -- and connect that discussion to local development.

Local development also implies local political development and the forging of a new relationship between local and national government. These, too, are themes that might have emerged with greater clarity in the Program's activities. Too often the structure and functioning of local government were taken as givens rather than matters to be considered for reform at a time when the climate is favorable to a critical review of the organization and operation of government in South America. Women's problems of access to local decisions may reflect the problems of access of many disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups. They point to problems with governmental structures and procedures that require change. Undoubtedly more basic research on the on-the-ground functioning of local governments is necessary before these problems can be identified. Meanwhile, the experience of the women local officials that participated in the Program might have been better exploited to bring many problems out in the open. It is to be hoped that ways can be found to do that in follow-up actions.

Here, too, in the relationship between gender, local government, and local development, the Women and Local Development Program was crucial to identifying a range of pending issues. These are issues that require further study, debate, and legitimation in the future.