

CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY ASSESSMENTS IN THE LAC REGION

Bolivia and El Salvador

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This report has two main purposes. The first is to provide an assessment of strategies pursued by USAID and other donors to support civil society as a critical component of democratization in Bolivia and El Salvador in the period since the democratic restoration of 1986. As such, the report forms a case study in the more general civil society strategy assessment currently under way at the Center for Democracy and Governance. The report’s second purpose is to explore the development of civil society in two cases that are illustrative in different ways of the political systems USAID has been assisting in the 1990s.

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- 👉 **Rule of Law**
- 👉 **Elections and Political Processes**
- 👉 **Civil Society**
- 👉 **Governance**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Harry Blair

Harry is the author of the present report and served as team leader for the two field studies it incorporates, as well as managing the overall civil society strategy assessment at the Center for Democracy and Governance. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from Duke University and served as professor of political science at Bucknell University from 1970 to 2000, with visiting appointments at Colgate, Columbia, Cornell, Rutgers, and Yale Universities. Currently he is a senior research scholar and lecturer in political science at Yale University. Harry's earlier research and publications focused largely on politics, rural development, and natural resource management in the Indian subcontinent; more recently he has been concentrating on the democratization process across a range of countries. At USAID, Harry has worked for the former Science and Technology Bureau in the early 1980s, and during the 1990s in both the Center for Development Information and Evaluation and in the Center for Democracy and Governance.

As with most USAID reports, this one was a team effort in its two field phases, and many thanks are due to Michele Guttmann (who served on both country teams), Adam Behrendt and Kelly Shanahan (Bolivia), and Leonor Schoening (El Salvador). Much appreciation also goes to Jose Garzon and Ana Klenecki, the principal democracy officers in the two missions. Maggy Morales and Orieta Sacre at USAID/Bolivia and Todd Sorenson at USAID/El Salvador were also most helpful. Thanks to Tom Reilly of Chemonics, the director of the Desarrollo Democrática y Participación Ciudadana project in Bolivia and Aldo Miranda of Research Triangle Institute, Tom's counterpart with the Proyecto de Desarrollo Municipal y Participación Ciudadana in El Salvador. Walter Guevara, formerly of USAID/Bolivia was as ever an inspired source of information and interpretation. Finally, many thanks to Kris Merschrod and Bruce Abrams for their careful reading and commentary on the earlier drafts of this report.

This report has been produced for USAID, but interpretations and conclusions in it do not necessarily reflect USAID policy. They are solely the responsibility of the author, as are any errors or other shortcomings in the report.

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on USAID support for civil society in Bolivia and El Salvador as part of a larger exercise undertaken by USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance (the Center). The exercise aims to assess civil society strategy across USAID, distilling lessons to be learned from the experience and considering their implications for future support of the civil society sector. The end product of the multi-country assessment will be a synthesis analysis.

As this report gathers lessons from these two countries in the LAC region as part of a wider assessment of civil society strategy, it is **not** intended as in any sense an evaluation—either formal or informal—of civil society support efforts in either Bolivia or El Salvador. It is to be hoped that others will undertake a formal evaluation of these important and in ways exemplary efforts. Here the purpose is to analyze aspects and illustrations of experience to inform the Center's global civil society strategy assessment.

The two democracy and governance (DG) assessments were carried out by teams working in-country for about two weeks each in the fall of 1999. In both countries, the teams concentrated on USAID-sponsored civil society assistance activities at local and national levels. There has been some modest updating since then to include more recent reports and findings, but the report's principal emphasis concentrates on how things stood at the time of the field visits.

A. The Core DG Problems

The basic Bolivian DG problem for centuries has been the systematic exclusion of the vast majority of its population from the political arena, primarily along ethnic lines, so that even into the 1990s the indigenous population largely had no meaningful role in the country's political life. In the early 1990s, a new national administration began a concerted effort to move the indigenous majority into significant participation in the country's political life; this trend has continued despite a relative lack of enthusiasm displayed by the succeeding national administration.

In El Salvador, the basic DG problem at the beginning of the 1990s was reconciling and reconstructing the polity itself after a prolonged and bitter civil war that had ended mainly because each side was forced to conclude that it could not win militarily. By the late 1990s, this effort had succeeded far beyond the expectations of most observers, sufficiently so that there emerged a basic elite consensus that a new national challenge should be crafted and agreed upon.

Class differences have also been important. It would not be off the mark to say that, while in El Salvador the principal societal cleavage constraining democratization for the last century and more has been along class lines, in Bolivia it has been the ethnic divide between an Hispanic minority and an Andean majority, with class differences playing a smaller although still significant role. These divisions very much endure today in the political, economic, and cultural life of these two countries. At bottom, the central democratic challenge is to bridge these gaps.

B. USAID Program Context

1. Bolivia

The centerpiece of the local strategy was the 1994 Popular Participation Law (PPL), which (along with ancillary legislation) brought elected mayor/council government for the first time to the entire country. At

the same time, the new dispensation also introduced a kind of parallel structure in the form of *comités de vigilancia* (CVs or vigilance committees) to be staffed with representatives chosen on a territorial basis by traditional groups. Their principal functions were to oversee municipal government operations and to file complaints of municipal malfeasance upward to the central level. In democracy terms, the reforms endeavored to provide a civil society structure through the CVs, in which very locally-based groups could gain a voice in directing government activity and in holding it accountable. The USAID Mission has supported this local governance initiative with its Democratic Development and Citizen Participation (DDCP) project; the main element has been assistance to 18 (later 25) municipalities as a pilot effort focusing on the CVs and local government capacity to respond to demand. By the late 1990s, it had become evident that, while the reforms were working well in many ways, they had failed to give a role to important local constituencies, such as women and occupational groups. In response, a number of experiments were launched to amplify the CV structure with new voices.

At the national level, the reform agenda centered on restructuring parliamentary constituencies so that half the members would be directly elected from single-member districts. This was a major change from the old system in which all members were elected on party lists through a department-based proportional representation scheme and thus had virtually no relationship with individual constituents. The new arrangement thus provided a real opening for citizens in any particular area to interact with their individual *diputado* both directly and through civil society organizations (CSOs). The USAID Mission has been supporting efforts to build such links.

2. El Salvador

Here also the local level has formed the central focus for USAID activity in the latter 1990s. In the earlier part of the decade, when post-conflict assistance was generous, the Agency funded a large-scale municipal program to combine financial support with civil society inputs in the form of town meetings. Later, as reconciliation became a less pressing issue and concomitantly U.S. aid shrank sharply, USAID switched to a pilot effort assisting 18 (later 28) municipalities, concentrating on a new national experiment to create *comités de desarrollo local* (CDLs or local development committees) that would function somewhat similarly to the CVs in Bolivia. The civil society challenge here is rather greater than in Bolivia in that municipal councils are elected on an at-large, winner-take-all basis, such that the winning party gets all the seats. Accordingly, the CDL system will be the only institution that can provide a different voice to the council, as well as attempt to include some territorial citizen voice (as do the Bolivian CVs) and some representation across social sectors (as with the new Bolivian experiments).

At the national level, USAID supported a wide variety of NGOs and CSOs in the earlier 1990s (see Blair *et al* 1995). At the end of the decade, assistance was being concentrated on an effort to help CSOs form coalitions around common issues and build alliance-based advocacy strategies. The number of CSOs recruited into these six coalitions ranges from 6 to 25.

C. Lessons and Issues for Civil Society Assistance

The first set of lessons and issues concerns USAID concepts and practices:

1. Definitions Including Function as well as Form

Just how should USAID define a “civil society organization”? At the Center, a CSO is defined as basically as a non-state organization concerned with DG reforms. Experience in supporting civil society in the 1990s, however, forces us to ask whether this definition should be expanded to include a wider range of organizations. In particular, we might want to include advocacy groups working outside the formal DG sector; service delivery NGOs; what might be called virtual or statutory CSOs like the

Bolivian CVs and Salvadoran CDLs; what amount to *de facto* CSOs, as when municipal councils lobby at higher level; and networking organizations providing support to CSOs. The idea is that function should be critical in defining a CSO, rather than form.

2. Civil Society Autonomy and Advocacy

If the definition of a CSO is loosened to include virtual CSOs like Bolivian CVs that are in some respects organs of the state, we must deal with the autonomy question—how much autonomy is needed for an organization to be a CSO? A second dimension is advocacy, also a hallmark characteristic of CSOs. Closely allied to the autonomy query is an advocacy issue: What is the effect of increased (or decreased) autonomy on a CSO's ability to advocate? The relationship here is important.

3. Linkages within and between USAID Sectors

- Civil society's location in the DG sector. At the Center, civil society is treated as a stand-alone sub-sector, although of course it blends in with other sub-sectors, especially decentralization in the present report. How much potential synergy is being lost through this compartmentalization?
- DG and the other USAID program sectors. The relatively small problems of linkages within the DG sector become magnified when the perspective shifts to the whole USAID portfolio—both within missions and in Washington. To what extent should DG programming include the health or environment sectors, for example? A recent PPC/CDIE assessment report, *Linking Democracy and Development: An Idea for the Times* (Lippman 2001), provides a synthesis of a USAID study on linkages between democracy and governance, and USAID's other strategic goals.

4. Sustainability as a Function of Necessity

In El Salvador, where foreign assistance has been rapidly declining from its apogee just after the 1992 Peace Accords, it has been relatively straightforward to convince both the government of El Salvador (GOES) and in-country NGOs of the need to strive for sustainability. In Bolivia, on the other hand, where such support has remained relatively steady over the same time period, few at any level are interested in such matters.

5. CSOs at Local vs. National Level

The key strategic concerns at the local level in both countries relate to representation and empowerment for different groups—giving them a significant voice in the political system. At the national level, the principal strategic issue is pluralism: How to assure that civil society actors in the political arena are skillful enough to produce a balanced polity? Are we dealing with two kinds of civil society? Or two different stages along the same developmental track?

A second set of lessons and issues concerns democratization more generally:

6. Political Will and Policy Dialogue

The PPL needed and received strong presidential commitment to attain enactment in Bolivia. Even so, donor dialogue was needed to reinforce central government resolve to support these reforms after a new national administration was voted into power. Political will thus sometimes needs reinforcement, even when initially it seems quite ample. In El Salvador, the 1992 Peace Accords required immense political

will on both sides to put into place, but the impetus thus created has been enough to carry the reformist impulse along, albeit at a more modest tempo than Bolivia has developed.

7. Host-country Government Role in Pressing Reform

In their willingness to undertake reforms in the political system, the two countries present a marked study in contrasts. Bolivia boldly enacted its PPL reforms and the single-member district system for the national legislature, following up with a party reform requiring that 30 percent of candidates and elected officeholders in each party be women. El Salvador has proceeded at a much more measured pace, willing to experiment but not to restructure its basic system thus far. Which is the better course? Bolivia risks bad consequences that could be hard to reverse, while El Salvador risks running out of reformist steam before anything serious has been accomplished.

8. Donor Coordination

The government of Bolivia (GOB) has invested much energy into coordinating the whole donor assistance enterprise in all sectors, with some success at achieving a coherent foreign aid operation. In El Salvador, donor coordination is barely starting. Objectively the positions should be reversed, as falling donor aid to the latter country might be expected to generate interest in more efficient allocation.

9. Consultation and Multiple Ownership of Reform

As it undertook its several major reforms in the 1990s, the GOB solicited serious input from a wide range of think tanks, NGOs, and intellectuals, much of which got incorporated into the actual reforms. More recently, the GOES has employed a similar approach in formulating a new national agenda-setting exercise, its “*plan de nación*.” Any dangers of dilution would seem to be more than compensated for by the breadth of support this approach has engendered.

10. The Importance of Structure

- Electoral structure. In the Salvadoran winner-take-all, at-large municipal election structure there is no official opposition political voice on the inside of the system and no direct links between council members and constituents. Bolivia’s proportional representation (PR) system solves the first problem but retains the latter. Parliamentary systems were completely PR-based in both countries, until Bolivia’s 1997 reforms changed half the members to single-member seats, thereby offering some chance to build *diputado*-citizen linkages. The point is that structure matters greatly.
- Multiple channels for representation and accountability. Despite a number of problems, both countries have crafted pioneering multiple structures to connect citizen with government. Bolivia has added its OTB/CV system to its new municipal council setup, and has also reformed its national legislative electoral structure to add single-member districts, thus offering a third channel. In El Salvador, if the CDL experiment continues and expands, it will also provide a second citizen-state linkage.
- Devolutionary structure. Every country decentralizes differently so far as sectors are concerned (e.g., health in Bolivia while not in El Salvador), but more importantly, each tends to take a different path in how it decentralizes any particular sector. Thus Bolivia devolved control over planning but not operational responsibility, while El Salvador devolved both aspects, which provides potentially much more scope for civil society activity. Again, structure matters.

11. Determinants of Post-conflict Reconciliation

Because the two sides in the Salvadoran civil war were largely headed by leaders from a similar class and culture, reconciliation has proved relatively uncomplicated, compared to what the prospects are for other post-conflict situations such as Bosnia or Rwanda. Civil society activity is easier to launch in such situations as well.

12. Attaining Representation and Empowerment

Although Bolivia has advanced considerably further, both countries have made progress in extending political representation to new sectors of the population. But this representation (having an official charged with serving the interests of a group) does not automatically mean empowerment (having a significant voice in official decision-making). The latter is a longer-term prospect.

13. Gender Equity

The Bolivian PPL reforms explicitly guarantee “equal opportunity at the representative level” to men and women, but at the same time they also specify that representatives to the CVs will be selected according to traditional customs and mores—which very much reflect the values of a male-dominated society. The latter promise generally trumps the former, and women are largely left out. A similar (although less obviously contradictory) situation occurs in Salvadoran local governance. In reforming some dimensions of participatory politics, others get ignored or even made worse.

14. Urban-rural Differences

The PPL appears to work significantly better in the smaller towns and rural areas than in the larger cities. This is a serious cause for concern in a rapidly urbanizing country like Bolivia. There are also problems at the rural end of the spectrum, in that the smaller municipalities simply cannot deliver many of the services their citizens need. Both problems have civil society repercussions. Special districts (*mancomunidades*) including several municipalities are helping with the second issue, but solutions to the first are proving more elusive. The lesson is that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot succeed; much tailoring is called for.

1 Introduction

This report focuses on USAID support for civil society in Bolivia and El Salvador. It constitutes the Latin American and the Caribbean phase of an exercise currently under way at the Center that is intended to assess civil society strategy across USAID [insert title of forthcoming synthesis]. The central idea driving this assessment is that, after a decade of USAID's supporting civil society, it is time to distill what lessons can be learned from the experience and to consider the implications of such lessons for future support of the civil society sector.

Our inquiry has gained significant enrichment from two independent exercises conducted by other offices at USAID/Washington. First, E&E/DG undertook a multi-country assessment of its experience in supporting NGOs in its region, an effort that has been published as a report, *Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story* (USAID 1999). Similarly, LAC/RSD engaged in an analysis of its Partners of the Americas network supporting civil society throughout that region, *Participatory Evaluation of Partners of the Americas Grant from USAID, Focusing on the Inter-American Democracy Network* (USAID 2000b). The present report represents the first tentative fruits of the Center's own assessment initiative and sums up findings for our two country analyses in Bolivia and El Salvador, undertaken in the fall of 1999. In 2000 we followed up with three country-level assessments in Africa, and one in Asia and the Near East. While our design is to publish a synthesis report for the exercise as a whole, the Center also felt this more detailed assessment of the programs in the LAC region had value to the DG community.

A. What the Report is and is Not

It is important to underline this report's central purpose as part of a wider assessment of civil society strategy, gathering lessons from the Bolivian and Salvadoran experiences. Accordingly, the report is not intended as in any sense an evaluation—either formal or informal—of civil society support efforts in either country. Instead, aspects and illustrations are taken from them to inform the Center's global civil society strategy assessment. It is certainly to be hoped that the USAID-supported programs featured in this report will receive a formal final evaluation before they come to an end, for both have valuable lessons to offer future efforts elsewhere. But the present report does not constitute such an evaluation.

B. Participants and Methodology

Both assessments were carried out by teams working in-country for about two weeks. The principal methodology consisted of key informant interviews, document review, several in-country fieldtrips, some direct observation, and one focus group session.

C. Levels of Analysis

In both countries four kinds of USAID-sponsored civil society assistance were in progress at the time of our assessment. The first two types were managed within the DG sector at mission level, but the other two were not. The four types are

- Local-level programs, mainly at the municipal level. These efforts formed the centerpiece of USAID assistance to civil society in both countries.
- National-level DG efforts. These comprised mainly coalition building and advocacy in El Salvador, and legislature and advocacy in Bolivia.

- National-level sectoral initiatives. These activities were managed by other sectoral offices within the USAID Missions in the two countries, chiefly in environment and health.
- Regional-level programs. These were the NGO support networks set up by the Inter-American Democracy Network (IADN), a five-member group in which Partners of the Americas was the lead member.

The analysis focused primarily on the first two types, with some attention to the third type. For a number of reasons, the fourth type was not a focus of the study. First, the LAC/DSR office was conducting its own evaluation of the IADN (see POA 2000), so this aspect was already being covered. Second, the timing of two sets of TDY visits proved incompatible. Third, the IADN programs were managed on a regional basis involving little direct connection with the USAID Missions in the countries visited, making it too difficult to include any serious attention to the IADN activity in addition to focusing on mission-sponsored efforts.

D. Organization of This Report

The analysis opens just below with a brief statement of the central DG problems in the two countries. The next section on civil society program activity then lays out for each country three things:

- The DG context facing the USAID Mission
- The major program activities undertaken by the mission at local and national levels
- How those efforts could be interpreted in terms of the civil society strategic logic framework used at the Center

It should be noted that the material presented in this second section is intended as a short overview of civil society programming in the two countries, not as a detailed analysis of what the team learned in each one. The third and final section draws out lessons and issues distilled from analyzing civil society experience in the two countries.

E. The Central DG Problems in Bolivia and El Salvador

In DG terms, each of the two countries has had one overriding challenge, which can be captured fairly straightforwardly in terms of recent history. The basic Bolivian DG problem for centuries has been the systematic exclusion of the vast majority of its population from the political arena, primarily along ethnic lines, so that the indigenous population largely had no meaningful role in the country's political life. After Bolivia's 1952 revolution with its tin mine nationalization and land reform—both extraordinarily ambitious steps for the time and setting—some previously excluded groups (especially mining unions and peasant syndicates) came to gain important roles, but most continued to be left out. By the 1980s, the unions and syndicates had declined sharply in their influence as new business elites gained. Then in the early 1990s a new national administration began a concerted effort to move the indigenous majority into significant participation in the country's political life. The 1997 elections brought a succeeding national administration into power that was at best indifferent to the popular participation initiative; however, its continuation came under some threat. More serious dangers to Bolivian democracy arose in the spring and fall of 2000 with massive disruptions over utility rates and coca eradication.

In El Salvador, the basic DG problem at the beginning of the 1990s was reconciling and reconstructing the polity itself after a prolonged and bitter civil war that had ended mainly because each side was forced

to conclude that it could not win militarily. Much of the very large assistance package assembled by USAID and other donors after the 1992 Peace Accords was directed at promoting such a rebuilding enterprise. By the late 1990s, this effort had succeeded far beyond the expectations of most observers, sufficiently so at any rate that there emerged a basic elite consensus that a new national agenda should be agreed upon. A lengthy exercise involving both national and local elites then ensued to define that agenda, which at the time of the team's visit was gradually coming into view as creating some combination of enhanced access, transparency and accountability. Undergirding this attempt at consensus, as well as the civil war and popular eruptions earlier in the 20th century, has been the very unequal distribution of income, wealth, and land in El Salvador.¹

It would not be off the mark to say that, while in El Salvador the principal societal cleavage constraining democratization for the last century and more has been largely along class lines, in Bolivia the main divide has split an Hispanic minority and an Andean majority, with class differences playing a smaller although still significant role. These divisions very much endure today in the political, economic and cultural life of these two countries. The central DG challenge is to bridge these gaps.

2 USAID Program Activity in Bolivia and El Salvador

A. Bolivia

1. Program Context

In 1993 Bolivia's newly elected president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, embarked on a reform program that over the next several years transformed the governance environment at the local level and promised similar changes at the national level. Motivations for the initiative were, as should be expected, mixed—partly an ethical conviction of the new leadership; partly a desire to build a new base for the president's political party; and partly to keep up with the global “third wave” democratization trends of the times. The implications for civil society have been profound.

The centerpiece of the local strategy was the 1994 Popular Participation Law (PPL), which (along with ancillary legislation) brought elected mayor/council government for the first time to the entire country, to be divided into some 311 municipalities. These new units were allocated some 20 percent of national tax revenues on a guaranteed basis. At the same time, the new dispensation also introduced a kind of parallel structure in the form of the CVs—a truly bold step that was the first of its kind anywhere. The CVs were to be staffed with representatives chosen² on a territorial basis by traditional groups, which would be officially recognized as *organizaciones territoriales de base* (OTBs). These were neighborhood organizations in the urban regions, and peasant syndicates as well as various tribal bodies in the rural areas. They were given a role in advising municipal councils on planning investments as well as selecting CV members. The CVs' principal functions were to oversee municipal government operations and to file complaints of municipal malfeasance upward to the central level (from which sanctions including a cutoff of central government funds could be levied if the complaints were found justified).

In democracy terms, the reforms were endeavoring to provide—through the OTBs and CVs—a civil society structure, in which very locally-based groups could gain a voice in directing government activity and in holding it accountable. The OTBs on average included only about 450 people, and the CVs were to be selected every two years, thus making available quite an intimate system of political accountability. In a Center taxonomic sense, though, some small confusion arises, in that the OTB or CV as “civil society organization” here is *de jure* an official governmental entity, not an NGO. Strictly speaking, then, CVs and OTBs do not conform to the Center's definition of “nonstate groups that can (or have the potential to) champion democratic/governance reforms” (cf. Hansen 1996: 3). On the other hand, the absence of salaried officeholders, public funding, and any governmental authority outside of their oversight role makes them seem more like CSOs than a part of the state machinery.³

At the national level, the new government's agenda centered on restructuring parliamentary constituencies so that half the members would be directly elected from single-member districts—a major change from the old system in which all members were elected on party lists through a department-based PR scheme. Whereas before all the *diputados* related to constituents more or less anonymously through party organizations, now fully half (to be called *uninominales*) would be electorally accountable to the population of a specific area averaging around 110,000 population. The new arrangement thus provided a real opening for citizens in any particular area to interact with their individual *diputado* both directly and through CSOs, whereas before they could reach an individual parliamentary representative only through the political party system, which meant basically not at all.

2. USAID Program Activities

USAID/Bolivia worked on both the local and national levels to support the host-country government's democratization initiative, focusing primarily on the former. The key element was assistance to the new machinery of governance at the municipal level. Working through its contractor Chemonics, Inc., USAID set up the DDCP project, in which the centerpiece was a pilot experiment with 18 municipalities (later increased to 25), focusing on strengthening municipal capacity to plan and manage investments, provide services, etc., and also on increasing CV ability to participate in the municipal arena. Of the program elements outlined in the principal USAID civil society assessment report,⁴ those most emphasized were resource mobilization among the municipal councils; and civic education, coalition building, and advocacy among the CVs.

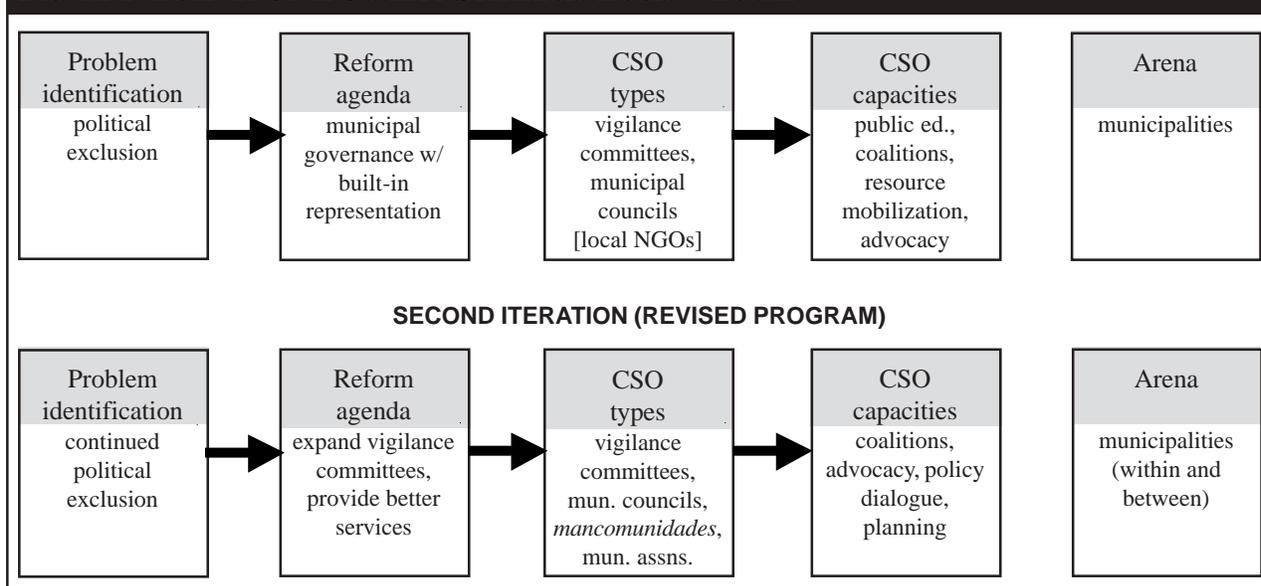
In addition, the USAID contract with Chemonics included a \$2 million allocation to the Fondo de Apoyo a la Participación (FAP or Fund for Supporting Participation), which was intended primarily to support local-level NGOs with small grants (up to \$50,000 maximum). This program was slow to get started, however, and only in November 1997 did it actually begin to function (see Shanahan 1999). At the national level, the mission planned to help link the new *uninominales* with their constituents through civil society efforts in 15 pilot constituencies.

By the late 1990s, after a new president and new party (Hugo Banzer Suárez and the Acción Democrática Nacional) had won election in 1997, the situation appeared to undergo a material change. For one thing, the new administration was considerably less enthusiastic than its predecessor in supporting the PPL reforms. Second, the new municipal governance system had run into problems in delivering what citizens desired in many areas, for lack of economies of scale. Almost one-third of the 311 municipalities had less than 5,000 inhabitants and simply could not afford to offer basic services even with the increased funding allotments from La Paz that came with PPL implementation. Third, the OTB/CV system, while certainly a great improvement in facilitating extra citizen involvement in the local political arena, had manifested some serious problems in its ability to represent a multitude of voices. In particular, it tended to exclude women, occupational groups (e.g., traders and professionals), and what were often called “productive elements”—farmers and local entrepreneurs in particular. The OTB/CV structure also seemed noticeably less effective in the urban than in the rural areas.⁵

The USAID response was correspondingly threefold. First the U.S. government country team, in coordination with other donors who largely had the same unease about the issue, pressed the new Bolivian administration to be more supportive of the PPL initiative. USAID then supported the efforts of many municipalities to form municipal associations at the departmental level⁶ and, most interestingly, *mancomunidades*, which amounted to special-purpose areas stretching over several municipalities to provide services otherwise unavailable (e.g., in health or road maintenance). The *mancomunidades* can be compared to U.S. special purpose districts for watershed management, mosquito abatement and the like that wander across county and/or municipal boundaries to provide agreed-upon services.

Third, the mission assisted the generation of new ideas to augment the CV structure by expanding it to include new groups or alternatively forming subcommittees to the CV or municipal councils that would include previously excluded elements. In particular, through the DDCP the mission supported an experimental body, the Comisión de Coordinación, Orientación, y Participación Electoral (COPE), intended to include representatives of functional, civic, occupational, and syndicate organizations. Its primary tasks are to advise the CV, to provide civic education, to promote citizen rights and participation, and to establish local links with the *uninominales*.⁷ It was hoped that COPE would provide a model for national replication, but GOB receptivity appeared uncertain at the time of the DG team's visit.

FIGURE 1: BOLIVIA CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIC LOGIC—LOCAL

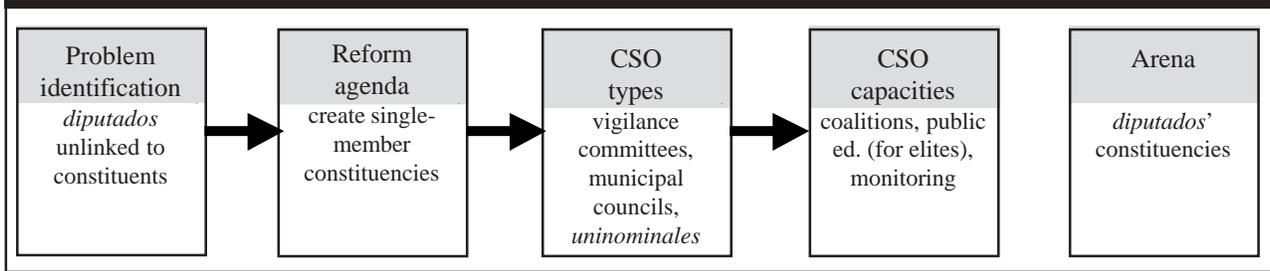


In addition, FAP support for local-level NGOs had, by the time of the DG team’s visit, come on line. [The support was to have been included initially in the DDCP but was slow in getting started.] By late 1999 about 150 activities had been funded through FAP (see Shanahan 1999 for details on these FAP grants). The program elements now most emphasized were policy dialogue (at the upper level), coalition building (promoting the *mancomunidades*), advocacy (through the municipal associations), monitoring (now by both CV and COPE), and future legislative reform to incorporate the CV restructuring plans expected to emerge from the ideas that were being floated in that regard.

The mission’s program at the national level, contracted to the State University of New York at Albany, focused on building links between the new *uninominales* and their constituents. This was to be accomplished through CSOs working with 15 *diputados* representing the areas containing DDCP project sites. Program elements emphasized coalition building across municipalities (so that CVs and councils would become *de facto* CSOs in relating to their *diputado*, monitoring their activities, lobbying them, etc.) and some technical assistance for the *diputados* to help them relate to their new constituents. This effort also ran into problems, but of a different kind. To begin with, the USAID contract with the original partner expired in 1998, and it was transferred over to the DDCP contractor, Chemonics, with some consequent interruption in the flow of activity.

More importantly, while the single-member constituency system was indeed implemented in the 1997 election and some 68 *uninominales* were duly placed in office, both the political parties and the *uninominales* themselves tended to behave much as before. Party leaders continued to treat all their *diputados* as subordinates subject to party discipline and no other accountability, and the *uninominales* themselves tended to accept this role.⁸ But some hope for the program lies in the finding from Mitchell Seligson’s surveys for USAID that both nationally and in the DDCP project sites citizens believed by 5-to-1 and more that their *uninominal diputado* represented them better than their *plurinominales* chosen under the old PR system (Seligson 1999: 58-59; also Seligson 2001: 244-245). Perhaps because of this difference, DDCP was able to make some progress, although it was difficult at the time of the DG team’s visit to tell how much.

FIGURE 2: BOLIVIA CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIC LOGIC—NATIONAL



3. Civil Society Strategic Logic in Bolivia

Figures 1 and 2 endeavor to lay out USAID’s civil society approach in terms of the Center’s strategic logic framework (as articulated in Hansen 1996). As with El Salvador, there is no documentary evidence that DG’s strategic framework was employed in this way to design the civil society program in Bolivia, and none of the program’s designers were still on hand to interview on the matter. But it proved relatively straightforward to retrofit what actually happened into the framework, as is done in the two figures.

Figure 1 recounts what was presented above for the local level, first for the initial program and then for the program as revised at the end of the 1990s when it became apparent that adjustments were needed in order to increase representativeness of the CVs and enhance service delivery. It is noteworthy that in the first iteration particularly what are shown as “CSO types” are not literally CSOs at all. Rather these CVs and OTBs are statutory bodies and thus in a sense a part of the state, not part of civil society.⁹ As pointed out earlier in this section on Bolivia, the CVs and OTBs were acting *de facto* as CSOs, in that their function was to make demands upon and insist on accountability from the more formal state body, the municipal council. In the second iteration, the definition of “CSO types” is pressed even further, this time to include municipal councils,¹⁰ which are now acting as lobbying agents vis-à-vis the departmental level. In Figure 2, “CSO type” is again expanded to include the CVs and municipal councils, this time as bodies voicing demands and insisting on accountability from their new *uninominales*. The idea of what exactly is a CSO needs a certain flexibility, contingent on function sometimes more than form.

B. El Salvador

1. Program Context

The local context for civil society programming has its origins in the municipal code of 1986, which was enacted during the civil war partly in hopes of making local government more responsive to the citizenry and thereby making the latter less responsive to revolutionary appeals of the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN). The first of the code’s key elements provided greater autonomy to the municipalities while at the same time requiring at least four *cabildos abiertos* (open town meetings at which citizens were invited to suggest priorities for local government action¹¹). Second, municipalities were authorized to grant legal status to NGOs within the community, a power that had hitherto been reserved to central authorities. Consequently, when the war ended in 1992, the municipal level offered distinct possibilities for promoting reconciliation by involving the former opposing sides in the *cabildos abiertos* and in NGO activity.

At the national level in 1992, the clear need was to encourage reconciliation among the elites who had led the two sides during the civil war. At that time, the challenge appeared a herculean one, especially given

the bitterness of a conflict that had taken some 80,000 lives over its 12-year history. A second need, equally important but dependent on progress in meeting the first, was to end the systematic abuses of human rights that had characterized so much of the conflict. The army and the police had to be thoroughly reformed.

To the surprise of most observers, by the later 1990s, the reconciliation task had succeeded, if not completely then certainly far beyond most expectations. FMLN elites had been largely integrated into the society at the national level, and at the local level, while the evidence is less clear, considerable progress appears to have occurred.¹² By 1997, this grand national agenda seemed to have been largely achieved, and President Armando Calderón Sol launched an exercise to craft a new set of goals for the nation (the *plan de nación*). Under the direction of a blue-ribbon commission, the initiative went through several stages over a 2½-year period, involving among other things some 19 reports from panels of experts on various topics and a series of departmental workshops that in the end included more than 4,000 participants. Finally in October 1999, the plan emerged as a set of regional proposals to bring sustainable development to different areas of the country—proposals that were then embraced by Calderón Sol's successor, President Francisco Flores.¹³ Notable from the viewpoint of the present report was the very widespread participation of citizens and CSOs at both national and local level in the plan exercise.

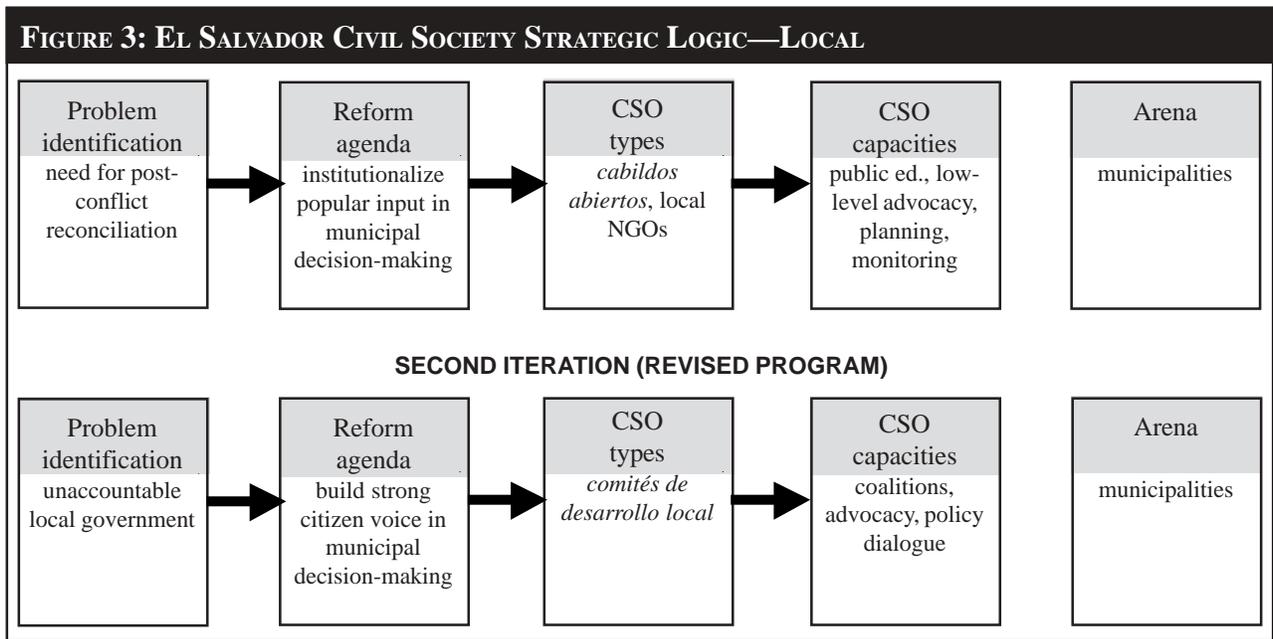
In 1998 a new municipal law was enacted allocating a considerably higher proportion (6 percent) of the national budget to municipalities and at the same time requiring them to adopt some form of participatory planning.¹⁴ This latter provision was somewhat vague in the law, but one of the two governmental bodies administering the allocations has used it to press municipalities to set up CDLs.¹⁵ A number of CDL models have been tried out, all embodying some form of representative citizenry to advise municipal councils on local policy. Various included in different CDLs have been delegates selected by the *asociaciones de desarrollo comunal* (ADESCOs),¹⁶ occupational representatives, community leaders, and mayoral cronies.

What was not changed at all in the 1990s, despite various presidential pledges to do so, was the winner-take-all aspect of local elections. In El Salvador, alone among all Latin American countries, the party gaining the most votes in municipal elections gets all the council seats, thereby eliminating any opposition voice on the council. There was, in other words, no structural way to ensure that a municipal council must listen to any voice other than that of its ruling and only party, except at election time every three years. The CDL offered the prospect of changing that situation, if only a bit.

2. USAID Program Activities

The USAID Mission responded to the opportunity offered by the 1986 municipal code with its Municipalities in Action program (known as MEA after its Spanish acronym), which provided support to conduct the *cabildos abiertos*, to fund projects identified by them, and to assist the local NGOs. At first this support went to municipalities in the government-controlled zones, but after the 1992 Peace Accords, the USAID program made significant efforts to include the former conflict zones as well, thus making MEA the centerpiece of its efforts to promote reconciliation at the local level (Blair *et al* 1995). MEA did enjoy some success in energizing citizen participation in areas that had been on both sides during the war, but its *cabildo abierto* structure meant that it was not able to do much more than involve civil society groups in assembling wish-lists for municipal investment.

In the later 1990s, USAID funding in El Salvador shrank drastically, from almost \$230 million in 1992 to around \$30 million by the end of the decade. In the process, the MEA with its heavy emphasis on infrastructural restoration was phased out altogether, to be succeeded by much leaner programs. USAID's

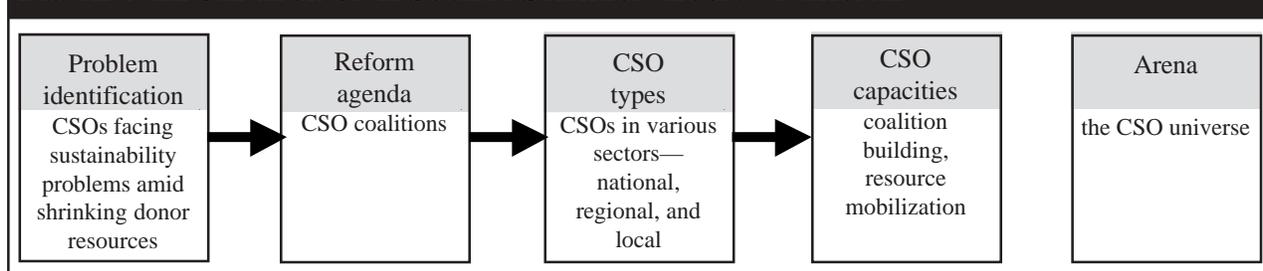


primary initiative in local governance became its Popular Participation and Strengthening Local Governance project, launched under a contract with Research Triangle Institute in 18 municipalities in 1995 (later expanded to 28). Initially the focus was more on enhancing municipal capacity to deliver services, but then it changed to a more demand-oriented program emphasizing citizen inputs, especially after the 1998 GOES reforms that required some movement toward participatory planning and at the same time greatly increased resources flowing to the municipal level. The program has since then been experimenting with various approaches to forming CDLs.

The exact structure and role of the CDL were still in a state of flux at the time of the DG team’s visit in the fall of 1999, so the USAID project as well as other donors were testing out different approaches to both elements. Some versions attempted a quasi-syndicalist scheme to represent groups within the municipality, and some invited the ADESCO statutory community organizations to send members to the CDL. Others seemed to draw more on friends of the mayor, and still others solicited local NGOs to depute members to the CDL.¹⁷ So far there has been no hint of anything like the complaint power accorded to the Bolivian CVs.

At the national level, USAID supported a wide variety of NGOs and CSOs in the earlier 1990s (Blair *et al* 1995). At the end of the decade, the mission was still assisting a number of them through its sectoral programs (e.g., in health and environment), but in the DG sector itself, assistance was being concentrated on an effort to help CSOs form coalitions around common issues and build alliance-based advocacy strategies. Formed against the backdrop of rapidly declining donor assistance, the central idea here has been to build alliances that would stand a reasonable chance of survival as the number of individual CSOs would inevitably decline. In this Citizen Participation and Governance results package, using World Learning as the main contractor, six coalitions were formed—three on a national basis and three on regional lines. The national themes comprise domestic violence, municipal code reform, and agricultural policy implementation, while the regional subjects concern drinking water use in the country’s major river basin, development policy at the department level, and land tenure. The number of CSOs recruited into these six coalitions ranges from 6 to 25.

FIGURE 4: EL SALVADOR CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIC LOGIC—NATIONAL



3. Civil Society Strategic Logic in El Salvador

Figures 3 and 4 portray USAID’s approach to civil society programming, again in terms of the Center’s strategic framework and once again retrofitting what appears to have occurred during the 1990s into the DG design frame. Figure 3 depicts the local level, beginning with the top half tracing the crafting of the MEA phase, working from problem identification through reform agenda, CSO types, and capacity building. Then as in Bolivia there was a second iteration as the problem was redefined from post-conflict reconciliation to accountability in local governance. Also familiar from the discussion of Bolivia is the fact that in Figure 3, most of the “CSO types” (in the third set of boxes) are not really CSOs in the strictest sense. These *cabildos abiertos* and CDLs are not official organs of the state in quite the same sense as the CVs and OTBs in Bolivia, for the *cabildos abiertos* consisted of whatever citizens wished to attend the open municipal meetings, while the CDLs are at this point only experiments without official status. But neither are they CSOs. Instead, like the CVs and OTBs they would perhaps best be seen as “virtual CSOs”—performing CSO-type functions as organized bodies between family and state representing citizen inputs and demands to the state.

Figure 4, in showing USAID strategic logic at the national level, is analogous to Figure 2 for Bolivia. Here the CSO types are the more commonly understood variety and fit easily into the DG framework.

3 Lessons and Issues for Civil Society Assistance

Relevant lessons and issues for civil society strategy that emerge from analyzing the experience in Bolivia and El Salvador are many. While the lessons stem from particular country-level experiences, most of them have a potentially much wider applicability, not only for the LAC region but elsewhere. These lessons fall into two basic categories. The first regards USAID concepts and practices, while the second concerns the external policy and political environments within which civil society operates. Both types have significant relevance for civil society programming beyond Bolivia and El Salvador. These lessons, it should be pointed out, are based on the team visits to the two countries, not solely on the material presented in Section 2 of this report, which provided a short overview of civil society programming. Accordingly, evidence for all the conclusions in Section 3 has not been presented in Section 2.

A. USAID Concepts and Practices

1. Definitions Including Function as well as Form

Just how should USAID define a civil society organization? In *Constituencies for Reform*, which has served as the basic Center guide to civil society strategy, civil society is defined as “nonstate organizations that can (or have the potential to) champion democratic/governance reforms” (Hansen 1996: 3¹⁸). Experience in supporting civil society in the 1990s, however, forces us to ask whether this definition should be expanded to include a wider range of organizations. In particular, the following bodies might be included:

- Advocacy groups working outside the formal DG sector. Such organizations in the environmental and health fields (for instance working to secure rights for HIV/AIDS victims) are pursuing reform agendas, and they are included in the *Constituencies for Reform* analysis as part of civil society (Hansen 1996: 2). In practice the Center in Washington and DG teams or offices at USAID field missions tend to exclude such groups from their DG activities. DG strategies, in other words, should become more explicitly cross-sectoral.¹⁹
- Service delivery NGOs, which so far have not been a real part of Center thinking. In the LAC region, where CSOs have long been in existence as an integral part of the political landscape, such an exclusion makes sense, but in an area like much of E&E, which had virtually no civil society in place when the communist era ended, it was necessary as a DG strategy to nurture service-oriented NGOs and encourage them to gradually take on CSO functions.²⁰
- Virtual or statutory CSOs. These are the CVs and OTBs in Bolivia, and the CDLs and ADESCOs in El Salvador, which function as CSOs in representing citizen interests to the municipal level and in their voluntary nature, lack of official funding, or absence of salaried officeholders. Yet at the same time they are official, statutory bodies and thus a part of the state. A more flexible definition of “civil society organization” is probably in order here.
- *De facto* CSOs. When a municipal mayor or council lobbies at the department (next higher) level in Bolivia or El Salvador, he/it is in effect acting as a CSO, competing with other municipalities, *comités cívicos*, etc. Municipal participation in the Bolivian *mancomunidades* seems similar, although the principal function is not to influence the state but to provide services to constituent municipalities. A better example comes when a group of mayors or councils forms a municipal association like COMURES to lobby at the national level for their collective benefit.

- Networking organizations. The IADN up through Partners of the Americas and its affiliated regional NGOs throughout the LAC region have provided logistical support, training, guidance, and backup to in-country CSOs (see USAID 2000b). Examples here are the work of the Chilean NGO Participa in Bolivia or the Guatemalan organization Instituto de Investigación y Autoformación Política in El Salvador. This kind of “intermediate service organization” is not exactly a CSO itself, in that it does not advocate any kind of reform. Like the media (which also do not generally engage directly in advocacy), it is very much a part of civil society and so should be included in any definition that endeavors to capture the whole of what civil society is or does. In much of Eastern Europe, intermediate service organizations have become a major resource (perhaps the major resource) of expertise and counsel as donors have gradually downsized their programs in recent years.²¹

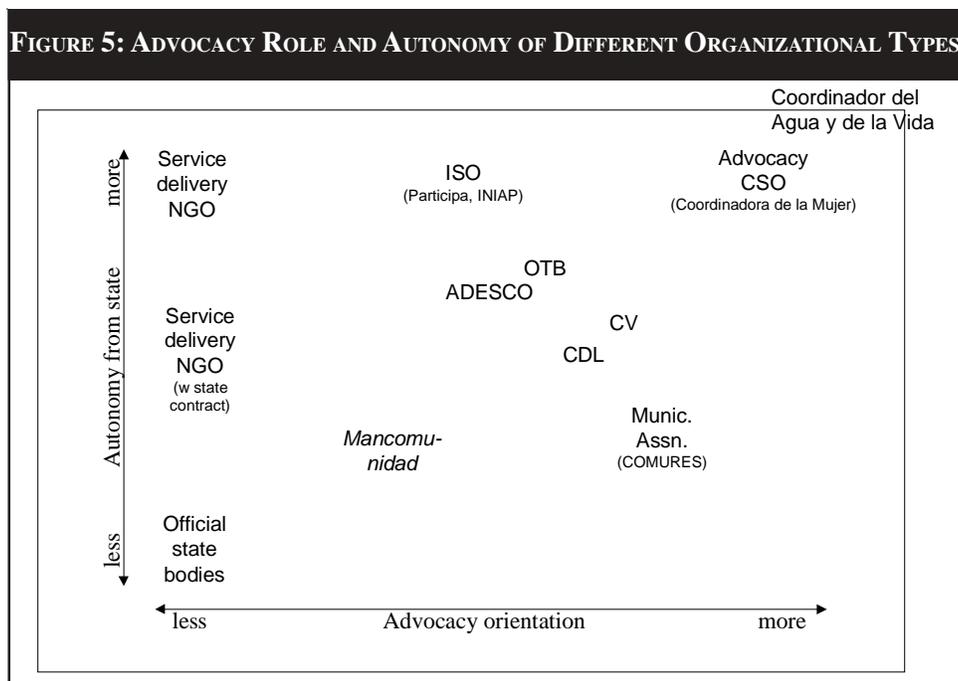
The key here in expanding the definition of a CSO is that function becomes critical, rather than form. If a given organization is doing what a CSO does in acting as an intermediary in the political terrain between family and state to press for reform, then it makes sense to consider it as a CSO, even though it may be working outside the formal DG sector or may be in a strict legalistic meaning a part of the state. Just how far to push this primacy of function over form will have to be determined, and will be further explored in the synthesis report for the larger civil society strategies assessment.

2. Civil Society Autonomy and Advocacy

Closely related to the definitional issue is the question of civil society autonomy. In *Constituencies for Reform*, civil society autonomy is seen as a critical characteristic; without it civil society can contribute little to democratization.²² What of virtual CSOs like the CVs in Bolivia and the CDLs in El Salvador? By definition they are not strictly autonomous, but hopefully they can act to represent civil society interests to the state. Should the idea of autonomy be expanded—or perhaps relaxed—to accommodate these quasi-CSOs?

As with the function/form issue, the autonomy question will also have to be explored further in putting together the synthesis report. In the meantime, however, a two-dimensional concept might be offered, as in Figure 5. Here a number of the Bolivian and Salvadoran organizations are situated according to how much autonomy they have from the state and how oriented they are toward advocacy activity. The upper right-hand corner inside the rectangle of Figure 5 represents the “pure-form” CSO—completely autonomous and wholly devoted to advocating the group’s agenda to influence the state—while the lower left-hand corner represents its opposite, i.e., an organization completely under state control and doing no advocacy. A women’s rights group like Coordinadora del la Mujer in Bolivia might fit in close to the first corner, while a municipal licensing office could exemplify the second.

The rectangle surrounding Figure 5 can be taken to represent the “rules of the game” of civil society and advocacy, particularly what forms of advocacy constitute acceptable behavior, such as petitioning, lobbying, demonstrating, and gaining access to the media. Violent demonstrations and disruptions of the polity are generally considered unacceptable, such that the blockades and violence erupting from activities undertaken by the Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida in the Cochabamba region of Bolivia in April and September 2000 could be considered to be at the “outside the box,” as indicated in Figure 5. But as can happen with civil society advocacy in Bolivia as elsewhere, the Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida’s campaign proved at least partly successful in inducing the state to halt its plans to privatize the water system.²³ For this reason, the Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida has been placed partly inside the game-rules rectangle in Figure 5 and partly outside. Similar remarks could be made with respect to the other movements disrupting the country in autumn 2000, most notably the peasant *sindicato* led by Felipe Quispe in the La Paz region.



It would be difficult indeed to establish empirically the exact degree of autonomy or advocacy embodied in any particular group, so the positioning of the examples in Figure 5 is impressionistic. But it would seem that COMURES would be more concerned with advocacy than a *mancomunidad*, even though both are made up of municipalities as their members. At the same time both would have about the same degree of autonomy from the state. Similarly, the OTBs and ADESCOs appear to have a bit more autonomy than the CVs and CDLs, while the latter two bodies seem to be somewhat more focused on advocacy. As the civil society strategy assessment synthesis proceeds, this two-dimensional construct hopefully will become more useful. At this stage, it is worth noting that civil society strategy involves at least two distinct dimensions that are often but by no means always related.

3. Linkages Within and Between USAID Sectors

Civil society constitutes one of four USAID objectives within the DG sector, and in turn the DG sector itself comprises one of USAID's six Agency goals or sectors.²⁴ These objectives and sectors are of course needed organizationally to plan Agency strategy and delineate which of its units are to do what, but in practice they naturally become rather less discrete and more fuzzy, tending in many ways to blend in with each other. Understanding, coping with, and hopefully harnessing that fuzziness to better accomplish the Agency's basic task of promoting democracy is one goal of the Center's civil society strategy assessment. The Bolivian and Salvadoran exercises permitted some observations in this regard, relating both to how civil society fits within the DG sector and to how the DG sector fits into USAID's whole range of sectors.

Although we know intellectually that (almost) everything in the DG sector relates to its other components, in practice we treat civil society as a stand-alone entity and treat it as a discreet activity area, conceptually and operationally separate from, for example, political parties or civil-military relations. In many ways this is difficult to do. Much of the DG activity analyzed in the present report could be considered as decentralization, for example. Some of the efforts covered here might be thought of as legislative strengthening rather than civil society, while others could be thought of as rule of law.

This overlap does not seem to cause much difficulty in many and probably most USAID Missions, where the DG teams are generally small and their members familiar with each other's work. But at the Center in Washington, some valuable synergies are doubtless being lost through compartmentalizing what is really civil society activity into other sub-sectors and vice versa. The answer to this loss of cross-fertilization cannot be just to urge more coordination between teams already overworked and spending too much time with other mandates that must be coordinated. Instead, some serious time needs to be devoted to how to encourage just enough cross-team attention to be productive without demanding so much as to be burdensome.

The relatively small problems of linkages between individuals and teams working within the DG sector become magnified when the perspective shifts to the whole USAID portfolio. There appeared to be relatively little connection within either mission between DG sector activity and what was going on in the other sectors, even though there was a good deal of what was really civil society work in the environmental and health sectors. By extension, these observations apply as well to USAID grantees engaged in civil society advocacy, who often feel isolated from each other. This kind of separation seemed to exist at both national and local levels. National-level CSOs working in health or environment had little or no connection to the mission DG sector, although there would have been much to learn and share on both sides. And local-level programs showed little linkage, even though on occasion they might be working in the same municipalities.

But this is not just an issue that could be raised at some USAID Missions. It is equally true at USAID/Washington, where the Center has little linkage to counterparts in other centers (especially G/ENV and G/PHN) who are engaged in civil society work. And again, the answer cannot be simply to levy presently overburdened teams with yet more mandates to set up meetings, read each other's reports, organize joint workshops, and the like—all of which would take away even more time than current coordinating activity from the substantive work that people are engaged in. The recent CDIE report on this topic (Lippman 2001) addresses most of these issues. Its findings will be integrated into the synthesis report that will emerge from the present report.

4. Sustainability as a Function of Necessity

The need for the NGO sector to achieve sustainability has become a mantra within USAID generally, and the pressure to achieve it has a palpable quality in a country like El Salvador, where the USAID funding budget has shrunk by almost seven-eighths since its high-water mark in 1992 and overall foreign assistance has decreased by about 70 percent since its apogee in 1993. A mission in a place like El Salvador rightly feels the need to initiate a program like the CSO coalition-building effort currently going on there, and individual CSOs find themselves scrambling to avoid going under altogether.

In Bolivia the story is very different. Donors tend to see Bolivia as a long-term development investment that is both worthy (e.g., lowest per capita income in South America) and appealing (e.g., beautiful scenery). The DG team received no inkling from any donor that radical downsizing or phaseout was being contemplated. The consequence, not surprisingly, was a complete absence of any impetus toward sustainability planning. Without a clear prospect of donor withdrawal, it would seem, sustainability has little appeal.²⁵

5. CSOs at Local vs. National Level

In both Bolivia and El Salvador, USAID has been assisting civil society activity at both the national and the local levels. But is it the same thing that the Agency has been supporting at these two tiers? Or is it really more like two different kinds of activity under the same label? To be sure, civil society at both

TABLE 1: CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

Level	Focus	Main tactical issue	Main strategic issue
Local	Individual CSOs	Inclusion	Empowerment
National	CSO sector	Capacity building	Pluralism

levels can be described as organizations existing between the family and the state (subject to the inclusion of virtual CSOs), but there are some very important differences as well, as illustrated in Table 1. At the local level in both countries, the key programming issues concern adequate representation of the citizenry and potential empowerment. Do the Bolivian CVs include a sufficiently broad swath of the population, or is some augmentational structure needed? How can the Salvadoran CDLs best be constituted so as to represent a good cross-section of the community? These are the relevant tactical issues at the local level. The main strategic issue appears to be empowerment: How can the marginal groups that will hopefully gain representation also gain some meaningful voice in local decision-making?²⁶

At the national level, the programming challenges resemble those we think of more generally in connection with civil society (e.g., advocacy, management skills, coalition building, and sustainability). To put it another way, the main task at the national level is capacity building for organizations already active as CSOs. The principal strategic issue is pluralism. Once CSOs have mastered the tactical skills (e.g., coalition building) sufficiently to become players on the political scene, how can we assure that there will be enough players with different agendas to produce the kind of pluralist polity that prevents any single group or coalition from gaining overpowering dominance?

We appear to be dealing with two different sets of issues here. At the local level the challenge is to get new players into the game, while at the national level the concern is more with how the game proceeds once the players are in. Are we also dealing with two kinds of civil society? Or dealing with civil society at two different stages of development, such that at the local level the challenge is how to get it started, while at the national level the challenge is how to consolidate it? These queries harken back to the idea of democratic sequence raised in *Constituencies for Reform*. Perhaps the local level could be considered as moving from pretransition to transition, whereas the national level is more firmly in a transitional stage or even moving into consolidation (cf. Hansen 1996: 50-56; also Blair 1998). This whole issue needs further examination and analysis as the Center's civil society strategy assessment moves forward.

A different way to consider the local vs. national question is in terms of donor activity focus. At the local level, the tendency is more to help specific CSOs, while at the national level it looks more at the CSO sector as a whole. Table 1 sums up the discussion.

B. The Policy and Political Environment for Civil Society

Aside from USAID programming issues, the Bolivian and Salvadoran experiences also offer a number of lessons about democratization more generally.

6. Political Will and Policy Dialogue

Political will was essential, even quintessential, in putting the Bolivian PPL into place. The PPL's "irreversibility" was soon tested, as an indifferent and unsympathetic national administration succeeded Sánchez de Lozada's term in 1998. Seeing the PPL as a machination of the party now out of power, the new government showed itself markedly unexcited about supporting the initiative. Probably the PPL was well enough entrenched at that point to have survived without any donor intervention, but its allocations might well have been seriously reduced, its authority trimmed, etc. As it was, the donor community did engage in dialogue with the new administration, and support to the PPL continued. The level of central enthusiasm for the program diminished, but all its main elements have continued in place with more or less the same degree of support from the center. The lesson here is not so much about policy dialogue as about the necessity to embed an initiative thoroughly into a country's political infrastructure.

The *uninominales* and party reforms at the macro-level also required some significant political will to enact. They have not been in place long enough to generate serious opposition, but if the deputies from the single-member districts do begin to establish civil society linkages to their constituents independent of the parties, antagonism may well arise from the national parties that feel themselves shortchanged. It seems less probable that elected female officeholders will generate similar unease (they are more likely to behave similarly to the males in their respective parties and thus create few waves), but this could happen as well. In either case, both political will and donor dialogue may be tested.

In El Salvador, once the 1992 Peace Accords had been agreed to, the essential political will was in place to carry them out. As observed earlier in this report, it remained in place long enough to do so. The question for the system now is whether there will be enough political will to keep on with the six percent allotment to municipalities and to regularize some form of CDL structure at the local level. Given the steadily decreasing size of foreign aid coming into El Salvador, donor dialogue could prove less potent than has been the case in Bolivia. If the March 2000 local elections had gone excessively in favor of one or the other of the country's two major parties, the consensus for reform could have come into some jeopardy. As things turned out, ARENA lost a bit, but not a great deal, while the FMLN gained, although again not inordinately, so hopefully the reform climate will stay in place.

7. Host-country Government Role in Pressing Reform

In their willingness to undertake reforms in the political system, the two countries present a marked study in contrasts. Especially in the Sánchez de Lozada administration, but also to a lesser extent the succeeding government of Hugo Banzer Suarez, Bolivia has embraced an aggressive structural reform approach. The PPL and accompanying legislation, which totally transformed local governance, were pushed through with no pilot schemes or experiments to chart their path in advance. Similarly the introduction of the single-member parliamentary constituency was done in a single stroke. The entire country has been a laboratory for experiment. Although the appetite for bold reform has slowed during the Banzer era, the summer of 1999 saw the enactment of significant party reform, requiring *inter alia* that 30 percent of candidates and elected officeholders at all levels be women.²⁷

In El Salvador, on the other hand, the pace has been very much more modest. The governance structure has been essentially in place for almost a decade and a half and its basic components for much longer. Most significantly, the one aspect that by many accounts most needs to be changed—the winner-take-all municipal council elections—remains firmly in place, despite various high-level declarations to change it. Against this structural rigidity, there has been a willingness and even eagerness to compromise and experiment. The implementation of the 1992 Peace Accords is the most obvious example, but we could

cite the innovative *plan de nación* and the various initiatives since then in local governance. It is noteworthy that the impetus for experiment here comes not so much from presidential or legislative leadership as in Bolivia, but from the bureaucracy. The two agencies implementing the central fiscal transfers to municipal level (FISDL and ISDEM), acting in part at the behest of external donors (mainly the Inter-American Development Bank and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), have been pressing local governments to arrange some kind of participatory mechanism to provide investment input and monitoring. Presumably, when the various experiments currently in place have shaken down and can be distilled into a workable model, legislation will be undertaken, but that moment seems some way off.

In their planning and design, the reforms in both countries have proceeded almost completely without USAID inputs or guidance. But it is certainly relevant to ask: To the extent that the Agency can influence central government decision-making, which course should it urge—the Bolivian path of bold reform or the Salvadoran approach of cautious, even ultra-cautious, experiment? Thus far, the experiences of the two countries would seem to favor the first course, for in Bolivia not only were the far-reaching reforms enacted and implemented, but they were able to achieve Sánchez de Lozado’s wish for “irreversibility.” They were firmly enough in place so that the unenthusiastic successor government was unable to dislodge them or even tone them down to any significant extent. Some donor pressure here helped, and the U.S. government was among those donors applying it. But it was the combination of boldness and presidential commitment at the beginning that planted the reforms so solidly that is most significant here.

The downside to the Bolivian approach, of course, is the risk that the PPL initiative may have been flawed in its design. If things go badly, it will be difficult to reverse course later on. El Salvador, in contrast, has taken on far less risk of bad policy initiatives, but this is because it has thus far done very little by way of reform. Presumably, there will come a time when the present government of Francisco Flores Perez has distilled the local governance experiments now in process and is ready to enact a new dispensation. By then the opportunity for serious policy initiatives may have gone. Most elected governments of any sort, after all, experience an early and limited window of opportunity for innovation of any scale; by the time the Flores administration is ready to act, it may well be too late in the political cycle; the reform window may have closed. The urgency is enhanced in El Salvador by the fact that, as in most other Latin American countries (including Bolivia), presidents cannot succeed themselves.

8. Donor Coordination

The GOB has put considerable effort into pushing itself and the donor community into greater coordination of foreign aid, in effect taking on the World Bank role in this regard and moving it further along. In coming into office in 1997, the new administration set up several subgroups to coordinate and each included donors, GOB officials, political party representatives, think tanks (which are mainly affiliated with parties), and NGOs. The exercise has experienced some difficulties (excessive meetings, less NGO involvement than had been hoped, widely differing views among participants, etc.), but has made a good deal of progress in establishing a pattern of coherent thinking on development assistance (see, e.g., GOB 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). Not shy of engaging with the current state-of-the-art in development assistance, the GOB has launched a management-for-results initiative, including targets and indicators rather similar to those employed by the World Bank (or for that matter, USAID). One might argue that the indicators do not quite accord with what ought to be underlying program objectives,²⁸ but similar objections are made to USAID programs. What is impressive is the commitment the GOB has made to donor coordination and results-oriented programming.

In El Salvador, by contrast, donor coordination efforts—which had been fairly extensive with respect to implementing the 1992 Peace Accords—were later in starting than in Bolivia and have gone less far.

Interestingly, donor coordination is being led by the UNDP mission in San Salvador rather than the GOES itself. The main participants include donors as well as governmental agencies and a number of NGOs (think tanks in particular). By the time of the DG team's visit in fall 1999, the group had held several meetings and had generated a two-page summary—a good way behind the slickly published and detailed reports already turned out by the GOB, but still a beginning. This undertaking has evidently continued since that time.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect here is that the account given just above is largely counter-intuitive. Objectively there should be more interest in coordination in El Salvador, where steadily declining foreign aid offers a powerful incentive to stretch existing resources further, while in Bolivia, with its stable and even increasing donor allocations, incentive should be less. But in fact things are the other way around. How to account for the difference? The donors are largely the same in both cases (the World Bank, IDB, UNDP, GTZ, and USAID), so that cannot explain the difference, at least in present-day institutional terms. Historical differences among donors might provide a partial explanation, in that during the Salvadoran civil war, many of the European donors were more sympathetic to the FMLN side, whereas the U.S. government firmly supported the government forces. It could be argued that the residue of these differences explains the lack of present progress in coordination. However, it would seem more than a little strange if the society itself had managed to overcome the divisions of war in ways that the donor community had not. Besides, these same donors coordinate and cooperate with each other quite well in any number of other contexts, such as OECD/DAC, local consultative groups, and the annual Paris meetings for so many developing countries.

A better explanation is that sufficient domestic political interest exists in Bolivia but has been notably less present in El Salvador. The challenge for USAID and the other donors to build GOES support for coordination amid decreasing external resources is correspondingly greater.

9. Consultation and Multiple Ownership of Reform

In putting together its ideas for the PPL, the GOB solicited input from a wide range of think tanks, NGOs, and intellectuals, and a good number of the suggestions received were incorporated into the program's design. One beneficial result of this inclusionary approach was that, when the PPL moved into implementation, there were many individuals and organizations claiming a proud parental role. Needless to say, such parentage (real or imagined) significantly increased enthusiasm for the new enterprise. This practice also helped build and solidify a constituency to support the PPL when a succeeding national administration proved less enamored of it. Interestingly, this same successor government took a page from the PPL playbook and has likewise tried to stretch wide the solicitational net in seeking input for its own efforts to reform the political party structure, expand the CV setup, etc.

The GOES has followed the inclusionary mode even more diligently, in crafting its national agenda-setting exercise—the *plan de nación* noted earlier in this report (Comisión Nacional de Desarrollo 1999). This effort, begun in 1997, extended over two presidential terms, coming to fruition only in the fall of 1999. As related above, the process involved many NGO figures, intellectuals, elites at all levels, and citizens. On a lesser scale, the government has recruited a network of policy-oriented NGOs to help in designing a future local development strategy (Barraza *et al.*, 1999). This was completed and approved by the president in December 1999 as the official local governance development strategy for his administration.

The lesson here is a simple one, namely that, if an initiative is to galvanize widespread public support, it helps greatly to include a wide swath of the public in its gestation—particularly opinion makers like

established CSO leaders. True enough, too many inputs can dilute the product, even to the point of rendering it altogether ineffectual, but in the cases mentioned here, the net effect was to bring the relevant constituencies on board as supporters of the new program. It is noteworthy that USAID had only a very indirect role in all these efforts. The Agency funded some of the CSOs that were themselves involved in contributing to the initiatives, but so far as the DG teams in the two countries could tell, no USAID effort had any substantive input into deliberations or final product in either one. The initiatives that emerged, in other words, were very much home-grown—a fact that helped get widespread national acceptance.

10. The Importance of Structure

These two country-level assessments bring home strongly the critical importance of political and administrative structure and the profound effects it has on the practice of democratic politics at all levels.

Electoral structure. El Salvador is the more obvious case in point here. In the Salvadoran system, the winner-take-all municipal election system mandates that whichever political party gets a plurality of votes in the triennial election gets all the seats on the municipal council and chooses the mayor. The system's at-large feature means that all the council members are from a single-party slate and are elected by the municipality as a whole, with no linkage to particular wards, cantons, neighborhoods or the like. At least two important consequences follow:

- Since the winning party gets all the council seats and the mayoralty, there is no official party-based opposition voice—no element inside the council with a platform to oppose corruption or malfeasance, offer alternative policy ideas, bring citizen complaints into public view, etc.
- Because at-large elections make the entire municipality the constituency for all council members at the same time, there are no direct links between individual members and particular groups of constituents. Accordingly, people have no one particular elected representative to go to with complaints, suggestions, demands, etc., who can take up their cause within the larger body.

The underlying assumption of both these arrangements is that the people as a whole have a single, common interest that is best expressed through one party collectively representing the whole population as an entity—not a plurality of interests that must be accommodated to obtain an acceptable outcome. Collectively these structural features make it more difficult to build a pluralistic democracy.²⁹

The Bolivian electoral structure at the municipal level allows for more pluralism by awarding council seats on a PR basis, so that the various parties contesting get seats in proportion to their share of the popular vote. Thus on most councils different parties are represented, and it follows that there is a greater likelihood that different interests will be represented as well. Moreover, when (as frequently happens) no party gets a majority on a council, a coalition is required to choose the mayor as well as for the council to operate, necessitating some compromise among differing players. At the same time, the Bolivian PR system is, like most municipal councils in the LAC region, an at-large system,³⁰ so there is no direct link between council member and a particular constituency. Bolivia, in other words, does better on only one of these two aspects of local governance.

Until 1997, the parliamentary systems of both countries operated on a modified PR basis. In Bolivia all the seats and in El Salvador 64 of the 84 seats were filled at the departmental level by PR and party lists (El Salvador's remaining 20 seats came from a national list, also on a PR basis). In 1997, Bolivia changed half its national assembly to single-member constituencies. Thus today half the Bolivian *diputados* potentially have a direct link to individual constituencies but none of their Salvadoran counterparts do. However, these new *diputados* so far appear to be behaving much as the old ones did, marching to the tune decreed by their party leaders rather than behaving as representatives of constituents back home.

The central lesson here is that constitutional structure and election laws do matter. The electoral system imposes serious limitations on what donor-assisted efforts can do to promote democracy. One cannot very easily help build connections between council members and their constituents when the individual members basically do not have constituents. This does not mean that USAID programs should avoid supporting civil society advocacy activities at the local level, but it does mean that a different and probably more difficult approach will have to be undertaken (it is generally easier to lobby elected officials one at a time than collectively). At the parliamentary level, there is clearly more scope in Bolivia along these lines, although the going has been slow thus far. Even in El Salvador, there has been some room for maneuver, in that in many (perhaps most) departments the *diputados* informally perceive themselves to have more affinity to particular locations in their department and so are more amenable to establishing links along these lines. The USAID Mission has been trying to build on this pattern in a couple of departments, but things would certainly be easier with single-member constituencies.

Multiple channels for representation. An advantage to both the Bolivian and Salvadoran local governance systems lies in the parallel channels they promise for citizen representation in holding government accountable. In Bolivia, the OTB/CV structure adds to the formal municipal council a second path through which citizens can access the state, and the *uninominal* system in Congress brings the individual *diputado* much closer to the voters who elect him or her, effectively providing a third path. For El Salvador, assuming the CDL experiment continues and becomes part of the local governance system, a second channel will be added to the municipal council, and the national assembly offers a third one.

True enough, there are problems with all these mechanisms, as we have seen in this report. The OTB/CV setup biases representation toward some traditional organizations and away from others, while the system for choosing and unseating mayors can make municipal councils so subject to friction that their representation function can get lost in the shuffle. The *uninominales* so far have done scarcely, if at all, better at building linkages to their constituents than the *plurinominales*. The Salvadoran winner-take-all municipal structure severely inhibits pluralism at the local level, and, while the CDLs may ameliorate the problem somewhat, they remain to date only an experiment. Finally, the Salvadoran representatives to the Asamblea Legislativa owe their seats to a party-list system like the Bolivian *plurinominales* rather than to an individual constituency.

Despite all these shortcomings, Bolivia in particular and El Salvador to a lesser extent offer pioneering models for enhancing access to governance by crafting multiple channels linking citizen to state.³¹

Devolutionary structure. In addition to the structural dimension of electoral laws discussed just above, the structural aspects of devolution have important repercussions for civil society. First there are the sectors themselves. Every country seems to do decentralization differently, and these two are no exception. In Bolivia, the main sectors devolved to local control have been education and health, with some responsibility for roads. The Salvadoran pattern has been to focus primarily on water and sanitation, along with local roads.

More important is the structure of devolution within the sectors. The Bolivian pattern was to decentralize control over infrastructural planning for the devolved sectors (i.e., to the CVs), but not operational responsibility or supervision over government employees. Planning and building of new schools are now done by the municipalities, but actually running the schools, assigning the teachers, and so on are still done by the central education ministry in La Paz. A municipality has no say in what is to be taught or in disciplining a teacher if he or she fails to show up. In El Salvador, by contrast, the decentralized sectors devolved are arguably less important when taken together than those chosen in Bolivia, but local control over those sectors is greater, for local governments do have programming as well as supervisory

responsibility. The practical consequence is that El Salvador offers a greater opening for civil society to have an impact on local governance. Again, as with elections, structure matters.

11. Determinants of Post-conflict Reconciliation

The fact that reconciliation has succeeded to a greater extent than anticipated in El Salvador, whereas it has done rather less well in such places as Bosnia and Rwanda, offers food for thought. The principal difference between the more and less successful settings would appear to be that the main conflict in El Salvador was based on ideology and class, whereas in the other two cases it was ethnic and in Bosnia religious as well.

In retrospect, it was possible during the mid-1990s to sort out and reconcile El Salvador's ideological conflict among elites in significant part because the leadership on the two sides shared the same cultural and class origins. The FMLN leaders in a sense moved back to the capital city and reclaimed their patrimony. For the former rebel followers, things have surely been more difficult to reconcile, but without a leadership that would take up the insurrectionary cause on the battlefield, they have in effect had to accommodate themselves to the realities of peace. Their adjustment has almost certainly been facilitated by an average annual economic growth rate of more than 5.5 percent in the 1990s, as against a mere 0.2 percent throughout the 1980s (World Bank 1999: 188), as well as high levels of remittance income from the United States (averaging around 11-12 percent of GNP). In places like Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, in contrast, the fundamental cleavages along ethnic and religious lines have proven much harder to heal, and there has been no recent economic growth buffer to soften things.

The civil society lesson would appear to be that some post-conflict situations offer considerably more donor opportunity than others. Just after the 1992 Peace Accords in El Salvador, NGOs (especially at the local level) tended to be very much aligned with one side or the other, and there were difficult donor problems (especially for USAID) to ensure some balance in its support to civil society.³² Elite reconciliation combined with economic growth made it possible to overcome these obstacles, and civil society assistance has not been impeded by ideological problems in recent years. Nicaragua would seem to present a similar environment for civil society assistance, and to a lesser extent (since the conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s did not erupt into open warfare) the same most likely occurred in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Guatemala, on the other hand, with the heavy ethnic component to its civil war, may prove to be more like Bosnia and Rwanda than like El Salvador. Angola is likely to be similar.

12. Attaining Representation and Empowerment

Bolivia and El Salvador illustrate the limits of territorial arrangements in assuring civil society representation and empowerment in local governance. Representation is taken here to mean having an official who is charged with standing for or serving the interests of the citizens who elected him/her. Empowerment means having a significant voice in official decision-making by representative bodies. The former term pertains more to the electoral relationship between officeholder and citizen, while the latter is more a function of the strength of civil society. Citizens are represented through the person they elect, while they gain empowerment through CSOs having influence on officeholders.³³ It is eminently possible, accordingly, to have representation without much if any empowerment. In the past, except for a few privileged Bolivian communities (e.g., miners and the military) few elements of society were empowered.

In electoral terms, representation has expanded remarkably in the 1990s. Popularly elected municipal government in Bolivia has expanded from less than 30 larger cities to the entire country. Indirect

representation has been introduced through the departmental councils, to which municipal councils select delegates to attend. On the civil society side, the OTBs and municipal councils were intended as a major step to ensuring that people at the grassroots would gain a real role in providing inputs to local decision-making, while the CVs were designed to increase accountability to the citizenry.

Because the OTBs that selected the members of the CVs are territorially based bodies, each geographical unit gets to send only one person to the CV. Such a formula may well ensure that the most prominent member of the community gets chosen, and it certainly assures that the local ethnic majority gains a voice, but it has done little to promote real civil society representation. Pluralism has not been a part of the picture—women, occupational groups, and ethnic and cultural minorities are generally left out. Thus while enhancing civil society in some ways (ensuring that a voice from the neighborhood level can be heard at the municipal level), the OTB/CV structure has probably stifled civil society in other ways (precluding much if any pluralist quality to the voices involved).

The experimental COPE-type structure was intended to correct the problem by including people from occupational and civic groups and women on a non-territorial basis. Here a member would represent not a particular geographical area but a group or community throughout the municipality (unlike the CV members, who do have territorially based constituencies). Civil society representation, accordingly, would be significantly enhanced.

In El Salvador the CDLs comprise a similar effort to broaden the representative base of local governance by reaching out to new elements. But the CDL must be expected to accomplish less in the direction of inclusiveness than the COPE, for two reasons. First, the level of inclusivity in El Salvador's local governance structure is much more modest than Bolivia's to begin with, so far as pluralistic representation is concerned. The council in El Salvador consists only of the winning party, with all others excluded, while in Bolivia there is a PR system. Secondly, Bolivia already has its CV system in place, while there is nothing comparable in El Salvador. In comparative functional terms the CDL amounts to an attempt to emulate both the Bolivian CV and the COPE in adding some pluralistic component to the winner-take-all municipal council.

In any event, even if the two experiments in widening the participatory net succeed and a larger proportion of the population does come to gain representation, there is no guarantee of empowerment for the newly represented constituencies. Will women, farmers, or small traders be able to actually affect local decision-making, either by themselves or in coalition with other civil society players at the local level? Or will they become essentially observers of a process that moves along without meaningful input from them? Such questions are perhaps premature at this stage, but eventually they will have to be asked. Hopefully participation and representation will lead to empowerment, but this is unlikely to happen by itself—for while the first two are both necessary conditions of the third, they are not sufficient by themselves to bring it about.³⁴ The lesson, then, is that empowerment is likely to be much harder and to take much longer to realize than participation and representation.

13. Gender Equity

While the various initiatives undertaken in our two countries are undeniably making some headway in widening participation and representation (if not necessarily empowerment) for many elements in society, they appear to have done relatively little for women, at least thus far. In Bolivia, the problem stems in significant part from a basic contradiction in the PPL. In its very first paragraph, the PPL states that it

attempts to improve the quality of life of both Bolivian women and men through a more equitable allocation and better administration of public resources. It strengthens the necessary political and

economic tools to perfect representative democracy, incorporating citizen participation in a participative democratic process, guaranteeing equal opportunities at the representative level to both men and women.³⁵

On the very next page of the PPL, however, popular participation is defined in accord with traditional customs and mores at the OTB level, and the OTB representatives of the OTBs [to the CVs] are recognized as those selected according to those same customs and mores. A bit further on, one reads that “in each territorial unit, only one OTB will be recognized as having access to the rights and duties defined in this law.”³⁶ What all this means in practical terms is that only one local organization could be chosen as the official OTB, and given the male-oriented set of customs and mores widely prevalent in Bolivia, the group selected invariably turns out to be a male-managed entity. Thus in the many places where there were separate but parallel women’s and men’s community organizations (e.g., peasant *sindicato* units for each sex), the men’s group became the OTB while the women’s group was frozen out.³⁷ The COPE initiative attempts to rectify this imbalance, but however it is eventually structured, the COPE will enjoy less power and importance than the CV, and so some real gender disparity will persist. In matters of gender, the PPL in a sense amounts to something of a backward step.

In contrast, the political party law passed in the summer of 1999 represents a definite advance in gender equity issues. Its requirement for 30 percent female representation in both party lists and officials elected at all levels (national and municipal) meant a big increase in elected female officeholders. At the municipal level, only eight percent of all council members were women after the 1994 elections; after the December 1999 polls the figure would have risen by almost four times if the law were fully implemented. As things turned out, the fact that a very large portion of the female council members were alternates rather than full council members meant that the effort at enhancing gender equity was only very partially realized. Even if the women had attained full membership in the councils, their representation would not lead automatically to empowerment, of course, but it should make women more visible in political life and can serve in time to improve gender equity further.

El Salvador presents a similar gender bias on the local level, with few female municipal council members (11 percent of mayors were reported to be women at the time of the DG team’s visit). As an embryonic institution, the CDL offers new possibilities for increased gender equity, and in one of the two municipalities visited by the DG team, about a quarter of the CDL members were women. In the other, however, it was only one out of 14. How this will play out as the country eventually decides on a CDL model to be the standard remains to be seen, but there was no indication at the time of the team’s visit that gender balance would be a high priority.

At the national level, the country’s post-conflict experience offers some sobering lessons in gender matters. On the FMLN side there was a significant number of women leaders holding important posts, but after the peace accords very few of them moved over to similar positions in the new arrangements, unlike their male colleagues, many of whom did assume new leadership posts. There has been some progress, for instance the passage of an anti-domestic violence law in the mid-1990s, but it has been difficult to sustain a coherent women’s movement. The core official component of such a movement could (and perhaps should) be the Instituto Salvadoreño de la Mujer, but rhetorical preoccupations along with bickering among those who would be its leaders have rendered it less than fully effective.

The lesson here is that in reforming some dimensions of participatory politics, other dimensions can get ignored or even made worse. The CVs increased participation in Bolivia and allowed for some civil society presence at the local level. The COPEs promise to enhance that civil society presence. In the process, gender equity, which after all should be a central element in any DG or civil society initiative, got lost in the shuffle. El Salvador’s presently unfolding CDL dynamic may well turn out to be similar.

14. Urban-rural Differences

One observation consistently made to the DG team in Bolivia was that the PPL was working better in the smaller towns and rural areas than in the larger cities. This idea is confirmed in a national opinion survey in 2000, which found participation in municipal council meetings and budget planning far higher in these less urbanized settings—the smaller the locality, the greater the participation. Citizen activism in lodging a complaint with the CV also varied inversely with urbanization.³⁸ Such a pattern might cause some modest unease in a country like Bangladesh, where at least 85 percent of the population can be considered rural, but Bolivia has been urbanizing at a much higher rate. By the mid-1990s the population was more than three-fifths urban and by 2015 or so the urban share is expected to be three-quarters and more, the vast bulk of it in 10-15 large cities. A local governance system that doesn't work so well in the bigger cities, then, gives cause for serious concern. Speculation abounds on the reasons for the disparity, centering mostly on the dislocation and social chaos that results from rapid urbanization. But well-grounded analysis is yet to materialize.

At the rural end of the spectrum there are problems also. Although public support for the system may be better than in the more urbanized areas, distribution of goods and services is necessarily worse, simply because so many municipalities are so small. Of the country's 311 municipalities, some 96 have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, and another 128 have between 5,000 and 15,000. Many of these small units—almost a hundred so far—have joined in common cause to launch *mancomunidades* for delivering various services that need economies of scale if they are to be offered. An obvious example would be road maintenance equipment. Irrigation and tourism are other activities undertaken by *mancomunidades* set up thus far, some of them with USAID assistance through the FAP program.

The municipal associations in both countries also provide ways to deal with the problems of ineffective service delivery, by offering the opportunity to pool and exchange experience and expertise among municipalities. They also offer a chance to lobby the central government for more support to local governments.

The obvious big lesson in general DG support here is that one size does not fit all—that different solutions must be found for different sizes and shapes of municipalities. In the case of the *mancomunidad*, the solution was not too hard to find conceptually and there is much experience to draw on.³⁹ For difficulties stemming from rapid urbanization, solutions will of course be more difficult. The smaller lesson in civil society support goes back to the lesson on defining the nature of civil society: Organizations (in this case the municipalities) that are part of the state apparatus in one sense or dimension can become civil society players in another (*mancomunidades* and municipal associations). DG thinking about civil society should adapt accordingly.

Acronyms

ADESCO	Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal (El Salvador)
CDL	Comité de Desarrollo Local (El Salvador)
The Center	Global Bureau/Center for Democracy and Governance
COPE	Comisión de Coordinación, Orientación y Participación Electoral (Bolivia)
CSO	Civil society organization
CV	Comité de Vigilancia (Bolivia)
DDCP	Democratic Development and Citizen Participation project (Bolivia)
DG	Democracy and Governance
E&E	Europe and Eurasia
FAP	Fondo de Apoyo a la Participación (Bolivia)
FISDL	Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local (El Salvador)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación (El Salvador)
G/ENV	Global Bureau/Environmental Center
G/PHN	Global Bureau/Population, Health and Nutrition Center
GOB	Government of Bolivia
GOES	Government of El Salvador
IADN	Inter-American Democracy Network
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ISDEM	Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal (El Salvador)
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean region
MEA	Municipalidades en Acción (El Salvador)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OTB	Organización Territorial de Base (Bolivia)
PPC	Policy and Planning Coordination Bureau
PPC/CDIE	PPC/Center for Development Information and Evaluation
PPL	Popular Participation Law (Bolivia)
PR	Proportional Representation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Endnotes

¹ Interestingly, the UNDP's human development index in the mid-1990s was just about the same in both countries (.674 for El Salvador and .652 for Bolivia) as was real GDP per capita in the "purchasing power parity dollars" (PPP\$) that the UNDP employs (exactly PPP\$ 2,880 in both). The differences come in life expectancy (significantly higher in El Salvador) and educational attainment (significantly higher in Bolivia). Perhaps most tellingly, the gini coefficient of income distribution (where a lower index indicates less inequality) was .50 for El Salvador but only .42 in Bolivia—the lowest in the LAC region except for Cuba. A difference of this magnitude in the gini coefficient is meaningful (e.g., for the Dominican Republic it is .51, while for relatively more egalitarian Jamaica it is .41). See UNDP (1999), World Bank (1999). Confirming evidence of pronounced inequality comes from landholding data, which show that even after extensive efforts at land reform in El Salvador, only three percent of all farms still held some 44 percent of all farmland. See USAID/San Salvador (1996: 23).

² The verb here is carefully selected. OTBs were free to select their representatives to the CVs by electing them or through other traditional mechanisms. The intent here was to incorporate popular experience and tradition into the process.

³ In 1999, CV members were allotted expense money for traveling to review public works. Before that they were dependent on the municipal mayor, leading to potential conflict of interest, since it was the mayors' projects that they were to review and audit. In some ways the CVs resemble U.S. local commissions like school boards or zoning boards, on which citizens generally serve without compensation. Whereas these U.S. bodies discharge governmental functions such as setting taxes, making regulations, and hiring personnel, the CVs have a much more limited role as citizen representatives overseeing (rather than directing) government activity.

⁴ *Constituencies for Reform* (Hansen 1996: 6 and 8-9, where these program elements are labeled "CAO [for civil advocacy organization] functions;" the terminology presently in use at the Center employs CSOs in place of CAOs).

⁵ A national survey of over 3,000 Bolivians in the summer of 1998 showed that participation and support for the political system were substantially higher in the smaller communities and rural areas than in the larger cities. See Seligson (1998: esp. 57, 108, 121). The same pattern repeated in Seligson's 2000 survey (Seligson 2001: 215).

⁶ Bolivia has nine departments, through which considerable funding flows from La Paz. It thus makes good sense to promote associations to lobby on behalf of the municipalities at this level.

⁷ The structure, duties, etc., of the COPE are spelled out in considerable detail in a DDCP publication that is receiving wide circulation as a manual for local government participation (DDCP 1999: esp 263-298).

⁸ See Culver and Ferrufino (1999); a later study by the same team (see Culver *et al* 2000) reinforced this finding.

⁹ The local NGOs funded through the FAP component of DDCP would certainly have qualified as CSOs, but this effort did not actually begin until late 1997 and so is shown in brackets in Figure 1's first iteration.

¹⁰ Although they are mentioned in the constitution, the *mancomunidades* included in Figure 1's second iteration are not official statutory bodies, but instead are voluntary associations composed of municipalities.

¹¹ The *cabildos abiertos* harken back to the Spanish colonial era and were revived in the 1980s as a mechanism through which municipal officials could vet their plans to a public audience. USAID then built much of its Municipalities in Action program around the *cabildos abiertos* as a way of encouraging popular inputs for its civil war reconstruction efforts (cf. Blair *et al* 1995: 34 &ff.).

¹² Many observers attributed the elite reconciliation to the fact that much of the FMLN leadership had the same cultural and class origins as the leadership on the government side. Consequently it was possible for these estranged elites to return to the cultural fold. The military was quickly downsized to less than half its former level, and the police was transformed into a new and much less abusive force (see Call 1997 on the latter matter). Locally, the FMLN was able to integrate itself into the political process, winning control of 16 of the country's 262 municipalities in the 1994 elections, then 48 in 1997, and finally 78 in 2000—including the municipal council of San Salvador, the capital city, in the last two elections. Because it won the municipal elections in a number of the larger towns, the FMLN alliance altogether now manages localities with more than half the country's population.

¹³ The reports of the expert panels appeared as Usmaña Cerna (1999) and the final report as *Comisión Nacional de Desarrollo* (1999). Interestingly, a third group involved in the exercise, a panel of national elite leaders from business, the professions, political parties, etc., was unable to complete its work, owing largely to dissension among the politicians—thought by many to be related to maneuvering in connection with the March 1999 presidential election. The fall of 1999 saw something of an outpouring of national proposals, including one sponsored by the president (GOES 1999) and another funded by FISDL (Barraza Ibarra *et al* 1999), in addition to the *Plan de Nación*.

¹⁴ Instrumental in lobbying for the 6 percent allocation was Corporación de Municipalidades de la Republica de El Salvador (COMURES), the association of municipal governments—an excellent example of a *de facto* CSO.

¹⁵ This is the *Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local* (FISDL); the other body, which administers the greater share of the allocations is the *Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal*, which also has been pushing citizen participation at local level, with assistance from GTZ. The USAID program is more tied into the FISDL activity, however, and so it has received the emphasis in the present report.

¹⁶ The ADESCOs are community organizations officially recognized by the municipal council. They are somewhat like the OTBs in Bolivia, but do not have exclusive rights to represent a given territory.

¹⁷ A study is currently under way by the Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo, a Salvadoran think tank, to study CDLs in 18 municipalities (including some in the USAID-supported project). Its completion date is scheduled for March 2000. **{HARRY STILL NEEDS TO GET.}**

¹⁸ Such organizations are called “civil advocacy organizations” in this 1996 report, but since then the Center has adopted the more commonly used term “civil society organizations.”

¹⁹ PPC/CDIE has recently completed a multi-country cross-sectoral assessment, which *inter alia* addresses this issue (see Lippman 2000).

²⁰ See USAID (1999).

²¹ For a brief analysis of the role intermediate service organizations have come to play, see USAID (1999: 32 &ff.).

²² The autonomy concept receives repeated attention as an essential requisite of civil society in *Constituencies for Reform*, e.g., "...strengthening newly emerging democracies depends on building autonomous centers of social and economic power..." (Hansen 1996: 2).

²³ At the end of the year 2000, it remained to be seen how successful would be the Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida's agenda of halting the government's attempts to eradicate coca cultivation in the Cochabamba region.

²⁴ For a quick overview of the six USAID strategic sectors, see USAID (2000: 25-37). More elaboration can be found in USAID (1997), which also provides a brief synopsis of the DG objectives. The latter are discussed in more depth in USAID (1998).

²⁵ Needless to say, a large part of all this is the objective reality of foreign aid inflow. In El Salvador, net official development assistance commitments from all donors were \$1.15 billion in 1993 (the first full year after the peace accords), declining to \$211 million by 1997, while for Bolivia the analogous figures were \$773 million and \$918 million—scarcely an incentive to strive for sustainability in the latter case. On a per capita basis, the trends were more stark: while Salvadoran aid per capita fell from \$209 to \$35 over this same period, in Bolivia there was actually a slight increase, from \$112 to \$118. Clearly, external motivation toward sustainability has been considerably stronger in El Salvador. Data are from OECD (various years).

²⁶ The relationship between representation and empowerment will be taken up in a later section of this report. A further question can also be posed: Even if CVs and CDLs work as intended, will it give marginal elements a real voice in decision-making?

²⁷ Local elections were held in December 2000 under the 30 percent rule, and, while the number of women elected did increase, a very large proportion of the new office holders were alternative council members, rather than holding the actual member slots. Moreover, there was also some evidence of fabricated "transgendering" as a number of male office holders took on female names (e.g., José becoming Josefina) for the election. The effect of the reform so far, then, has to be regarded as modest at best. The effect of the reform so far, then, has to be regarded at best as incomplete.

²⁸ For example, in the popular participation sub-sector, the "identified target" (similar to an intermediate result in USAID parlance) is to "support municipal strengthening to make [municipalities] function effectively." The indicator is locally raised resources as a portion of total municipal income (GOB 1999b: 89). As with many USAID indicators, this one arguably gauges a single aspect of municipal capacity but does not capture the whole picture in any real sense.

²⁹ The citizenry can effect change at municipal level with the Salvadoran system, but only by turning over the whole council at election time. The 1997 elections witnessed considerable change by placing the FMLN and allied parties in power within some 53 municipalities (including San Salvador), up from 16 in the 1994 elections, and then the 2000 elections changed that number to 78. But it is hard to believe the body politic as a whole changed that much (or that it was so unsympathetic to the FMLN in the previous election).

In more philosophical terms, the Salvadoran assumption is that there exists a Rousseauvian general will of the whole that must be channeled rather than a Tocquevillean plurality of interests between which compromise can be achieved. If one takes the approach that a collection of people such as those in a municipality most likely do not share a single, common political interest but are instead split among a number of interests, the Tocquevillian approach makes more sense. The point for USAID DG officers is that the antique ruminations of thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Alexis de Tocqueville do have a real impact on political realities today.

³⁰ Only Venezuela had an area-based system as of the mid-1990s in Latin Latin America. See Bland (1994).

³¹ These ideas are explored further in Blair (2001).

³² See Blair *et al*, 1995: 45-53 for an analysis of some of these issues in a more immediately post-conflict context. There were also problems at the macro-level (*ibid.*: 54 &ff.), but they proved tractable as well.

³³ This is an oversimplification, of course. Elections can empower, and empowerment is scarcely restricted to CSOs. An election in which one or two issues or the interests of a particular group of people loom very large may empower (or disempower) people, and individuals (as opposed to groups of people in CSOs) often have considerable influence on officeholders, etc.

³⁴ See Blair (1998 and 2000) for an exploration of this participation/representation/empowerment theme, which will be taken up in more detail in the synthesis report.

³⁵ The quotation is from Section 1, Chapter I, Article 1, dealing with “objectives” of the PPL. See GOB (1994: 1).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Section 1, Chapter II, Articles 3 and 6.

³⁷ See Blair (1998c: 11-12) for more on this issue.

³⁸ Seligson (1998; 200a: 214-220). Seligson’s earlier surveys found similar differences (see Seligson 1998 and 1999: esp. 35).

³⁹ The United States, for instance, has some 15,000 “special purpose districts” similar to the *mancomunidades* for all sorts of purposes from solid waste management to mosquito abatement.

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