



Inter-American Development Bank
Gender and Diversity Unit

Technical Notes on Gender Equality in Municipal Development

Experiences from Latin America and the Caribbean



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Gender in the Municipal Context

As national policies for decentralization advance across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), subnational governments are playing a more central role in improving the lives of their citizens.¹ The transfer of decisions about public administration and resource allocation to the local level has increased the influence of municipal governments over the delivery of services and infrastructure, employment opportunities, and the quality of the social, cultural, and physical environment. Within this context, development actors and policy makers are realizing that equal opportunities and the active participation of women, along with men, in social and economic development are crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of municipal development initiatives. At the same time, women from both rural and urban municipalities have higher expectations that their needs and priorities should be met and that they should be at the heart and not the margins of development processes.

Inequality between women and men remains a persistent feature of social, economic, and political life in the LAC region. Despite some positive trends for women—in education, employment legislation, and labor market participation—female unemployment remains high, and women’s employment is concentrated in limited sectors and at the lower levels, which leads to marked differences in remuneration between women and men. Women are also underrepresented as entrepreneurs, they continue to face greater obstacles in accessing credit and other financial and technical resources, and businesses established by women are generally smaller than those run by men. These differences are detrimental to women and to local and national economies. They arise, in part, from problems associated with the need to reconcile family and work life, social attitudes and prejudices about appropriate gender roles, and difficulties of mobility and access. These inequalities also arise from the failure of development strategies to adequately address women’s specific needs, to build on women’s experiences and skills, and to facilitate their full participation in municipal programs and projects.

The gender-specific needs and inequalities faced by men and boys are also key concerns for local governments, especially those that affect low-income populations. These can include gender gaps in educational attainment and school drop-out rates that disfavor boys; male participation in criminal activities; social and domestic violence; men’s

1. Subnational governments include both state and municipal governments in the LAC region. These technical notes focus mainly on structures and processes at the municipal level. The terms local governments and municipal governments are used interchangeably throughout the text.

“Local government is in a unique position to contribute to the global struggle for gender equality and can have a great impact on the status of gender equality around the world, in its capacities as the level of governance closest to the citizens, as a service provider and as an employer.”

—International Union of Local Authorities (IULA),
Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government,
1998

limited access to secure, safe employment; and their low level of involvement in the control of fertility and the rearing of children.

Against this background, the promotion of equal opportunities and capabilities for women and men in development initiatives at the municipal level is a priority in many countries in the region. However, it is often unclear what this means in practice for local governments and development institutions. There is uncertainty regarding: (i) the appropriate policies to promote equality in municipal development initiatives; (ii) the information required to support the mainstreaming of gender considerations into municipal development, and the best means for its collection; (iii) how to

design, monitor, and evaluate municipal development programs and projects from a gender perspective; and (iv) the concrete methods and instruments that can be used to achieve gender mainstreaming.

Gender terminology

Gender refers to the behavioral characteristics and roles that are socially ascribed to women and men within a specific historical period and culture, beyond their biological differences. Gender is truly cross-cutting, shaping the expected responsibilities, opportunities, and constraints of women and men from all walks of life.

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions and opportunities for exercising their rights and for realizing their full potential in social, economic, political, and cultural matters.

Gender equity is the fair and just distribution of resources and benefits between women and men, according to their rights and participation in a given social, economic, or political context.

Gender mainstreaming refers to the thorough treatment of gender issues across development policies, programs, and projects. It includes analysis of relevant gender issues, specific actions to address the issues, measures to ensure the implementation of the actions, and indicators to measure the different results and impacts for women and men.

These technical notes provide a framework that will support the process of mainstreaming gender considerations into municipal development work. They explore three key elements that are essential for advancing gender equality at the local level: (i) the creation of a social, political, and physical environment that is friendly and safe for women and men across all age and socio-cultural groups; (ii) the promotion of equal opportunities in economic and social development; and (iii) the facilitation of equal access to leadership and decision making. The notes present achievements and experiences from the LAC region in these areas of action, as well as concrete recommendations on how municipal governments can play a leading role to foster equality between women and men.

The first note lays out key mechanisms, structures, and instruments that local governments can use to promote gender equality in municipal development policies and initiatives. The second explores how to integrate a focus on gender equality and women's participation throughout municipal planning processes. The third addresses the integration of the same focus throughout other stages of the municipal project cycle and human resources management. The fourth note assesses the level of women's leadership and representation in elected and public administration positions, and discusses how the presence of women in decision-making positions can influence the municipal political agenda. The last note describes regional support for gender and municipal development initiatives, with an emphasis on the experience of the IDB. Each technical note ends with a list of questions that can be used to assess progress in the given area.

“Women have equal right to employment in local government and equality in recruitment procedures. As employees in local government women and men have the right to equal pay, equal access to benefits, promotion and training, as well as the right to equal working conditions and treatment in the evaluation of their work.”

—International Union of Local Authorities (IULA),
Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government,
1998



Mechanisms for Promoting Gender Equality in Municipal Development

New legislation, structures, and mechanisms are often needed to provide local governments with the necessary instruments to implement their commitment to gender equality. They can also be needed to provide platforms for local women to engage in municipal development and to support gender policy issues.

Formalizing Commitments to Gender Equality

A key step that municipalities take to signal their endorsement of gender equality and women's rights is often the adoption of a municipal declaration or decree. In some cases, such as in Buenos Aires, the principle of gender equality is included in city or state

Box 1.1. Boaco issues Nicaragua's first municipal gender equality decree

In 2005, the Nicaraguan municipality of Boaco issued a decree requiring the inclusion of gender aspects in all municipal plans, projects, and programs. The decree also stipulates that municipal employee training must address gender issues, and it instructs local actors to implement affirmative action measures that promote equality between women and men. To support its implementation, the municipal council also assigned 1 percent of the municipal budget to initiatives that further equality between women and men. The decree, the first of its kind in Nicaragua, was the result of an IDB-financed pilot initiative to promote gender considerations in municipal development, including the training of local government employees to promote gender-sensitive policies in two Nicaraguan municipalities. The initiative was the Gender and Municipal Development Project (NI-T1001).

Source: Arboleda, 2005.

Box 1.2. Buenos Aires promotes gender equality in its founding constitution

The municipality of Buenos Aires in Argentina showed the importance of legislative action with its 1996 founding constitution, which mainstreamed gender considerations throughout all of its issue areas, and included a specific chapter dedicated to the promotion of equality between women and men. This gender-sensitive document was the result of a collaborative effort between the city government and various women's groups that were working to ensure respect for women's rights and the creation of an environment in the city that would allow women the fullest opportunity to realize their potential. Specific measures in the constitution include: assistance for women heads of household to access housing and credit; the consultation of women's organizations in the design of public policies; gender quotas for electoral lists; and the drafting of a municipal gender equality plan. The initiative has led to a greater awareness of gender issues relevant to good governance and local democracy. Through the implementation of the gender quota, it has also given women greater voice in the local decision-making process.

Source: Arboleda, 2005.

constitutions. These formal commitments to gender equality usually establish goals and resource requirements, as well as the municipal structure that will be responsible for translating them into action. These documents often include specific goals for improving women's social and economic conditions, such as helping to end gender-based violence and enhancing women's access to productive resources. Some gender equality commitments, such as the 1999 Gender Equality Policy of San Salvador (El Salvador), also address the municipality's role as an employer. The goals in the area of human resources management have included the promotion of wage equity, equal access to job opportunities, the attraction of women to trades where they tend to be underrepresented, and the balance of work and family life.

The municipality of Boaco, in Nicaragua, formalized its commitments to gender equality through a decree (box 1.1). Buenos Aires, Argentina specifically addressed gender equality issues in its founding constitution in 1996 (box 1.2). The municipality of Villa González in the Dominican Republic formalized its commitment to equal opportunities for women and men in its municipal gender policy of 2005 (box 1.3).

Municipal Structures

To ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies, municipal governments in some countries have created gender units, women's commissions, or women's affairs

offices. For example, in El Salvador, 12 of 262 municipal governments, including the country's capital, have created such institutional bodies. In Chile, 129 of 345 municipalities have municipal women's offices. The Honduran National Policy on Women mandates the establishment of municipal women's offices, and to date 30 of 298 municipalities have done so. These commissions or offices are usually comprised of elected women representatives and are mandated to consult women's groups and to make recommendations to the municipal councils. Other municipal governments have established women's

Box 1.3. Gender equality policy in Villa González, Dominican Republic

To strengthen equal opportunities for women and men, the municipality of Villa González in the Dominican Republic developed a municipal gender policy in 2005. The policy was the result of collaboration between the municipal administration and civil society, with the support of a national nongovernmental organization, Fundación Solidaridad. The policy encompasses three thematic areas: health (including violence prevention), education and training, and employment. Each thematic area has its own strategic goals and actions. In addition, the policy created the Municipal Office of Women's Affairs to oversee its implementation. Some interesting aspects of the policy preparation were the ample consultation with civil society and local leaders, the thorough diagnostic study, and the inclusion of recommendations to allocate adequate financial resources and to evaluate results.

Source: Ayuntamiento Villa González, 2005.

advisory panels that are made up of delegates from women's organizations, public employees, and citizens (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2004). The municipality of Montevideo in Uruguay created its commission on women in 1991 (box 1.4). These entities are useful for determining local gender priorities and advocating for women's concerns within the local government. One risk of separate commissions for women is that gender issues may be looked at outside of other mainstream planning and resource-allocation processes, thus limiting their influence. This problem can be ameliorated by establishing a clear mandate, budget, role, and authority for these bodies, and by implementing efforts to build support within the government and civil society.

Gender Action Plans

To make gender policies and commitments more concrete, some municipal governments have integrated gender issues into their overall municipal development plans, while others have developed specific gender action plans. These plans usually include definitions of gender equality objectives and strategic areas of action (such as education and training, health, violence prevention, public participation, and labor market participation) to generate equal opportunities and capabilities in the municipality. The most effective plans also outline specific actions, partners, human and financial resources, responsible parties, and timetables. It is also important to identify any factors that may help or hinder the implementation of the planned actions. For example, a municipal government that decides to increase the representation of women in the local police force may have to confront an obstacle such as harassment against women. The entire effort may be jeopardized if steps are not taken to sensitize male colleagues and encourage respect and

Box 1.4. A municipal structure for addressing gender issues in Montevideo

In response to demands from women's movements and a group of women politicians, in 1991 the municipality of Montevideo in Uruguay created a commission on women. The commission managed to push through the approval of several specific actions in favor of women in marginalized areas of Montevideo. Its main achievement, however, was the establishment of informal alliances with women's groups and networks, allowing it to capitalize on their experiences and knowledge base. In 2001, the commission was transformed into a gender equality commission and mandated to develop and provide follow-up on the city's equal opportunities plan. The plan, launched a year later, included 150 specific commitments by the municipality, including formal mechanisms to increase the participation of women in decision making, the support of women's safety initiatives, and the allocation of funds to promote gender equality. A committee, made up of representatives of the women's movement and women in the municipal government, provides oversight to ensure that the commitments are honored. Three key factors have contributed to this progressive institutionalization of gender and women's rights issues in the municipal structure: (i) pressure from and collaboration with local women's groups and other partners; (ii) establishment of a clear mandate, staff, and budget; and (iii) creation of a follow-up mechanism.

Source: Arboleda, 2005.

Box 1.5. Cuenca, city of equality

In response to demands from local women's organizations, the municipality of Cuenca in Ecuador issued a gender equality decree in 2000 to establish the country's first municipal equal opportunity plan. The plan, which aims to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote women's health and rights, was developed under the leadership of the deputy mayor in close collaboration with representatives of universities, women's groups, and other civil society organizations. The results have been tangible, including a new municipal decree against gender-based violence, the creation of a municipal Department for Equality Planning and Management, as well as the execution of more than 20 projects that specifically promoted gender equality between the years 2002 and 2004.

Source: Arboleda, 2005; Pestanez, 2004.

acceptance of women in nontraditional roles among the local population. Consulting women's groups on the content of gender action plans is also important. In the LAC region, these civil society groups and associations often play a key role in raising the awareness of municipal officials about gender issues and making sure that policies and actions that favor gender equality are not overturned or ignored.

The implementation of the gender action plan is frequently the responsibility of the municipal body in charge of gender equality or women's issues, when it exists. In its absence, however, responsibility for the action plan's oversight and supervision must be clearly assigned to ensure that it produces the desired results. The collaboration of local women's groups remains critical throughout the plan's implementation. This collaboration is exemplified by the municipality of Cuenca in Ecuador (box 1.5).

QUESTIONS

Assessing the gender-responsiveness of municipal mechanisms and structures

- ✓ Has the municipal government made a formal commitment to gender equality through the adoption of a specific policy or decree developed through a consultative process?
- ✓ Has a gender-equality office or commission been created and mandated to coordinate and oversee the implementation of gender-responsive policies, programs, and service delivery?
- ✓ Does the municipal government develop and implement gender-equality action plans with specific actions, indicators, a timetable, and resources? Do they disclose results to the public?
- ✓ Are women from civil society groups involved in municipal structures for gender equality, and engaged in defining municipal gender equality mechanisms?

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Gender-Responsive Municipal Planning

In many countries, initiatives that aim to increase women's involvement in municipal planning have been the starting point for broader efforts toward gender equality in municipal development. Across the LAC region, most local governments have adopted formal municipal planning systems. The main purpose of these planning systems is to establish municipal investment plans, ideally with a multi-annual focus and with broad citizen participation that includes both women and men. The best examples of this type of planning take into consideration all of the different stages of the project cycle (implementation, supervision, operation, maintenance, evaluation, and social auditing) and include participatory budget exercises. Many municipal governments and the national institutes for municipal strengthening are actively engaged in efforts to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and inclusiveness of these systems. A growing number of local governments have also made progress in integrating gender analysis and women's participation at different stages of the planning and project cycles. In order to truly institutionalize gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, however, there is a need to support and encourage a gender perspective across all local planning processes.

Stakeholder Identification and Participation

The first stage of a participatory planning process involves the identification of the key actors from civil society and local institutions that should be involved. This stage requires the greatest attention in municipalities that have both rural and urban areas, diverse ethnic groups, and many institutions with a local presence. The local actors who are most commonly underrepresented in municipal planning are women from rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities. In addition, elderly and disabled men and women are very frequently overlooked. A stakeholder analysis that includes a focus on women and disadvantaged social groups can help to identify opportunities and obstacles to gender equality for all stakeholder groups (table 2.1).

Another key aspect of stakeholder identification for municipal planning exercises is the definition of the form and optimal level of participation. There are multiple levels

Table 2.1. Stakeholder analysis with a gender focus—an example

Stakeholder group	Gender considerations
Municipal government	<p>Consultation with local communities is limited. The different needs of women and men are not well identified.</p> <p>Few women are represented within municipal structures and decision-making bodies.</p> <p>No clear evaluation criteria measure benefits for women vs. men.</p>
Local contractor	<p>Participatory methods are not used in project preparation and implementation.</p> <p>Personnel are all men with technical profiles and no experience in community participation or gender issues.</p> <p>All employed workers are from outside the communities.</p>
Local committees	<p>Decision-making power is concentrated among the male leaders of the committees.</p> <p>Women members frequently miss committee meetings due to time schedules.</p> <p>Few women participate in the training offered to the committees.</p>
Women	<p>Women have limited access to employment, credit, and training opportunities.</p> <p>Women’s health needs are not being adequately met, including those associated with access to safe water and reproductive health.</p> <p>Women have limited access to information about local development initiatives and are underrepresented in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Women do not feel safe when using public transportation.</p>
Men	<p>Men work primarily in agriculture and construction.</p> <p>Many men must migrate to find work outside of the municipality for several months each year.</p> <p>Men are the leaders of local organizations despite their frequent absence.</p> <p>Men are increasingly among both the perpetrators and victims of social violence in the municipality.</p>
Children	<p>Girls’ time for education and recreation is limited by household chores.</p> <p>Children face health problems associated with physical labor and water-borne diseases.</p> <p>A growing number of local girls and boys have dropped out of school to work in the capital city. Several have reported being abused in these jobs.</p>

Source: Adapted from Urban, Bernal, and Charlot (2002).

Note: Gender considerations include institutional issues affecting the promotion of gender equality as well as priority issues for women and men at the community level.

of participation that contribute to equitable, sustainable development, including: information dissemination (one-way); consultation (exchange of information and ideas); building agreements and consensus (shared responsibility, collaboration in the definition of alternatives and objectives); and local empowerment (transferring control to affected groups). Many municipal governments in the LAC region have not moved beyond the first two levels of participation in their interactions with local stakeholders, and expanding the level of participation of certain sub-groups within the population does not necessarily transfer to other local actors. For example, in many municipal planning processes in the LAC region, it is found that women most actively participate in general consultation processes, while men are still the principal actors in subsequent discussions and decision making on development proposals and agreements.

This pattern may be carried through the entire planning and project cycle if explicit actions are not taken to expand women's involvement. The exclusion of women can prevent municipal institutions from identifying important development challenges for women and their families, and reduce the likelihood that women will play an active role in the implementation and maintenance of municipal development projects.

Obstacles to women's participation include cultural and social restrictions, time constraints associated with women's productive and household workloads, lack of information about public institutions and planning processes, limited experience in community organizing, and, in some cases, language barriers. Examples of the strategies that have been used to overcome these barriers in the LAC region have included, among others: sensitizing local leaders to the valuable contribution of women for local development; holding separate focus group meetings for women and men to facilitate the open exchange of ideas; providing civic education and capacity building for local women's groups; holding meetings in local languages; and scheduling meetings at times that suit both women and men, and providing daycare services for small children.

Box 2.1. Montevideo's gender diagnostic study shapes municipal planning

Montevideo carried out a municipal diagnostic study to provide input for the city's first plan for equal opportunities and rights (2002–2005). The study included both qualitative and quantitative information on the social, economic, and political status of women compared to men in the city, as well as the different demands and visions of women from different organizations. This study took advantage of existing information to the greatest extent possible, collecting new data to fill information gaps. It also provided concrete proposals for the plan. Its overall usefulness was directly linked to the collaborative process of the study, which included dialogue and negotiation within the city government and with civil society.

Source: Arboleda, 2005a.

Box 2.2. National gender diagnostic study and baseline in Nicaragua

In 2004, Nicaragua's Institute for Municipal Strengthening (INIFOM), with support from the IDB (Gender and Municipal Development Project, NI-T1001), developed a national diagnostic study on gender and municipal development to support its efforts to integrate a gender focus into the country's municipal planning system. The study included a survey of 102 municipalities as well as a more in-depth initiative in two municipalities to establish a baseline and to strengthen capacity to integrate gender issues in their new municipal development plans. The diagnostic study compiled information on: (i) the level of incorporation of gender issues into municipal planning instruments; (ii) women's benefits from municipal resources and services; (iii) women's access to citizen participation bodies; and (iv) women's access to local power and employment in the municipal administration. This baseline was disseminated and validated with local actors and provided indicators for measuring progress of the interventions in the two municipalities.

Source: Arboleda, 2005a.

Diagnostic Studies

Diagnostic studies that identify and analyze gender-specific issues are valuable technical and political instruments at the municipal level. These studies provide critical information and data for shaping policies and programs that promote social and gender equity. While these studies can vary in scope and purpose, they have frequently been used to assess the socioeconomic status of women and men in the municipality; to identify priority needs of men and women from different population groups; and to determine the level of participation of women and men in municipal consultation and decision-making bodies. Many gender diagnostic studies utilize stakeholder analysis with a gender focus as one of its components. The most useful studies have been those that directly influence the content of municipal development policies, plans, and projects, and that establish a baseline for measuring progress (boxes 2.1 and 2.2).

Gender-Inclusive Participation Mechanisms

Across LAC municipalities, many new entities and bodies have been established over the past decade to facilitate the participation of the local population in municipal planning. These include municipal roundtables (*mesas de concertación*), sector boards (*mesas sectoriales*), and municipal development committees, among others. Experience from the region clearly indicates, however, that the existence of these bodies by itself does not necessarily guarantee the representation and voice of women. For example, while Bolivia's Law of Public Participation (1994) created a legal framework for increasing citizen participation and social equity in municipal development, this did not automatically translate into gains in gender equality. The active engagement of local women's organizations was pivotal for increasing women's participation and attention to gender-specific priorities in many municipalities in the country (box 2.3).

Box 2.3. Women’s participation shapes new municipal plans in Bolivian municipalities

Beginning in 1997, various private development institutions and women’s organizations in Bolivia joined together to advocate for concrete actions to incorporate a gender perspective in municipal planning. Their strategies included the mobilization of local women’s groups to develop consensus and articulate their priority needs; direct negotiation with municipal governments for municipal projects that directly benefit women; and the establishment of oversight committees (*comités de vigilancia*) to follow up on gender-specific initiatives. This process spanned several years, and produced a series of concrete results in several different municipalities: (i) Cochabamba integrated gender as a cross-cutting issue in the formulation of its Municipal Development Plan with clear guidelines on gender and generational equity; (ii) La Paz introduced guidelines on gender equity into its annual and five-year budgets; (iii) Tarija approved a municipal strategy for increasing women’s access to education and employment opportunities; (iv) Chuquisaca created a gender division within the local administration to support the design and supervision of initiatives that promote gender equality; and (v) El Alto approved and launched a municipal agenda for gender equality.

Source: Arboleda, 2005a.

Projects that Address Gender Issues

As is illustrated by the Bolivia example, an important measure of the effectiveness of women’s participation in planning processes is the degree to which their priority concerns are incorporated into municipal strategies and plans, and whether they are translated into concrete projects and measures that benefit women. To respond to the demands and priority needs of women, many municipal governments develop stand-alone projects that target specific groups of women in their territories (box 2.4). While these initiatives can generate clear benefits for specific groups of women, they also tend to be limited in scope and resources. To maximize results for both women and men, a complementary approach is to integrate actions that ensure equal opportunities and benefits into broader projects that target the overall population. Integrating specific actions that promote gender equality across municipal projects remains a significant challenge across the region. In addition, a lack of project-specific indicators makes it difficult to determine if the actions are meeting their objectives and producing concrete benefits for women and men in the municipality.

Box 2.4. Quetzaltenango addresses indigenous women's needs in municipal projects

In 1996, Quetzaltenango elected the first indigenous mayor in Bolivia's history. The mayor quickly adopted an intercultural, participatory, and socially inclusive approach. This included preferential attention to the participation of women and specific efforts to ensure that their demands and needs were included within the municipal development plans. The mayor constituted the first women's municipal committee, with the participation of indigenous women, which assumed responsibility for identifying and supervising concrete actions and projects for women. These included training local women on municipal development issues and processes, issuing identity documents for indigenous women to enable them to exercise their right to vote, and providing training to improve women's ability to generate income. In 2001, the Women's Coordinating Group of Quetzaltenango was formed and participated in the construction of a multicultural agenda with concrete proposals for the social, economic, political, and cultural development of women and men in the municipality. At the same time, the mayor created the Municipal Women's Secretariat to ensure that the gender-specific elements of the agenda were made operational through a series of municipal projects.

Source: Arboleda, 2005a.

Municipal Budgets

Given the worldwide trend to decentralize government resources and functions to the subnational level, it makes sense to analyze how resource allocation by municipal governments can either discriminate or promote equity. To help allocate their budgets more fairly, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and El Salvador, among others, have already initiated gender-sensitive budget initiatives at the subnational level (Budlender, 2002; Clulow, 2005). In El Salvador, two municipalities—Cojutepeque and Santa Tecla—have committed themselves to the development of gender-sensitive budgets. In Matagalpa, Nicaragua, the municipal council has financed a gender-equity commission and dedicates a minimum of 1 percent of the municipal budget to women in development projects (Clulow, 2005). The municipalities of Oña in Ecuador and Rosario in Argentina offer two good practice examples of participatory budgets with a gender focus (boxes 2.5 and 2.6).

Box 2.5. Oña includes a gender focus in budget process

In 2000, the municipal government of Oña in Ecuador introduced a system of popular consultation on the budget. Based on a gender diagnostic study of the municipality, including its gender composition, the participatory budget process led to a better understanding of women's specific needs, and consequently to more funding of programs and services that respond to those needs. Over 41 percent of the municipal budget was reserved for investments that directly respond to women's practical and strategic needs. To ensure the permanence of the principles and objectives of this process, the municipal government later issued a decree, stipulating the equal participation of women and men in the formulation of the municipal budget.

Source: Arboleda, 2005a.

Box 2.6. Rosario strengthens women's role in the participatory budget

In 2002, the municipality of Rosario in Argentina put into practice a budgetary process with the direct participation of the population in the definition of priorities and the distribution of resources. To expand the participation of women and introduce an explicit focus on gender issues, the municipality's women's section launched the Participatory Budget and Women's Active Citizenship Program in 2004. The program facilitated neighborhood and district meetings with women's groups to analyze women's priorities, and to inform them about the participatory budget processes. It provided formal training to women who were directly participating in the budget exercises and supported a pilot initiative to provide daycare. As a result of these efforts, the 2006 budget included 15 projects that specifically addressed women's concerns, with an assigned budget of 520,000 pesos (US\$166,000). This was an improvement from the 2005 budget, which incorporated seven gender-sensitive projects, equaling 357,000 pesos (US\$114,000).

Source: Municipality of Rosario, 2006.

Box 2.7. Women’s presence in municipal management in Peru (1999–2000)

The project introduced municipal authorities to approaches and strategies for incorporating a gender focus in local governance and development, and strengthened citizen participation, especially that of women, in the design of public policies that address priority gender issues. To support these aims, the project supported diagnostic studies and surveys, residential training courses on gender-sensitive technical tools for municipal management, workshops to facilitate debate and dialogue on priority gender issues, and the publication of a bulletin for disseminating the experiences and good practices of different municipalities with gender policies. The training benefited more than 100 municipal authorities (80 percent women) and 100 local women leaders. It included capacity building in the areas of leadership, citizen participation, employment generation, reproductive health and domestic violence prevention. These activities resulted in the inclusion of gender issues in the municipal development plans of five municipalities and the creation of a municipal women’s commission.

Source: PROLEAD, 2000.

Building Gender-Sensitive Capacity in Municipal Planning

Emphasizing gender equality in municipal planning frequently requires sensitization and capacity building among municipal authorities. Across the region, this has meant greater attention to participatory consultation mechanisms, data collection, designing projects with a gender focus, and, more recently, incorporating gender criteria into municipal budgets. Much less attention has been paid to improving capacity to effectively implement projects with gender-specific actions or to measure their results. This is an area of weakness across subnational governments throughout the LAC region.

Some of the international organizations that have provided support for municipal institutional strengthening have supported the development of training modules and guidelines for integrating gender issues into municipal planning. Two examples are the “Guide for Planning and Formulating Municipal Policies that Promote Gender Equity” produced by the International Union of Local Authorities/Latin American Center for the Training and Development of Local Governments (Quiroz and Medellín, 1998) and the “Manual for the Integration of a Gender Focus in Municipal Plans,” which was pilot tested in Nicaragua in 2005 (Arboleda, 2005b). The International Training Center of the International Labour Organization (ILO) also offers an intensive certificate course on gender approaches to local development. This distance learning course was launched in 2002 as part of ILO’s DELNET Program to Support Local Development and is available

in Spanish, Portuguese, and English (<http://learning.itcilo.org/delnet>). The overall effectiveness of municipal capacity building in the area of gender mainstreaming has not been systematically assessed. However, these training modules are useful points of reference for new institutional capacity building initiatives at the municipal level, to help avoid duplication of effort and to learn from their experiences.

To complement capacity building efforts within municipal administrations, sensitization and skill building among local community leaders and citizens are also important. Community leaders charged with presenting local priorities to municipal level decision-making bodies may not present gender-specific needs and priorities if they are not specifically requested to do so by the decision makers or if the community leaders themselves have not developed an understanding of the potential effects gender issues can have on women and men from different population groups in their territories. At the same time, the different population groups that are seeking greater involvement in the planning process need to develop skills to better articulate and prioritize their needs so that they can be clearly communicated and justified before the municipal government. In Bolivia, for example, a multiyear training initiative was carried out in municipalities across the country, with the support of the Secretariat of Gender Issues and women's NGOs, to educate women's groups and community leaders on the Public Participation Law, women's citizenship, and organizational skills, so that they would be better prepared to play active roles in the process (Romero and Soruco, 1997).

An IDB project in Peru, financed by the regional Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation (TC-9607253-RG), provides a good example of an effort to strengthen local capacity to promote women's leadership and gender equality at the municipal level (box 2.7). The positive impact of the capacity building is illustrated through the resulting integration of a gender focus in municipal planning instruments and mechanisms.

QUESTIONS

Assessing the gender-responsiveness of municipal planning

- ✓ Does the municipal government gather gender-specific information and data to inform local planning?
- ✓ What is the model of participation being utilized in the municipalities? Who participates in the planning process? In what percentages and at what levels do women participate?
- ✓ What steps can be taken to improve the participation of women and men, if deficits exist for either sex?

- ✓ Do municipal plans and budgets include concrete targets and resources for promoting gender equality or addressing specific needs of both women and men?
- ✓ Do the planning processes adequately address gender considerations in all stages of the municipal project cycle (budgeting, implementation, maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation)?
- ✓ What capacity building does the municipal government need in order to improve its attention to gender equality?
- ✓ What municipal office is responsible for following up on gender-specific actions in municipal development plans?

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Gender-Sensitive Municipal Management

Mainstreaming gender considerations into municipal management ensures that both women and men participate in the development process and that their specific needs and responsibilities are reflected in municipal programs and services. Local governments benefit in a number of ways from mainstreaming gender considerations in aspects of municipal management. For example, (i) gender mainstreaming enables local governments to more efficiently administer their human and financial resources since it helps identify and target the specific needs of the citizens; (ii) it contributes to the elimination of discrimination within municipal administrations; (iii) it ensures that both women and men participate in and benefit from municipal programs and projects; and (iv) it allows them to better monitor and evaluate the effect of their policies and actions on the quality of life of women and men, and to adapt their decisions accordingly.

Institutional Implementation Strategies

The implementation and supervision of municipal development policies and plans with a gender focus (see Technical Note 2 for more details) can be jeopardized by weak institutional structures. In many cases, implementation is left to a small entity, or even one specialist, with little influence over other municipal employees. A range of institutional strategies are available for the implementation of municipal gender policies and action plans, including (i) the creation of a liaison with central government authorities to mobilize human and financial resources; (ii) training and sensitization of employees and management in gender mainstreaming and in the implementation of the municipal gender action plan; (iii) capacity building of municipal employees on gender-sensitive monitoring, evaluation, and social auditing; (iv) convincing managers to provide incentives to promote the implementation of the gender action plan; (v) assigning a network of gender specialists in key positions to help integrate a gender perspective throughout municipal programs and services; and (vi) improving municipal information systems to

Box 3.1. Gender focal points and community advocates in San Salvador

In 1999 the city of San Salvador in El Salvador adopted a gender equality policy with the objective to promote gender awareness and equality throughout the structures, programs, and services of the municipal government. While the women's department within the Human Development Directorate and the municipal council's commission for gender equality were mandated to oversee the execution of the policy, gender focal points were assigned throughout the municipal council's structure, thereby ensuring that gender issues were not confined merely to the women's department. The implementation of the gender policy was also strengthened through specific courses on gender analysis methodologies and the integration of the issue into other training courses. Other key elements in the successful implementation of the policy included the establishment of women's centers and social advocates at the community level, and efforts to involve men in district gender roundtables.

Source: Clulow, 2003.

provide data on key indicators broken down by sex. In the city of San Salvador, in El Salvador, gender focal points were assigned throughout the municipal council's structure to promote gender issues (box 3.1).

Adapting Municipal Services and Programs to Gender-Specific Needs

Many municipal governments in the LAC region have sought to increase women's participation in the design and delivery of municipal programs and services in order to ensure that they are adapted to gender-specific needs and priorities. Areas where gender mainstreaming has been successfully applied by municipal governments include the following:

- ***Crime prevention and safety.*** Since safety is one of the main obstacles to women's free movement in many urban areas, several LAC municipal governments are implementing gender-sensitive policies for crime prevention and safety. For example, certain subway platforms and cars in Mexico City have been reserved for women and children. The city government introduced these measures several decades ago in response to widespread complaints from women about their physical safety, particularly during rush hours.
- ***Gender-based violence.*** Many local governments in the LAC region—such as the municipality of Rosario in Argentina—have created telephone help lines, shelters,

legal assistance and psychological counseling for victims of gender-based violence (Whitzman, Canuto, and Binder, 2004). Similarly, the program *Renacer*, in the municipality of Independencia in Peru, uses a network of antiviolenace professionals who work to prevent and respond to cases of gender-based violence (International IDEA, 2007). In Honduras, in order to improve and systematize Valle de Sula's data on social and domestic violence, an IDB-financed citizen security program (HO-0205) created a violence observatory that is linked to the information systems of the police, hospitals, and public defender's office.

- ***Sexual and reproductive health.*** The decentralization to municipal governments poses particular challenges to sexual and reproductive health programs that generally are implemented through vertical structures. In many cases, responsibilities are transferred to the local levels while the implementation remains centralized (Maceira, 2005). Nevertheless, there are some success stories, such as the Office for Women's Health within the Municipal Health Secretariat in Sao Paulo in Brazil, which was created as a result of pressure from women's groups. The office has pioneered programs on contraception, legal abortion when a woman's life is at risk, and assistance for teenage victims of abuse and sexual violence (Maceira, 2005).
- ***Income generation.*** There is significant demand for greater involvement of municipal governments in the promotion of economic development and employment opportunities. While this continues to be an area of weakness for many municipal governments, there are a growing number of good examples. For example, in 2004, Montevideo's Women's Commission and Institute for Human Development implemented a pilot project to increase the income of poor women working as artisans and vendors. It provided economic resources, training and technical assistance to improve women's product development, marketing, business management, and strategic planning. It also aimed to bolster women's self-esteem and negotiation skills to help them expand their microenterprises (Arboleda, 2005).
- ***Water and sanitation.*** Local governments are key actors in the provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure, including water and sanitation. Women have always played pivotal roles in the provision of safe water for their families as well as household and community sanitation. However, gender roles and women's participation in this sector are frequently overlooked, which negatively affects the effectiveness and sustainability of these municipal investments. During the implementation of the IDB-financed Investments in Water and Sanitation Project in Honduras (HO-0072), the Municipality of Coloma discovered that it was not meeting the needs of many local households because women had not been involved in local decision making about water distribution. In response, the local government modified time schedules for water distribution to households to better fit the schedules of women working in the *maquilas*, who represent a large portion of the beneficiary population in the target area. It also established a target of 35 percent for women's representation on local water committees (IDB, 2007).

Communicating about Programs and Services

To reduce gender stereotyping and ensure that all citizens can take advantage of available municipal programs and services, it is essential that local governments have effective communication and information mechanisms in place. In this respect, women's groups and networks can be an asset for reaching different groups of local women, including those who are isolated due to illiteracy or language. Women's associations and other nongovernmental organizations can also play an important role in bringing gender issues to the attention of city employees, both women and men. To ensure ample citizen participation in municipal meetings, they must be scheduled at times when both women and men can attend, taking into account work and household responsibilities. To raise awareness among the population more generally, media campaigns and training projects—for example gender training for journalists—can contribute to bringing about changes in social attitudes. The city of San Salvador in El Salvador uses internal and external City Hall communications to advocate for gender equality in the municipality (Clulow, 2003).

Transforming Human Resources Management

Municipal governments play an important role in local economies as a major employer. However, in the LAC region, men constitute more than 80 percent of municipal employees (INSTRAW, 2006), and women tend to be pigeonholed in certain sectors and occupy less-skilled, lower-paid jobs. Within municipal administrations, few women reach middle-management positions and even fewer the upper levels of management. The obstacles to women's advancement in municipal administrations lie mainly in rigid career ladders and difficulties in balancing work and family life.

Municipal governments can increase the percentage of women in nontraditional sectors and in higher management positions with mechanisms such as: (i) employment equity programs that promote the hiring of qualified women; (ii) job descriptions that highlight gender equality requirements; (iii) composition of interview panels designed to provide nonbiased assessments; (iv) training programs to upgrade the skills and qualifications of women employees, making them more competitive for promotion; and (v) mentoring programs to facilitate women's networking opportunities.

Municipal governments can also implement a range of measures to change the organizational culture to ensure that women are treated fairly and to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Clear norms and education about sexual harassment can help clarify appropriate behaviors in the workplace. Sensitization and training for municipal employees can increase their ability to provide services and deal with personnel issues in a gender-sensitive manner. Worldwide trends indicate that municipal governments are increasingly implementing measures to promote family-friendly work environments, including support for daycare and flexible working hours.

Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation

The practice of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation brings to light the positive and negative results and effects of municipal programs and services on women and men. It requires the clear identification of goals and targets from the outset of a program or project, the availability of gender-specific baseline data, and output and outcome indicators that are stated in gender-specific terms (box 3.2).

As an integral part of the monitoring and evaluating of programs and services at the local level, it has become increasingly common that local governments establish mechanisms for social auditing. In some cases, the social auditing activities are limited to strengthening community involvement in municipal development in general, informing the population about the management of resources, and inviting it to monitor

projects and services. Other local governments have chosen to create more formal social auditing structures, which may take on many names and shapes, such as social accountability committees, municipal transparency commissions, networks of social auditors, microregional representation entities, or anticorruption councils (Sollis and Winder, 2006). Whatever social auditing mechanism is chosen, the integration of gender considerations is central to its success. For example, to provide a full picture of community perceptions and outcomes, both women and men must be able to express their ideas and concerns throughout the process. This can be facilitated by scheduling meetings at times when women can attend and by having separate meetings for women and men to allow them to speak freely about sensitive issues such as the quality of reproductive health services and violence. There must also be a confidence on behalf of both women and men that their views count and that their services will improve. Such a pilot program of social auditing took place in Belén de Gualcho in Honduras (box 3.3).

The gender dimensions of municipal structures, policies, programs, and services have only begun to be explored. Future research, monitoring, and evaluations are needed to assess:

- The extent to which municipal services meet the gender-specific needs of women and men
- Whether women or men are at a disadvantage in accessing certain types of services
- Inequalities in the delivery of services and the causes of existing inequalities
- The potential of elected women representatives to influence political agendas and approaches to governance.

Gender-specific indicators reflect the situation of both women and men. Indicators that reflect only the situation of women are women-in-development indicators that do not allow a comparison between women and men.

Box 3.2. Sample indicators for gender-sensitive monitoring in municipal development (baseline and results)

Socioeconomic indicators

- Gender gaps in education
- Access to health care, including reproductive health services (m/f)
- Employment and unemployment rates (m/f)
- Gender gaps in access to credit
- Gender gaps in land ownership
- Incidence of domestic violence

Incorporation of gender issues in municipal policies and planning

- Existence of municipal decrees in favor of women or gender equality
- Adoption of policies that ensure women's access to education, health care, employment, land, and credit, and of policies that support the reduction of gender violence
- Portion of municipal development plans, municipal investment plans, annual operational plans and budgets that include a gender focus
- Percentage of women who actively participate in the selection and prioritization of annual and multi-annual municipal investments
- Percentage of women as compared to men participating in social audits of projects

Access to municipal services and projects

- Portion of municipal projects with a gender focus
- Percentage of women beneficiaries of municipal services (such as markets, trash collection, cemeteries, civil registry, etc.)
- Percentage of women who access income-earning opportunities generated by municipal projects

Representation and employment in local governments

- Percentage of women mayors, deputy mayors, and municipal council members
- Percentage of women in senior manager positions within the municipal government
- Percentage of women staff in the administration of municipal governments
- Women's share of positions as technical staff, advisors, and consultants hired by the municipal government

Participation in local consultation and decision making

- Percentage of women representatives on municipal development committees (from municipal councils, social and economic sector institutions, private enterprises, NGOs, unions, associations, etc.)
- Percentage of women participating on municipal sector boards (social and nonsocial)
- Percentage of women as territorial leaders
- Percentage of women participating in municipal and community assemblies, consultation workshops and meetings, and so on

Box 3.3. Social auditing of education services in Belén de Gualcho

Following a corruption study, the municipality of Belén de Gualcho in Honduras decided in 2005 to implement a pilot participatory monitoring process. A methodology was developed that allowed mothers, fathers, and teachers to evaluate the quality of community education services. A regional anti-corruption council consisting of civil society organizations from six municipalities, as well as donor organizations, collaborated in the training, auditing, and the systematization of the process. As a direct result of the social auditing pilot, important irregularities were identified and remedied, including the arbitrary contracting of teachers and unexplained salary differences. A key aspect of the success of this pilot experience was the commitment of the local government to transparency and to ample citizen participation, ensuring the involvement of both women and men.

Source: Sollis and Winder, 2006.

QUESTIONS

Assessing the gender-responsiveness of municipal management

- ✓ Has training in gender mainstreaming been provided to public servants and elected representatives (men and women)?
- ✓ Is an equal opportunities program in place for hiring public servants in the municipal administration?
- ✓ Is there an incentive structure that encourages municipal employees to address gender issues in municipal programs and services?
- ✓ Do municipal programs mainstream a gender perspective?
- ✓ Is gender-disaggregated data available, and does the municipality conduct gender-impact assessments of policies, programs, and services?
- ✓ Do the participation mechanisms used during policy and project implementation and evaluation ensure the participation of both women and men?

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Women's Leadership and Representation in Local Governments

Women continue to be underrepresented in local decision-making structures in Latin America and the Caribbean. The average percentage of women in mayoral posts in Latin America is 7 percent, which is below the world average of 9 percent (UCLG, 2006). In some countries, the number of female mayors is even lower. For example, only 8 of 361 (2.2 percent) mayors in Guatemala are women, and the situation is just marginally better in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, where women comprise 3 percent of mayors. As indicated in table 4.1, more progress has been made among municipal council members, with women representing on average a quarter of municipal councilors in the region. This represents an important advance since the early 1990s when women's share of councilor posts was only about 10 percent (FLACSO, 1995). In recent elections, some countries witnessed important increases, including Costa Rica, which achieved 47 percent representation of women in 2003. However, most countries are still far from achieving parity. For the English-speaking Caribbean, data is scarce. There is evidence from several countries, however, that women's participation in local governments is similar to or higher than in Latin America. For example, in 1998, Trinidad and Tobago reported that 14 percent of mayors and 21 percent of council members were women (Myers, 2002). Women's access to these posts appears to be lowest in Guyana and Belize.

A wide spectrum of hurdles has been identified to explain women's underrepresentation in elected positions. These include: (i) lack of personal wealth to fund campaigns and lack of access to networks to secure other financial resources; (ii) lack of knowledge and skills to carry out electoral and media campaigns, negotiations, etc.; (iii) lack of confidence, especially for public speaking; (iv) difficulties reconciling work and family life, particularly for women with young children; (v) concern that a public role will intrude on family life, especially during campaigns; (vi) social norms relegating women to more subordinate, passive roles; (vii) the view that politics is corrupt, causing women to reject it; (viii) lack of support from political parties to promote women in their internal leadership and in elected positions; and (ix) apparent lack of encouragement and support from men as well as from other women.

Table 4.1. Women in local governments in Latin America (percent of total)

Country	Mayors	Councilors
Argentina	7	N/A
Bolivia	11	34
Brazil	5	12
Chile	13	27 ^a
Colombia	3	30
Costa Rica	9	47 ^b
Dominican Republic	7	28
Ecuador	3	25
El Salvador	7	25
Guatemala	2	25
Honduras	8 ^c	22
Mexico	4	16
Nicaragua	10	34
Panama	16	13
Paraguay	5	19
Peru	3	25
Venezuela	6	30
Latin America average	7	25

Source: UCLG Database on Women in Local Decision Making; except (a) SERNAM, 2004; (b) INAMU, 2003; (c) Republic of Honduras, 2005. Figures are from the latest election data available for each country, between 2002 and 2005.

At the same time, local government is often seen as the most viable entry point for women in politics since many women perceive that: (i) local government responsibilities can be easier than national elected positions to combine with family life; (ii) local political issues are particularly relevant to the roles and responsibilities that women already have in their families and communities; (iii) women's often strong social networks at the local level can be utilized to rally support for their candidacy; and (iv) there may be less competition for seats than in national elections. However, as government decentralization brings greater resources and power to the local level, local offices are becoming more coveted and gradually more competitive.

Legal Gender Quotas

Although quotas are controversial, with some critics arguing that they will lead to the election of unqualified candidates and restrict the free choice of the voters (Dahlerup, 2006), progress in the election of women to municipal governments has been made mainly through legislation that establishes quota systems. To date, ten countries in the LAC region have adopted legal

gender quotas at the subnational level to increase the number of women representatives (table 4.2). The effectiveness of quotas in specific countries has varied based on the wording, requirements, and sanctions, as well as the electoral system and the history of women's participation in public life (Dahlerup 1998). Examples of strong quota systems at the local level include Peru, where the number of council women increased by 20 percent in the first elections held after the adoption of the quota law in 1997, and Ecuador, where the number of women municipal councilors increased from 8 percent

in 1996 to 25 percent in 2003 following new quota legislation. Similarly, after the introduction in 1999 of Bolivia's 30 percent gender quota for the election to municipal governments, the proportion of women councilors increased from 8.3 percent to 32 percent, and the number of women mayors from 12 in the previous election to 21 (Costa Benavides, 2003).

However, quotas do not automatically translate into proportional gains for women, especially if women candidates are assigned to races in which they are essentially nonelectable or superfluous. In Honduras, for example, despite a 30 percent quota in the election of mayors, approximately 8 percent of newly elected mayors were women in the 2005 election (Republic of Honduras, 2005). In the 1995 municipal elections in Brazil, a 20 percent quota for women was introduced along with a simultaneous reform enabling parties to present 20 percent more candidates than seats, thereby creating ornamental slots in exact proportion to the quota. When the quota subsequently was raised to 30 percent, parties were allowed to nominate 50 percent more candidates than seats (Piscopo, 2006).

To avoid loopholes and noncompliance with quota legislation, some countries have introduced legal requirements of double quotas, regulating the rank order of candidates in order to ensure that women are placed in positions on the ballots where they have a chance of being elected. This has been the case in Costa Rica, where the double quota system has significantly increased representation of women in local governments (box 4.1).

Political Party Quotas

Eleven countries in the region also have voluntary political party quotas for electoral candidates (table 4.2). In many of these countries, several political parties have opted to use quotas. Because the enforcement of the requirements that the parties have imposed upon themselves is often weak—which is, for example, the case in Chile (International IDEA, 2007), El Salvador, and Nicaragua (Clulow and Manson, 2005)—these voluntary party quotas may not be as effective as some legal quotas in increasing the number of women in elected positions.

Gender quota definitions

Legal gender quotas are either mandated by the constitution or by the electoral law, stipulating that women must constitute a minimum number of candidates or percentage of representatives of a body (e.g., electoral lists or municipal government).

Political party gender quotas are voluntarily used by one or more political parties and may apply to electoral lists and reserved seats in legislature as well to the internal party structure.

Double gender quotas not only require a certain percentage of women on electoral candidate lists, but also stipulate the rank order of candidates.

Box 4.1. Double quota brings women to power in Costa Rica

To address the slow speed by which the number of women in politics was growing, Costa Rica in 1996 introduced a minimum quota for women nominees for all elected positions, from the president and vice president to the municipal level. Through an amendment to the electoral code, binding to the political parties, women had to make up at least 40 percent of nominees for elective posts and delegates in political party structures. However, no sanctions were imposed on parties that failed to respect the provision, and, in practice, women candidates were placed at the bottom of the lists. Another practice used to circumvent the effective enforcement of the quota was adding together the women nominees in national, cantonal, and district elections, rather than presenting the ballots of each municipality separately. In response, the Supreme Elections Tribunal adopted progressively more stringent regulations, issuing in 1999 a double quota that not only required a minimum percentage of women on the electoral lists, but also required that women be listed for electable positions on party lists. Following these revisions to the law, the quota was finally enforced in the 2002 elections. At the municipal level, women's participation in municipal councils is now nearly equal to that of men. The proportion of women council members, including both principal and alternates, increased from 14 percent in the 1994 election to 36 percent in the 1998 election and then to 47 percent in 2002 and declined to 41 percent in December 2006.

Source: Garcia Quesada, 2003; Jones, 2004; INAMU, 2006.

Municipal Employees

Women occupy only 16 percent of municipal positions in Latin America and fill mainly low-ranking positions (INSTRAW, 2006). The underrepresentation of women is even more prominent in the higher levels of municipal administrations, even in sectors where women predominate as employees or users of services.

In some cases, local governments have been proactive in addressing the disparity between the employment of women and men. Some of the strongest trends worldwide to help increase the number of women serving as senior managers include: (i) affirmative action employment programs designed to increase the number of women in specialist and senior positions; (ii) measures to create safe and nondiscriminatory work environments, such as policies against sexual harassment; and (iii) measures to help women and men balance work and private life, such as childcare and flexible work hours.

Colombia provides a unique example in the LAC region of a quota for women's participation in public administration positions at all levels (30 percent) (INSTRAW, 2006). While the quota was instituted in 2000, its enforcement has varied significantly from municipality to municipality. In fact, local governments have demonstrated relatively low levels of compliance. In order to address this problem, civil society organizations have launched initiatives to help increase accountability and raise women's access to senior management positions in municipal administration (box 4.2).

Table 4.2. Gender quotas in elected local government positions

Country	Legal quotas	Voluntary political party quotas
Argentina	Quota requirements are included in provincial laws and in the constitution of Buenos Aires.	The Justicialista Party (PJ) has a 35 percent quota and the Radical Civic Union (UCR) has a 30 percent quota for women on electoral lists.
Bolivia	A 30 percent gender quota for the election to the town councils is required through national legislation.	N/A
Brazil	A 30 percent quota for women for the election to local governments is required through national legislation.	The Workers Party (PT) has a 30 percent quota for women on electoral lists and for internal positions.
Chile	N/A	The Party for Democracy (PPD) and the Socialist Party (PS) have 40 percent gender quotas on electoral lists, and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) has a 20 percent quota for women.
Costa Rica	A 40 percent gender quota for the election to local governments is required through national legislation.	The National Liberation Party (PLN) and the Christian Social Union Party (PUSC) have 40 percent quotas for women on lists, and the Citizen Action Party (PAC) has a 50 percent quota for the Chamber of Deputies.
Dominican Republic	A 50 percent quota for women for the mayoral elections was introduced through national legislation. It requires that each municipality fill the mayor and deputy mayor positions with one man and one woman.	The Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) has a 25 percent quota for women on electoral lists.
Ecuador	A 30 percent quota for women for the election to local governments is required through national legislation.	The Ecuadorian Roldosista Movement (PRE), the Democratic Left (ID), and the Popular Democracy (DP) party have 25 percent quotas for women on candidate lists.
El Salvador	N/A	The Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN) has a 35 percent quota for women.
Honduras	A 30 percent quota for women (which will increase gradually until it reaches 50 percent) in the election of mayors, deputy mayors and regional leaders.	N/A

continued

Table 4.2. Continued

Country	Legal quotas	Voluntary political party quotas
Mexico	No more than 70 percent of the candidates for Mexico City's legislature can be of the same sex (with a recommended 50 percent quota). Seven states have established 20–30 percent quotas for candidates in legislative elections.	The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has a 50 percent quota for women and the Party of Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) has a 30 percent quota for women.
Nicaragua	N/A	The Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) has a 30 percent quota for women.
Paraguay	A 20 percent quota for women for the election to local governments is required through national legislation.	The National Republican Association (ANR) has a 20 percent quota for women on lists.
Peru	A 30 percent quota for women for the election to local councils through national legislation.	N/A
Uruguay	N/A	The Socialist Party (PS) has a quota that is dependent upon the proportion of women members of the party in each jurisdiction.

Source: International IDEA, 2007; United Nations, 2005; INSTRAW, 2006; Government of Federal District of Mexico, 2003.

N/A = not applicable.

Advocacy and Support Networks

In many parts of the world, national and regional associations of municipal authorities have supported the creation of networks of women in local governments. The networks often include both current and former elected officials of local governments, as well as representatives of women's groups and organizations. In the LAC region, the Latin American and Caribbean Federation of Women in Local Government (FEMUM-LAC) was created in 1998 to serve as a link between municipalities in the LAC region and national municipal women's associations.

At the subregional level, the Central American Network of Women for Local Development with Gender Equity (CANW) was established in 2003 and has liaison committees in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, bringing together women from different parties to promote women's rights (Clulow, 2005).

Box 4.2. Promoting compliance with the public administration gender quota

Colombia's quota law for women's participation in management positions in the public administration was slow to take effect across the different departments and municipalities of the country. In response, the Corporación Sisma Mujer developed and executed a strategy between 2002 and 2004 aimed at promoting the law's implementation. As part of its strategy, Sisma trained 117 women on the legal mechanisms to monitor and ensure compliance with the quota law. Participants included NGO representatives, local political leaders, and public officials at the departmental and municipal levels. After the training, participants launched 24 petitions requesting information regarding the composition of decision-making positions in the secretariats and administrative units of eight departments in Colombia. Through legal mechanisms provided by the government, Sisma then took action against those municipalities that were not complying with the law. As a result, the quota law was fully implemented in four departments in Colombia.

Source: PROLEAD, 2004.

At the national level, networks have been formed to lobby local government to promote gender equality, and counteract the isolation of women working in local governments, including the Association of Municipal Women in Ecuador (AMUME), the National Alliance of Honduran Women in Local Government (ANAMMH), and the National Association of Women Councilors and Mayors of El Salvador (ANDRYSAS).

Due to their underrepresentation, women elected representatives in local governments and managers in municipal administrations are often isolated. Through membership in national and regional networks, they establish contacts with women in other municipalities, allowing them to share information, provide support to one another, and coordinate initiatives in favor of women.

Preparing Women for Election to Local Governments

The representation of women in decision-making positions within local governments can bolster the confidence of women elected officials and provide inspiration for other women to enter political life at both the local and national levels. Achieving a critical mass of women could also influence critical norms and policies to favor issues such as gender equality and social development. However, the presence of women does not guarantee the transformation of policy choices and resource allocation. One of the key

Box 4.3. Supporting the capacity of women elected representatives in Peru and Colombia

To contribute to the democratization of political parties in Colombia and Peru, an IDB-financed initiative implemented by the Peruvian NGO Transparencia promoted the adoption of mechanisms to facilitate women's participation within parties and electoral processes. The project built awareness among political leaders by disseminating successful experiences of women's participation in political parties through debate forums and cross-party meetings. It also supported the establishment of a mutual assistance network for political parties that helped develop the "Basic Platform on Gender Policies," which committed its 10 signatories to actively promoting women's political participation. These efforts also included direct counseling for political parties, and the training of women officials and candidates for elected posts in communication, negotiation, and the integration of gender into public policies. Finally, the project provided technical assistance to draft policy proposals on electoral reform, equal-opportunity laws, and Peruvian draft legislation calling for quotas for women in training for political parties and on lists of candidates at both the national and municipal levels.

Source: PROLEAD, 2006.

obstacles is that women are often confined to traditionally feminine areas, such as the cultural and social sectors.

Municipal governments as well as private organizations can take many steps to help female elected officials become advocates for gender equality and enhance their leadership potential. These include: (i) identifying women elected officials or staff who have potential, but not enough visibility and influence, to exercise their leadership fully; (ii) providing women with training in leadership, use of the media, institutional procedures and norms, networking skills, and priority setting; (iii) introducing a mentoring system aimed at learning from the experience of others and supporting professional development; (iv) raising the awareness of councilors and municipal managers of both sexes to issues of gender equity; (v) establishing the presence of women in all committees; (vi) building partnerships with local women's groups and their representatives to promote collaboration; and (vii) strengthening or creating municipal offices on women's affairs. An example of another IDB-financed PROLEAD project from the Andean region (box 4.3) illustrates an ongoing effort in the region to increase women's capacity for leadership as well as the willingness of political parties to promote women in local governments.

QUESTIONS

Assessing the representation of women in local governments

- ✓ What is the proportion of women in elected positions at the executive and legislative levels in municipal governments? Has it increased over time?
- ✓ What is the proportion of women among managers and employees in the municipal public administration? Are they confined to specific sectors?
- ✓ Are political or legal quotas in place to enhance women's representation in local governments? What is the level of compliance and enforcement?
- ✓ Has the existence of quotas increased women's representation in local governments?
- ✓ Has the presence of more women in elected positions increased attention to women's priority issues on municipal agendas?
- ✓ Do women have access to capacity building to develop their potential as municipal leaders?
- ✓ Do municipal women leaders participate in national and international networks with other elected representatives to share lessons learned and provide support to other women?

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Regional Support and Achievements

As countries progress toward greater decentralization of public management and resources, the demand for technical assistance and financial investments at the municipal level has increased. As a result, investments in subnational development from multilateral and bilateral development organizations have dramatically increased over the past two decades. Many international institutions have recognized the importance of integrating a focus on gender equality and women's participation into their development assistance at the municipal level, because they are inextricably linked to the promotion of equitable, sustainable development, good governance, and a strong civil society.

Several multilateral and bilateral agencies have made specific efforts to integrate a gender focus into the municipal development projects that they finance. Most of these efforts have aimed to increase women's access to the benefits of local development projects, and to facilitate their participation in municipal planning and governance.

USAID Support for Women in Local Governance

In the 1990s, USAID supported one of the first LAC regional initiatives to promote women's participation in municipal development, through the Women and Local Government Project, implemented by the International Union of Local Authorities' Latin American Center for Training and Development of Local Governments (IULA/CELCADEL, 1998). It supported activities across Central and South America, generating a range of experiences in mobilizing women's organizations; designing methodologies to formalize women's participation in municipal planning; and fostering national and regional networks and capacity building. Building on this experience, USAID has made strides mainstreaming a gender focus into its support for local governance and decentralization in the LAC region. For example, in Guatemala, USAID includes a specific focus on gender and ethnic equity in its support to municipal development councils and local citizen groups.¹ In Bolivia, Agency projects supported the creation of a municipal gender policy and legal framework, and increased participation

1. <http://www.usaid.gov/gt>.

of both women and men in municipal governance, including in budget meetings and other key decision making.²

World Bank Assistance to Address Gender in Local Development

In 2001, the World Bank created a Trust Fund for Gender Mainstreaming (GENFUND) to support strategic and innovative work on gender equality. Several projects financed by the GENFUND have provided support to increase women's participation in local governance and to assess the impact of decentralization and women's political empowerment on public expenditures and community development (World Bank, 2006a). Within its regular lending portfolio, the World Bank has only a few examples of projects in the LAC region that support municipal development and incorporate a gender perspective, and they fall within the social investment sector (World Bank, 2006b). For example, the Bank provided specialized support to mainstream gender considerations across the Honduras Social Investment Fund (SIF) as it expanded its efforts to decentralize and more actively engage local institutions. Through its PROGENIAL initiative,³ the Bank provided gender sensitivity training to SIF project personnel, supported the participation of men and women in planning and outreach, and helped to design income-generating projects for women.

International Support of Gender-Responsive Local Budgets

Since 2000, international support for enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and equity of public budgets has increased. This has included initiatives that aim to hold governments accountable to their commitments to gender equality and women's rights by linking them to the distribution, use, and generation of public resources both at the national and local levels. The main actors in this arena in the LAC region have included the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Gender-responsive budget initiatives have been introduced at the subnational level in approximately 10 countries in the LAC region. These have included cross-cutting

2. <http://www.devtechsys.com/services/activities/ddcppbolivia.cfm> .

3. The Gender and Innovation for Latin America Program, financed by the Dutch and Japanese governments, helps World Bank staff and project coordination units to address gender when implementing Bank-financed projects.

Box 5.1. Gender pro-equity in fiscal policy in Latin America and the Caribbean (2003–09)

The project gives budget experts in government and nongovernmental organizations in several countries and municipalities in Latin America access to technical information and Latin American experiences integrating gender criteria into public budgeting processes. It offers training, regional knowledge, and advice concerning instruments and methods to integrate a gender perspective into budgets at the national and local levels. As a result, the project enables local governments to better account for the differential impacts of their budgetary policies on women and men. It is also expected to increase the integration of gender criteria into budgetary planning and the allocation of resources by local governments.

Source: Public Budget and Gender in LAC, www.presupuestoygenero.net.

studies on gender-sensitive budgets at the municipal level; analysis of public expenditures in the area of violence prevention and treatment in municipal budgets; support for increasing the focus on gender dimensions in participatory budget exercises; and training and technical assistance of local authorities to incorporate a gender focus in municipal management and budgetary planning.⁴ A highlight among these initiatives is the project on gender pro-equity fiscal policy in Latin America and the Caribbean financed by GTZ and executed by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) (box 5.1).

Mainstreaming Gender in IDB Municipal Development Lending

The IDB has actively supported subnational development, investing in the majority of the sectors within the jurisdiction of local governments. These investments tripled between the 1980s and 1990s, and have grown at an even more accelerated pace since 2000. In 2001, the IDB established its Subnational Development Strategy to guide its operations in this area. The strategy states that “Bank-sponsored operations will assist governments in establishing effective mechanisms to promote the leadership and representation of women, indigenous and Afro-Latin groups, and other marginalized constituencies so that their specific interests are adequately represented” (IDB, 2001).

Between 1998 and 2005, 69 IDB lending operations were approved that provide support for municipal development across the LAC region. They support capacity building, institutional modernization, improvements of municipal development practices and

4. *Source:* <http://presupuestoygenero.net>.

Table 5.1. IDB loans that support municipal development and gender issues

Loans approved between 1998 and 2005

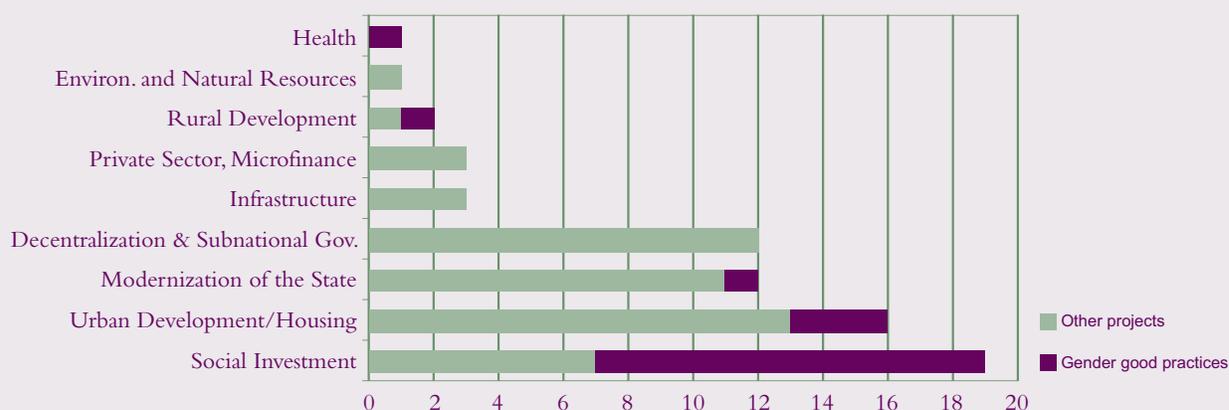
Project number	Name	Year	Sector
BO-0216	Reactivation of the Center of La Paz	2004	Urban development
BR-0246	Pernambuco's Da Mata Zone Sustainable Development	2001	Rural development
BR-0250	Urban Improvement Rio de Janeiro II	2000	Urban development/housing
CH-0161	Efficiency and Regional Investment Management	2000	Modernization of the state
CO-0213	Peaceful Coexistence and Citizens' Security	1998	Social investment
CR-0144	Health Sector Development	2003	Health
DR-0072	Northeast Community Development Phase I	1998	Social investment
GU-0127	FIS for the Eastern Development Project	1998	Social investment
GU-0155	Program Against Urban Poverty	2002	Urban development
HA-0079	Local Development Program	2003	Social investment
HO-0131	Social Investment Program (FHIS III)	1998	Social investment
HO-0205	Sula Valley Citizenship Security	2003	Social investment
HO-0220	Poverty Alleviation and Local Development Phase II	2003	Social investment
NI-0075	Social Protection Network	2000	Social investment
NI-0108	Poverty Alleviation and Strengthening Local Capacity	2000	Social investment
NI-L1008	Municipal Social Investment Program – ESIF	2005	Social investment
PE-0193	FONCODES III	2002	Social investment
PR-0125	Social Investment Program II	2002	Social investment

procedures, and the installation of social or economic development programs to be implemented by municipal or state governments. Of these projects, 18 (26 percent) mainstreamed a focus on gender issues into their designs (table 5.1).⁵

The majority of the projects considered to be gender good practice are in the area of social investment (figure 5.1). There are also a few promising examples in the areas of urban development, modernization of the state, health, and rural development that can

5. These projects were rated with “significant” or “best practice” gender mainstreaming in the IDB Gender Mainstreaming Rating system. This system classifies lending operations into five categories: none, minimal, partial, significant, and best practice (IDB, 2006).

Figure 5.1. IDB loans that support subnational development (1998–2005)



Box 5.2. Examples of gender-specific design features in IDB municipal development operations

- Special attention to girls, adolescent mothers, and female household heads living in poverty in actions aimed at improving basic social services.
- Specific actions to support the prevention of teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS among women and men.
- Measures to increase women’s participation in setting priorities when establishing agreements between the municipality and civil society, primarily in areas of social infrastructure.
- Vocational/labor market training that aims to increase employability, including a specific emphasis on women heads of households.
- Institutional strengthening within the executing agency to increase their ability to detect and address gender inequalities (e.g., staff training, development of gender equality policies).
- Capacity building for local actors (e.g., sensitizing the community on issues of gender equity, strengthening the role of women in community development and participatory planning processes, and strengthening the organizational capacity of civil groups).
- Social assessments that include gender-specific criteria in the preparation and selection of local projects that will be financed by the programs.
- Verification of gender-specific benefits and participation through monitoring, evaluation and social audits.

Box 5.3. Program to combat poverty and strengthen local capacity in Nicaragua

This program provided support to increase the effectiveness and decentralization of Nicaragua's Social Investment Fund (FISE). It aimed to increase the participation of local communities and municipal governments in the implementation and maintenance of social infrastructure projects. Along with greater delegation of the FISE project cycle to local actors, the program sought to promote the active participation of women, through (i) training for municipal technical units, NGOs, and other local actors in gender-specific aspects of local development; (ii) training for women to strengthen their participation in community development committees and other local development decision-making bodies; (iii) evaluation of gender-specific aspects of all proposed projects prior to their implementation; and (iv) monitoring indicators to measure advances in women and men's participation in the different aspects of the program.

Source: IDB, 2000.

help point the way to better integration of gender equality and women's participation in future operations in these areas.

Interventions integrated into the design of these good practice operations address specific issues affecting women and girls or provide support for the development of better institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality (box 5.2). An example of a best practice project is the Program to Combat Poverty and Strengthen Local Capacity in Nicaragua (box 5.3).

Other noteworthy examples from the IDB lending portfolio beyond the social investment sector include the following:

- *Revitalization of the Center of La Paz* (BO-0216, 2004). The project's social development fund gives priority to projects that support the employment of female household heads and the provision of daycare, as well as return-to-school programs for teenage girls and boys who otherwise would accompany their mothers to work in the city center. Women vendors, who account for two thirds of all vendors in downtown La Paz, also receive vocational training to boost their income earning capacity.
- *Sustainable Development in Pernambuco's Mata Region* (BR-0246, 2001). The program aims to increase women's access to the benefits of the economic diversification and national resource management projects that it finances. It includes specific measures to ensure women's full participation in local needs assessments, training, and promotional activities associated with these rural projects.

And while none of IDB's loans for decentralization or subnational government can

be considered projects that mainstream gender issues, a few have introduced innovative gender-sensitive aspects that could be expanded upon or replicated in future operations. One such example is the Public Investment System Program in Bolivia (BO-L1006), which supports the inclusion of gender equality criteria and the evaluation of the impact of public investments on women in its effort to decentralize and increase the transparency of the country's National Public Investment System.

Challenges and Missed Opportunities

Overall, international support to promote gender equality and to address women's priority needs at the municipal level has been largely focused on initiatives that aim to strengthen municipal governance and social investment programs that include municipal strengthening. There has been much more limited attention to gender issues in the actual implementation of municipal development projects, local economic development initiatives, and municipal administrative and fiscal management. There is also a real dearth of monitoring and evaluation data on the results of these initiatives and projects.

There are many more opportunities for initiatives that promote gender equality through the portfolio of subnational lending and technical assistance in the LAC region. For example, in the IDB there are many missed opportunities among the programs that support decentralization and subnational governments directly, specifically in their social participation mechanisms, in the development of indicators to assess the results of municipal development plans and policies, in capacity building for local authorities, and in modernization of municipal management systems. In the lending portfolios of both the IDB and the World Bank, there are many untapped opportunities for supporting the development of municipal budgets that are more responsive to gender-specific needs and priorities.

QUESTIONS

Designing municipal development projects

Needs assessment

- ✓ *Who needs what?* What are the different needs and priorities of women and men from different socioeconomic and ethnic groups in the municipality?
- ✓ *Who does what?* What are the main income generating options for women and men in the municipality? Who does what paid and unpaid work for the household and the community?

Decision making and rights

- ✓ *Who decides?* Who participates in decision making? Whose voice is heard and given weight?
- ✓ *Who has rights and can exercise their rights?* Rights include the right to housing, property and land ownership, employment, governmental services, voting, and living free from violence.

Access to project benefits

- ✓ *Who gets what?* Who benefits and has access to resources from the municipal development project?
- ✓ *Who does what?* Who has access to paid work generated by the project? Who assumes responsibility for unpaid work associated with the project? Do these responsibilities create an imbalance in work burdens for women or men?

Institutional mechanisms and capacity

- ✓ *What institutional mechanisms are in place to promote gender equality?* Mechanisms include gender policies and action plans, quotas for women's participation in municipal bodies, integration of gender issues in municipal development plans and budgets, and gender-sensitive indicators for measuring participation and results.
- ✓ *Do local authorities have the capacity to address gender issues adequately?* Will the municipal project have the human resources needed to follow-up on gender-specific actions? Are there capacity building needs? How will the project address them?

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