Report

One World Action seminar
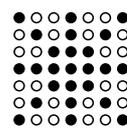
Developing gender-sensitive local services

London, 28–29 June 2000

ONE WORLD ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

Developing gender-sensitive local services

A seminar organised by
One World Action and
The British Council

London
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FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

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Preface

Helen O'Connell, Head of Policy, One World Action

One year ago One World Action organised a seminar entitled 'Influence and Access',[1] which looked at local democracy and service provision. It was a very stimulating seminar, rich in ideas from expert and experienced participants, but we had one specific criticism of it: despite our best efforts, gender issues and gender analysis were not as fully explored as we would have liked. We decided, therefore, that this seminar should focus specifically and closely on gender issues. We decided also to concentrate on the service delivery side of the theme rather than the gender aspects of local democracy in terms of women's political participation *per se*, since that question has already been very well explored elsewhere. Issues concerning gender-sensitive service delivery, in contrast, have not been explored in any depth. These are quite difficult issues, and in the end they concern practice – what we do on the ground, how we deliver services. The overarching question is: What can we do to make services not only affordable, accessible, and appropriate – the three As of service delivery – but also gender sensitive?

The aim of this seminar is to provide a forum in which participants from important stakeholder groups can share information and experiences. The major focus will be not on theory but on practice, and the discussion will be based on specific, practical case studies. We aim to explore the gender dimensions of service delivery in practice. What do we really mean by 'gender-sensitive roads and transport', for instance? What do we mean by 'gender-sensitive justice systems'? The two days of the seminar have been structured so as to enable us to hear a number of case studies from a range of countries and to learn from them how things are being done in practice in different national contexts to make services more sensitive to gender needs and interests. What successes have been achieved, what lessons have been learned from failures? We aim also to explore strategies for delivering services, strategies for women's organisations and community-based

organisations, ways of working with local officials and elected representatives.

There are three strands in particular in which we hope this seminar can contribute to an exploration of the development and delivery of gender-sensitive basic services. These are:

1 *Who delivers services, and how are they delivered?* The deliverers of services may be local authorities, NGOs, private operators, or sometimes a public–private partnership. There is a series of key issues here to do with gender mainstreaming, the attitudes of public officials towards citizens as the consumers of services, the funding of services, and decisions about who is given priority for which services.

2 *What is the role of civil society organisations?* How do women's organisations, citizens' groups, and other civil society organisations (CSOs) mobilise to put pressure on local authorities or others who deliver services to their communities? Issues to be addressed here include consultation, the agreement of demands, and mobilising to have those demands met. What strategies have CSOs developed both for dealing with officials in local administrations and for working with elected representatives?

3 *How do we envision gender-sensitive services?* The most effective advocacy offers an alternative to what it is criticising. When we say we want gender-sensitive water delivery, gender-sensitive roads and transport, a gender-sensitive justice system, what do we really mean? What would such services look like?

Both One World Action and the British Council are committed to facilitating information sharing and mutual learning between the UK and Europe and countries in Africa, Asia and Central and Latin America, and also to facilitating exchange between African, Asian and Latin and Central American countries themselves. Sometimes the

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[1] *Influence and Access: Local Democracy and Basic Service Provision*, London, May 1999, Seminar report, Mandy Macdonald (ed.). London: One World Action, 2000.

most important outcome of events such as this is the exchange they enable between participants from different countries. Clearly, we all share an agenda in the areas of social inclusion and service provision. Issues of quality, gender sensitivity, and *accessibility* are as challenging for people in the UK as they are for people in Africa, Asia and Central and Latin America. We share concerns about the *affordability* and *appropriateness* of services – who pays for services, what user fees are acceptable, who delivers the services – and about *accountability*, principally the accountability of officials and elected representatives to citizens.

Finally – and importantly – we want to identify approaches which could be useful to the European Union and the British government in their development co-operation programmes and policies. Alongside the set of shared agendas outlined above is another agenda which is equally important for this seminar. In 1995 the UK and the European Union, alongside most other countries in the world, signed agreements at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen. This year they have reiterated their commitment by signing agreements at the follow-up conferences, 'Beijing + 5' and 'Copenhagen + 5'. Fundamental to these international agreements is gender equality and the commitment to women's rights as human rights. The international community has also committed itself to certain international development targets which stem from the series of UN conferences that took place in the 1990s. One of those targets poses a challenge: to halve the incidence of poverty by 2015. The UK and the European Union have very good gender policies in their development co-operation. Yet, as we all know, there are still huge inequalities in access to, and control over, services such as water, health care, education, sanitation, transport, roads, justice, and housing. In such a context it is difficult to see how women, men and children can enjoy and exercise their full human rights when they are denied access to some of the most basic essential services. We hope this seminar will contribute to narrowing the gaps both between affluence and poverty and between policy and practice.

Richard Edwards, Director, Governance and Society Department, The British Council

One of the British Council's talents is that it is extremely good at connecting people – across social divides, across cultures, across hierarchies and countries. Bringing people together to advance debate, to share and to learn is a kind of driving force for the British Council, and it is extremely satisfying to see people from many different parts of the world, including the UK, participating in events such as this seminar. Particularly important is the recognition that the UK has a great deal to learn from other parts of the world. Unfortunately, politicians in the UK don't always like to listen to the views of people in other parts of the world, but we can try and make sure that some lessons get to them. Mutuality is vitally important to us, and so I am particularly pleased to see some of our partners from Namibia, Uganda and Brazil at this seminar.

I have been working for twenty years in different parts of the world, looking at community mobilisation and also working within local government for reform so that it can meet the needs of the community. Over that time the British Council's approach has changed considerably. Some ten years ago I tried to set up an NGO in Pakistan, a country which provides an excellent example of the tensions between local communities, local government and political issues. I put forward a plan to the Council's headquarters in London which was based on the kinds of issues we are talking about today: how to make services respond to the community, how to make them gender-sensitive, and how to mobilise communities to put forward their demands. Headquarters opposed the plan fiercely; they thought it too radical. Their idea of development at the time was simply to install infrastructure, such as pumps and wells. That attitude is no longer typical.

I congratulate One World Action for its achievement in bringing people together at seminars such as this and articulating their exchange and discussion in excellent reports. But why is the British Council collaborating with One World Action today? As Director of the Council's Governance and Society Department, I head a team of

people at our large Secretariat working on a range of
themes in the areas of governance, local democracy,
community development and mobilisation. Gender equality
is probably our strongest core theme, and we have a long
history of working on it. But we work also on participation
and democracy, and on what we call 'management
effectiveness', which addresses questions of how institutions
manage themselves so as to allow all people access to
their services in an inclusive and sustainable way. Like One
World Action, we are trying to bring these themes together,
and that aim lies behind our collaboration on this
conference with One World Action. I agree that there has
been a great deal of work on gender issues specifically in
relation to democracy issues, but not enough on what
gender equality really means for the shape of service
delivery, what it means for the behaviour of staff in local
government, how they have to change, and what spaces
need to be created for women or for communities in order
to make services gender-sensitive. I think this seminar will
go a long way towards answering some of those questions.

Introduction

Helen O'Connell, Head of Policy
One World Action

Local democracy and basic service provision

The seminar 'Developing gender-sensitive local services', is part of One World Action's programme of policy dialogue and awareness-raising to inform and deepen the debates in the UK and at the European Union level on how to strengthen local democracy in developing countries and ensure the poorest communities have access to quality and gender-sensitive basic services. In this programme we publicise the work of our Southern partners in working for democratic and equitable services and engaging with local and national political structures, and highlight the parallels with issues in the UK and in other European countries.

We are particularly keen to explore the relationship between open and active local democracy and the poorest communities' access to good quality and gender-sensitive basic services. In this seminar, we wanted to examine the process and strategy by which basic services could become more gender sensitive, and explore the factors which facilitate or obstruct their delivery.

The international donor community has widely publicised its interest in promoting and supporting democracy, good governance and the rule of law in developing countries. This is a cornerstone of the development policies of the UK, the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and others. The international donor community is also committed to giving priority to support for basic services, such as health and education, within the wider pledge of achieving the International Development Targets (based on the agreements of the UN conferences from Rio to Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul). In another forum, under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation, representatives of donor governments and others are discussing proposals for reforming the public sector – proposals which, if implemented, would undermine the stated commitment to democracy and basic service provision, and have disastrous implications for the poorest women, men and children.

In many developing countries public services are poor or non-existent for the majority of people, and in others, as in many European countries, new forms of public service provision, including contracting-out and public–private partnerships are being considered; increasingly, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups and the private sector are involved in service delivery. There is relatively little gender analysis of these issues. Gender considerations are usually overlooked in discussions and decisions about service-sector priorities, quality, accessibility, affordability, delivery, or management.

This seminar brought together practitioners and policy-makers from Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America and the EU to discuss a number of sector-specific case studies on developing gender sensitive basic services. We were not looking for blueprints – in fact, the importance of context was repeatedly reiterated – but we wanted to identify some of the characteristics of successful approaches and attitudes to, and some of the politics of, guaranteeing gender-sensitive basic service delivery and how this related to greater equity in local democracy. We were also keen to identify approaches and good practice useful to UK and European Union development co-operation policy-makers.

Why develop gender-sensitive services?

Services which are gender-sensitive would improve the potential of women and men to enjoy and exercise their full human rights – political, economic, social, civil and cultural; would facilitate greater equality between women and men; and would contribute to gender equity.

Services are not gender neutral. The way in which services are developed and delivered has a different impact on women and on men. Consequently, services can contribute to gender equality and equity; reinforce existing inequality and inequity; or exacerbate that inequality and inequity. Service provision which does not recognise the different and specific needs and interests of women and men is unlikely to meet those needs and interests or reduce gender-based inequality and inequity. By contrast, service provision which is gender sensitive, and which recognises

and responds to gender differences, can make a significant contribution towards gender equality and equity.

Relations between women and men are unequal: the division of power, roles, rights and responsibilities between women and men is biased against women and in favour of men. This severely limits women's opportunities to enjoy and exercise their full political, social, economic, civil and cultural rights. To quote Mirjam van Donk: `Service delivery is ... not just a basic need but an act which can liberate women in several interconnected ways. Direct provision of clean water and adequate sanitation will improve their quality of life both by improving community health and diminishing their reproductive burden. It will free up many labour hours which could be turned to more productive uses, or simply allow overworked women to enjoy some much needed rest. Finally, it may enable women to expand their informal income-generating activities by making it easier to practice trades like hairdressing, taking in washing or day care.'

Women and men have different health care and education needs, different needs and uses of transport, different needs of water provision, and different needs in relation to personal security and access to justice. Women and men do not have equal access to, or influence on, the decision-making that shapes service delivery. As a result, the basic service needs and interests of women, as distinct to those of men, are inadequately articulated, and rarely heard or satisfied.

There is a perception that some, if not all, services are neutral, that, for example, services such as water, waste disposal or transport benefit everyone and are a common good regardless of who uses them or who delivers them. The case studies presented at the seminar demonstrated the inaccuracy of this perception. Access to and use of basic services is influenced by gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation and other factors. In San Marcos in El Salvador, for example, as Silvia Matus told us, women and men are frequent users of public transport: men to get to their construction jobs, women to ease the daily long steep walks with children, shopping bags, and produce to sell.

Women and men also use public transport at different times of the day.

An analysis of gender power relations, and the specific and different gender needs and interests of women and men, is fundamental to questions of service quality, appropriateness, accessibility and affordability, as well as effectiveness and efficiency.

How do we ensure services are gender sensitive?

A number of strategies emerged based on the experience and analysis in the case studies and presentations at the seminar and some useful common strategic ideas were identified.

It is important at the outset to recognise *some qualifications:*

Each service is different – and requires a sophisticated and differentiated approach in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. Rawwida Baksk-Soodeen captured this issue well: `A key issue in the gender mainstreaming of basic services is that of translating generic gender equality concepts into an analysis of basic services in order to transform service provision. This needs to be done service by service, not by applying generalised basic concepts to all services. With water and sanitation, for example, the question is mainly one of access. However, if we 'unpack' education we find a variety of aspects: gender role socialisation, the organisation of schools, curricula, the way textbooks are written, sexual harassment, sexist perceptions and attitudes, gender stereotyping of school subjects, classroom interaction, informal interaction, and sexual education within the school system. Mainstreaming gender in the education service thus implies analysing and transforming each of these aspects. We need to stand inside the intellectual and political parameters of a particular service or institution in order to deconstruct it from a gender perspective.'

Each context is different – socially, economically, culturally, politically. Although there are certain broad basic principles that apply relatively generally, there is no single, 'one-size-fits-all' recipe. Questions must be asked, such as: What is the precise composition of the community or municipality in question? What class, race, religious, cultural groupings exist in that area? How well established and representative are civil society organisations? How well established are local and national political structures? How well or badly resourced is the service provider?

Pilot projects are good, but not enough – there is no shortage of good examples, pilot projects and isolated initiatives in almost all countries, but these have not been generalised. The challenge is learning the lessons from small-scale successes and failures and scaling up to delivering gender-sensitive basic services to whole communities, municipalities, and huge cities, while at the same time retaining sensitivity to gender and other social factors.

Elements of a strategy

1 Increasing gender awareness and sensitivity

Gender policies cannot be implemented by agencies that aren't gender-aware. Building greater awareness of and sensitivity to gender differences among local decision-makers – elected representatives, officials, service planners and deliverers – is fundamental to developing gender-sensitive services. What is required is not formal training in gender planning, but *awareness raising about attitudes to citizens and service users, internal processes, organisational culture, and ways of working*. Local officials and elected representatives must be equipped with the skills to understand fully the social forces which shape the lives and actions of individual women and men within the poorest communities. It is attitudes and understanding which shape the nature of service delivery and the way local government representatives and officials relate to citizens and their communities.

Civil society organisations, including NGOs and community-based organisations, also need to develop gender awareness and sensitivity. One of the Working Groups stressed this point: `NGOs need to be more gender-sensitive. Staff must inculcate gender sensitivity into their own lives and behaviour, not just as a question of training. At the same time, it must be recognised that changing attitudes and practices is a long, slow process. Gender sensitivity at grass-roots level is esential. If it is understood there, people will push for gender-sensitive services and elect appropriate people.'

The importance of enabling women in positions of power to develop more gender-sensitive service delivery and build greater transparency and accountability was also stressed. *Training and capacity building for women-elected representatives* was seen as critical in order to enable them to have the skills and potential to uncover the needs of the poorest and least vocal and work to ensure these needs were met. A number of points were made on this by one of the Working Groups: `... appropriate capacity-building for women representatives needs to go beyond gender analysis and be practical, how-to-do-it, skills-based, and rights-based. It should include such issues as how and where decisions are made, how budgets are planned and allocated and how they can be made gender-sensitive'.

Encouraging and enabling men to change is a logical and necessary partner to this, and here some specific suggestions were made including: raise awareness among boys of gender issues at grass-roots level; gender awareness training to change the attitudes of hostile or apathetic local officials (usually men); invest in reducing and redistributing women's workload in order to allow women and girls to use services fully; and engage with political parties to begin to deal with patriarchy.

In summary, effective gender-sensitive basic service provision requires gender awareness and responsiveness from policy-making, planning through appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and back to policy-making.

2   Building accountability and transparency

Another essential building block in developing gender sensitive services is greater accountability of local government elected representatives and officials to women and men citizens. A number of factors are critical here. On the one hand, *building a culture of democratic accountability* among elected representatives and officials is part of the organisational change required to equip service providers to provide gender-sensitive services. On the other hand, *citizens/service users must understand their rights and have the capacity, information, skills and power* to demand accountability. Mechanisms to ensure accountability, for example, monitoring and evaluation systems, feedback from audits, evaluations and consultations, are critical.

Speaking about the example of health-sector reform in Bangladesh, and what the government there is doing to improve service delivery with donor support, Barbara Evers pointed out that: `Systems of accountability, both to communities and to women, needed to be incorporated into the sector-wide programme. Especially, the resources being allocated to gender priorities needed to be tracked and analysed, which implies involvement in the budgeting process. It is extremely important to make gender inputs at the early stages of budgeting and to get gender sensitivity into the earliest planning documents.' She argued that it is critical that this process is linked to support for the participation of gender-aware women's NGOs and women in the community.

Transparency in budgetary and decision-making processes about service delivery is a necessary accompaniment to accountability. In most situations, decisions about service delivery are made by a small group of officials, usually without the full knowledge of elected councillors, let alone the wider community. Understanding accounting and budgetary and decision-making processes was seen as key, not only for elected councillors, but also civil society organisations. Here again, emphasis was placed on *capacity building* to equip all stakeholders with the skills to monitor expenditure decisions, and present proposals, amendments or alternatives.

The data on which service delivery is based has to be disaggregated by sex, as well as by other context-relevant social and economic differences. Service delivery cannot be well planned, appropriate or gender-sensitive without full knowledge of who the recipients are. *Sex-disaggregated data* is vital to enable service delivery decision-makers and providers to see the common, different and specific gender needs and interests of women and men.

The challenges of gender-responsiveness, accountability and transparency are huge. In the UK, 'best value' requires local authorities to review all services every five years in order to achieve continuous improvement.

Every local authority and public-sector organisation in the UK has the statistical profile of its population and has to make sure that the delivery of services actually addresses all issues of class, race and gender. Officers will now have to ask questions such as:

◆   How do you know who gets the service you offer?

◆   How do you know that the service you are delivering meets the needs of the community?

◆   How can you be sure that everybody in the community, every socioeconomic group, is taking up your service?

◆   Can you tell if the money spent on specialised services is the most effective use of those funds?

◆   Is the standard of the service you deliver the best it can be within the limits of the resources available?

(Stephanie Segal)

3 *Strengthening participation and consultation*

Much has been written and promised by policy-makers at all levels about participation and consultation. In summary one could say that not all participation is empowering for a host of reasons including poverty, lack of information, and lack of genuine democracy. Also 'participation' can cover a range of actions from somewhat passive consultation on the one hand to political activism on the other.

Meaningful consultation about service delivery could be characterised as women and men having the *information, ability and capacity to ask questions* as well as answering them, and having sufficient information on service options, costs, accessibility and sustainability in order to assess the suitability of any service. Of course, involving communities in defining priorities for local government spending must be matched by local government's ability to mobilise the resources to deliver at least some of the priorities. Otherwise, people may rapidly regard the consultation as pointless.

The method of community consultation can, intentionally or inadvertently, exclude certain groups or individuals because of their gender, class, home language and so on. Also different groups in the community need different information and participation strategies.

There was agreement at the seminar that *autonomous gender-sensitive organisations* (mixed and women's organisations) – at community, local and national levels – have a central role to play in ensuring basic services are gender-sensitive. This role is *to inform, encourage and facilitate participation, lobby, monitor, document* and present the real situation compared with promises and stated policy, and, importantly, expose the policy–practice gap.

4 *Achieving gender equality and equity in positions of power*

Increasing the numbers of women in all elected political structures and decision-making positions is essential. This is primarily a matter of gender equity and justice, and it is also a question of effectiveness and good practice. Is has to be in the long-term general good of all citizens that greater numbers of women participate and influence the decisions taken in local and national political structures. However, *numbers are not enough*. As one of the Working Groups put it: `Greater and more meaningful participation of women at all levels of central and local government is an important part of the answer, but it is not the whole answer.' Greater participation needs to contribute to changing formal and informal gendered power relations.

Gender equity and equality in representation, and greater gender awareness among women and men in positions of power, are vital, but have to be combined with *a willingness to actively challenge, transform and democratise unequal and unjust power relations* – formal and informal – and all the factors which shape these relations in the home, community and wider society.

In conclusion

Progress on many fronts is required: increasing gender awareness and sensitivity, building accountability and transparency, strengthening meaningful participation, and achieving gender equality and equity in political decision-making structures.

Gender-sensitive services have by definition to be specific to each context, but this does not mean that we cannot learn lessons from each other or have meaningful exchanges of experience. It does mean, however, that any approach to developing gender-sensitive services has to be a sophisticated project working on many fronts, layers and elements.

There is clearly a need for a much more thorough analysis by policy-makers and service providers of the gender issues in each specific service delivery and for this analysis to be incorporated into every stage of the delivery cycle from needs assessment to evaluation. A priority has to be closing the gap between the rhetoric of gender

mainstreaming and gender equality and equity, and the day-to-day reality of basic service provision.

Mobilisation and organisation will continue to be vital. To relate successfully to officials and elected representatives, communities need to be gender-sensitive, well informed, organised and persistent.

The long road to gender-sensitive public transport – San Marcos, El Salvador

Representatives of the committee took their proposals to the mayor's office, the ministry of transport and the bus company. The bus company insisted that buses could not serve the community until the access road was repaired; the mayor would not consider authorising repairs to the road without a civil engineer's report. Despite their own lack of resources, the women of the community raised funds to pay for the engineer's report, by selling food and drinks and organising an Easter outing. The representatives of the three communities took their proposal, backed by the engineer's report, to an open session of the municipal council and finally won the mayor's pledge that he would give it his attention.

Once the road had been repaired there were further negotiations with the mayor, the transport ministry and the bus companies to extend the bus route as far as the villages.

Opening presentation

Gender equality in Uganda: The enabling role of government policy

Angela Kiryabwire, Senior State Attorney, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Uganda/Uganda Association of Women Lawyers

In this presentation I want to outline the efforts being taken by the Ugandan government towards the effective provision of gender-sensitive basic services. I shall attempt to give a general overview of the programme and underlying issues, paying particular attention to gender-sensitive basic services in Uganda's social, economic, political and historical context.

In Uganda, women produce about eighty per cent of the food for domestic consumption and form about seventy per cent of the agricultural labour force. In other words, women are the driving force of the economy, in which agriculture is the most important sector. Some transformation has taken place recently, and women are moving from being principally confined to the unpaid subsistence sector to paid employment in the commercial and industrial sector. A large percentage of women, however, is still engaged in the non-monetary subsistence sector.[2]

Gender equality in Ugandan government policies

Government policy in Uganda aims at raising the status of women, fostering their emancipation from socioeconomic, political and cultural bondage, and ensuring their integration into mainstream development processes.

The government's decentralisation policy is committed to integrating gender into development plans at all levels to ensure that programmes address women's multiple roles and reduce their work burden, and to promoting gender awareness among local politicians and bureaucrats. In that

respect, government has developed gender-responsive planning and policies and these have been introduced to the districts, the principal administrative units of local government. This is considered important, since the decentralisation process involves developing and implementing programmes at district level. Government does not intend this exercise to result solely in 'women's projects', but wants to ensure that gender concerns are made explicit in all sectoral policies and all district planning. It is an attempt towards more efficient programming by the various sectoral ministries and district authorities in order to meet the needs of men, women and children as specific target groups that need to be addressed differently.[3]

Health

The national health policy aims at promoting primary health care (PHC), with an emphasis on community-based interventions in health promotion, disease control, sanitation and simple curative and rehabilitative health care. Health is one of the most crucial areas in terms of developing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, because of the inherent nature of the service and the demands made on it. Women have different health requirements from men over and above those health requirements shared by both. Indifference to this distinction has a negative impact on women and also, ultimately, on the economy, bearing in mind women's majority participation in the economy. Areas such as maternal health, including ante- and post-natal care, are of crucial concern. The accessibility of these services has an immediate bearing on women's health and requires special attention both at policy and implementation level.

Education

Government policy on education is tailored to encourage positive discrimination in favour of women and the girl child, in an attempt to achieve gender balance in education. The policy is being implemented in enrolment into public institutions of higher learning. In July 1990,

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[2] Ministry Of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Kampala, *Third Country Status Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, p. 2.

[3] Government of Uganda, country report in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995.

government formally introduced an affirmative action policy for female applicants to state-funded tertiary institutions, in order to increase the enrolment of women students. In order to increase literacy rates the government embarked, in 1997, on a programme of universal primary education (UPE). However, the enrolment rates for girls have remained below those for boys because of traditional preference for boy children over girls. Family, societal and institutional beliefs and attitudes remain important among the factors accounting for the inhibition of women's participation in education.

In order to ensure good-quality education for girls, the government has initiated strategies aimed at removing gender biases in the system, such as stereotyping in textbooks and classroom interaction at all levels. The other fundamental policy change has been the equalisation of educational and training opportunities between men and women as part of democratisation strategies. Government is also making efforts to promote adult literacy education for both men and women.

The ministry for gender

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is the main national instrument for promoting and mainstreaming the government's gender policy. The directorate of Gender and Community Development in the Ministry is a catalyst and facilitator, lobbying other sectors of government to mainstream gender in their policies and programmes. This function is seen as a long-term process and is being carried out in partnership with sectoral ministries.

However, one of the biggest problems facing the gender ministry is that it is one of the least well-funded of the government ministries.[4] Though its job is to reduce gender inequalities, in particular through government policy, this

mandate has not been matched with budgetary allocations. The ministry is understaffed and underfunded. Of all the commissions established by virtue of the 1995 Constitution, only the equal opportunities commission, under the gender ministry, has not yet been established. Although the conceptual framework is in place and planning and programming actions are being taken to implement gender-responsive policies, this has as yet made little difference to the lives of most Ugandan women.

Gender equality in political participation

The new Constitution promulgated under Uganda's current government in 1995 has been described as one of the most gender-sensitive constitutions on the continent.[5] It guarantees equal access for all people to all positions of leadership. The Local Governments Act 1997 makes the participation of women mandatory at all five tiers of the local government system – village, parish, sub-county, county and district.[6]

In line with the Constitution, the Local Governments Act expanded to one-third the quota for women's representation at all levels of local councils. Affirmative action for women also applies at the parliamentary level. For every district, a parliamentary seat is reserved for a woman to represent women's interests. Eighteen per cent of MPs are women. However, of the 214 direct county seats contested in parliament, only eight are occupied by women who successfully challenged male candidates in elections. The rest of the parliamentary seats occupied by women are guaranteed through affirmative action.

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[4] Third country report, 1999.

[5] Third country report, 1999.

[6] Uganda is divided into administrative units called districts. In a bid to promote participatory democracy, decision-making has been devolved to grassroots levels, through different levels of local councils structured in a five-tier system that runs from the village to the district. The districts are decentralised and their funding is through the various local authorities.

Provisions for the elimination of discrimination against women in the Ugandan Constitution 1995

Article 21:

(1) All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.

(2) Without prejudice to clause (1) of this article, [persons] shall not be discriminated against on the ground of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion or social or economic standing, political opinion or disability.

Article 33:

(1) Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.

(2) The state shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement.

(3) The state shall protect women and their rights, taking into account their unique status and natural maternal functions in society.

(4) Women shall have equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.

(5) Without prejudice to article 32 of this constitution, women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of addressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom.

(6) Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status, are prohibited by this Constitution.

Article 180:

(1) A local government shall be based on a council which shall be the highest political authority within its area of jurisdiction and which shall have legislative and executive powers to be exercised in accordance with this constitution.

(2)(b) One third of the membership of each local government shall be reserved for women.

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The challenges of developing gender-sensitive services

Although the 1995 Constitution theoretically guarantees women's rights and a national gender machinery has been established to oversee the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming, continuing gender inequality in practice in Uganda points to a number of challenges that must be met if gender-sensitive basic services are to be attained.

Women in decision-making

Developing gender-sensitive basic services starts with *women's involvement in decision-making* structures. Women in decision-making positions must perceive themselves as being there as a matter of right and not because the government has done them a favour. However, women politicians are becoming comfortable and complacent. They are beginning to forget women's problems, whereas they could be lobbying for more positions in government to be taken up by women, especially since the Constitution provides for this. Moreover, although certain positions at local government level are guaranteed to women and often do not have anyone contesting the seat, most women shy away from the responsibility when it is suggested that they stand for office. More women need to be encouraged to get involved in political activities so as to be able to advocate for their interests.

Members of parliament and policy-makers in local government should be reminded that when they are drawing up policies for the provision of basic services, they should ensure that these are discussed at all levels from the village upwards. These discussions should have gender as an item on their agenda, and should address specifically what the women say on any issue. In this context, it is important that women in the rural areas are given the chance to air their own views. It is time for élite women to give way for grass-roots women to speak up for themselves.

The government has done much, in fact, to get women into parliament via affirmative action. It is time we started asking those women the vital question: what has been done so far to improve on the provision of basic services affecting women? Representation should now be translated into tangible results, and accountability demanded of those who are answerable.

Policy and practice

Gender-sensitive services also require gender-sensitive policies. Uganda has gone some distance in the development of these, but there is still a long way to go. The starting point should be the sensitisation of policy-makers and government decision-makers, so as to create political will for gender mainstreaming and the formulation of gender-sensitive policies that will then be translated into gender-sensitive basic services. If political will has been mobilised and continues to be nurtured, it should be possible to address the provision of the basic services. But if policies for basic services and for gender mainstreaming have been set in place but are failing in practice, we should ask why they are failing. A gender audit should be held to identify problems of implementation, priorities should be set or revised, and specific action plans for change developed.

The existing gender policy can be enhanced if political structures and processes have the capacity to identify, analyse and incorporate gender concerns. Women in policy-making positions should also be trained in gender issues. In Uganda, Makerere University's Department for Women's Studies has taken the lead by running a series of gender studies courses for people from all walks of life.

Cultural factors

At the same time, we need to look at the provision of gender-sensitive basic services in an *historical and cultural context*. Why has there been so little progress? It is my contention that as long as certain roles in the family and the community, such as collecting water and firewood, continue to be allocated along gender lines, there will be little progress. This is particularly important in the case of the girl child, on whom enormous demands are made. Culture has been cited as one of the hindrances to the emancipation of women.

Policy-makers should be encouraged to see these aspects as national issues, not women's issues. However, these cultural issues also need to be laid tactfully on the table for discussion, not treated as a matter for confrontation. Talking to the cultural leaders and gaining their support will go a long way towards breaking the cultural barriers. It is also important to target the family, which is the core of the society and the bearer of a society's values. Attitudes, including gender attitudes, are usually determined there. So it is important to target men. But these issues should not be treated as gender issues. They are national issues and need to be addressed as such.

Conclusion

I have drawn my argument today from Uganda, but, although participants at this seminar come from different countries and cultures, the problems we experience may have much in common. Experiences drawn from other situations and from other national machineries for women and gender equality may be adapted in our lobbying for change in our own jurisdictions. Uganda is certainly not unique in requiring the translation of written policies into practical realities.

Discussion

General discussion following the opening presentation raised a number of issues that were to continue to appear

throughout the seminar, chiefly the determinant relationship between increased participation by women in political decision-making and the gender sensitivity of services. As seen in Uganda, the theoretical involvement of women in every stage of policy-making is not a guarantee that they can be effective. However, Ugandan women are beginning to bring up issues such as more convenient location of health centres for women and children. In India as well, women are gradually taking on greater responsibility in the *Panchayats* (local councils), even though this means their confronting the whole system of caste and patriarchy. Examples from other countries illustrated the possibilities and limitations of increasing women's political participation in local government. From India it was reported that, although thirty-three per cent of seats in local government are reserved for women, women's participation is still very low, hindered by the attitude of government officials and the local male politicians, and by women's continuing educational disadvantage.

The effectiveness of ministries for women as guarantors or promoters of gender mainstreaming was also discussed. Several examples showed keen awareness of the danger that a separate ministry for women may result in gender equality issues being ghettoised, especially where a lack of horizontal linkages between ministries coincides with male reluctance to engage with gender equality. In Ghana the National Council for Women's Development decided *not* to be a ministry for precisely this reason. In Uganda, when the gender ministry was the Ministry of Women in Development, it was ghettoised, but since becoming the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development it has a wider mandate and cannot be sidelined so easily. In Namibia, having started off with a gender body in the presidency, the women's machinery is now a full ministry (of women's affairs, not gender affairs), and children's affairs has been added to its remit; however, everyone is waiting to see whether the effect will be to sideline women and gender. In El Salvador, pressure from the women's movement led to the creation in 1998 of an Institute for Women's Development, which has been involved in defining national policies for women; however, it needs a greater focus on poverty in order to address gender-

sensitive service provision adequately.

Service delivery is in fact a new emphasis in the national machinery debate. Previous discussion of women's ministries has tended to centre on the status of the women's ministry in government, its mandate to exercise influence in other ministries and whether it is a policy-making or advisory body. A focus on gender-sensitive service delivery in women's or gender ministries ties their remit more closely to policy implementation and monitoring.

As the discussion revealed, a wide range of mechanisms exists, and there is evidence of indecision among governments as to whether women's interests are better served by specialist entities for women (which may ghettoise gender concerns into a separate box labelled 'women's issues') or comprehensive gender mainstreaming (which may submerge and eventually make invisible women's specific concerns). In the UK, for example, there is now a shift away from specialist women's units in local authorities – there is only one left in the country – but the best option is likely to be a combination of a specific women's unit or directorate and horizontal structures and linkages to ensure mainstreaming. In the end, however, the main indicator must be whether gender-sensitive services are actually reaching women at the grass roots.

Gender sensitivity in service provision is still taken to refer principally to better services for women, and it is true that gender inequalities do almost always mean that women are disadvantaged. However, care needs to be taken that the focus on gender does not slip into a focus solely on women. In education, for instance, specific actions on behalf of boys are becoming necessary in many countries alongside continuing efforts as regards girls' education. The gender focus on men as well as women is somewhat hampered by the fact that work on men from a gender perspective is still rather analytic and academic, rather than policy-orientated. However, it is clear even at an anecdotal level that the power relations between men and women affect service delivery, and an understanding of how this happens can lead to strategies for change.

Panel I: Working with or within the local council or administration

Effective local partnerships for gender mainstreaming

Elizabeth Sclater, Equalities and Social Inclusion Manager, Lewisham Council

Our role in the Equalities and Social Inclusion Unit of Lewisham Council is to influence the Service Directorate of the council and to work with partners: both our partner organisations in the agencies and community-based organisations as well. Lewisham Council has taken on a partnership role in an innovative transnational project of gender mainstreaming, called Effective Local Partnerships for Gender Mainstreaming (ELP). This is a three-year project funded under the European Union's 4th Action Programme on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. This presentation describes the project and its results; but first I would like to say something about the national context in which we are now working in local government.

When the new UK government came into power in 1997, the administration was ready to make major changes in local government. They called their programme Modernising Government. The government has raised dozens of initiatives in the context of Modernising Government. Three major initiatives are particularly important for the work of local authorities:

1   *Democracy and consultation*: This is a very strong theme coming from central government. Central government is very clear that it wants local authorities to put systems and structures in place to ensure democracy and consultation; if a local authority cannot demonstrate that it has done this, it would be unlikely to be successful in receiving even mainstream funding.

2   *Changing structures and forms of local government*: This involves significant change in the role of local politicians and the way they work. It includes having elected mayors, each of whom works with a small cabinet which takes political decisions and has responsibility for the political direction of the services councils provide. Then there is a larger group, the Assembly, which is there to debate and criticise the decisions of the politicians. Assemblies also have a much stronger role within the communities they represent; their job is to listen to what their constituents are saying and ensure that the constituents' voices are heard.

3   *Improving services*: As well as these political changes, modernising government involves improving services. The principal programme in this respect is what is called 'best value'. Briefly, what 'best value' means is ensuring that the services a local authority provides are at a quality local people want and at a price local people are prepared to pay. This doesn't mean that people are expected to pay directly for services (although some local authorities do charge fees for some services), but that there should be some processes for overseeing and reviewing the costs of services which are, for all intents and purposes, financed by grants from central government to local government.

That is a brief outline of the context in which we are working in Lewisham. Although the various initiatives the government is promoting emanate from central government, local authorities often need to compete with other local authorities, not only within London but across the United Kingdom, for central government resources to carry them forward. However, I was fortunate, together with colleagues from several other countries across Europe, to get money from the Equal Opportunities Programme of the European Union to look at gender mainstreaming, picking up an issue raised in the Beijing Platform for Action, that of institutional mechanisms for the improvement of the status of women. We wanted to explore ways of making that issue relevant at local level.

First, we needed a definition of gender mainstreaming to work with. The following definition, which is the one used by the Council of Europe, is the one that we thought probably most important and useful for us:

Gender mainstreaming: the Council of Europe definition

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that an equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and at all stages, by actors normally involved in policy-making.

Particularly important for us is the phrase 'by actors normally involved in policy-making', especially in view of the government's clear new emphasis on consultation and the new role for local politicians. We felt very strongly that the actors involved in policy-making should include local people and especially local women. How were we going to achieve that? We wanted to use a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach; and that caused consternation in the European Union. I will be eternally grateful to a Norwegian colleague, a civil servant from the Ministry for Women in Norway, who was working in the European Commission at the time and encouraged us to apply for funds.

The experience of Beijing in 1995 was extremely important to me personally and it was a catalyst for the project. Beijing changed my life. I came back feeling that, if Beijing was to mean anything to the millions of women who had not been able to go to the conference, we had to make it relevant to local women. One of the things that we did on our return – those of us who had gone to Beijing not as council members or staff but just as women in our community – was to develop our own local Platform for Action. We commissioned somebody to work with local women on the critical areas of concern, but also ensured that she ran focus groups with various sectors of women so as to take on the diversity of equality and ensure that the agenda reflected their concerns: black women, women with disabilities, lesbians, older women and young women. We also addressed the issue of the girl child. The resulting women's agenda became our local Platform for Action, and is the gender agenda followed by Lewisham Council

in developing a task group to take forward women's concerns and recommendations. It is important to stress that this was a women's agenda, coming from local women and supported by the council, not the council's work. The Inter-agency Task Group to implement the Lewisham Platform for Action, set up during the first year of the project, contains representatives of council departments and agencies and women's groups from the locality.

We then wanted to share the experience of our local project work with partners in Europe. In the ELP project we began to look at gender mainstreaming on the basis of a common partnership. We wanted to learn and exchange with others working locally, nationally and internationally. We recognised that we have much to learn from other countries and particularly from the struggles of women and men in developing countries. It was also important to ensure that we had an influence; a project by itself, no matter how good, is of little use if it has no influence. We wanted to influence the council's core business, not just remain on the margin. I have a little mantra that I say to myself when any new initiative comes up: Who has the power? Who has the money? How can we influence them so that they take on gender issues and equality issues – including other equalities issues as they affect women?

The European partners in the ELP project were:

◆ United Kingdom: London Borough of Lewisham, the lead partner

◆ Netherlands: Provincial Women's Council of South Holland

◆ Ireland: Fingal ICTU Centre for the Unemployed, Dublin

◆ Italy: CGIL, a public-sector trade union

◆ Spain: General Directorate for Women of the Madrid Region (years two and three of project).

The diversity of these partners – a national trade union (Italy), a community-based organisation (Ireland), a

regional women's council (Netherlands), a rural local authority (Spain) and an urban local authority (UK) – mirrored the kinds of partnership we were working with at the local level in Lewisham. They came up with different ways to achieve gender mainstreaming, and we learned from working together that there are many ways of mainstreaming gender. Mainstreaming is multifaceted and multi-layered, and much depends where different actors in policy-making are placed in their organisations, what roles they have, and what opportunities for influence they have on the structures, rules and regulations that exist in each setting. Also, there is often a gap between policy and practice: legislation may be in place but what actually happens on the ground can be quite different.

To summarise the common results that emerged from the European project:

◆ There is no single, universally applicable recipe for gender mainstreaming, rather a set of agreed core principles which must be adapted to different local contexts and resources.

◆ One method cannot be mechanically transposed to another setting or country, but must take account of national, cultural and organisational context.

◆ The partnership-based approach to gender mainstreaming enables creative use of multiple resources and roles from a range of organisations and sectors. A cross-sectoral approach is at the heart of the ELP approach at both local and transnational level.

The ELP project has produced a comprehensive pack detailing both the local partnership work and the European-level work, with case studies from all partners and a toolkit for building partnerships, sustaining partners in gender mainstreaming, and developing new mainstreaming practice in partnerships.

In Lewisham itself, the results included:

◆ better understanding of the process of gender mainstreaming by local politicians, council officers, and community-based groups

◆ arousing interest in gender mainstreaming in the new political management structures

◆ a more explicit scrutiny role for the Equalities Committee, e.g. scrutiny of 'best value' from the equalities perspective.

Despite the usual initial resistance, we found that just talking about gender issues, and explaining in simple language what mainstreaming means, has enabled our politicians to have a better understanding. For example, we took a councillor who chairs our Platform for Action sub-group to a meeting in Rome with us in May 1999, and the experience was a great eye-opener for her. She immediately began to use the experience to inform and question council policies and practice, and this enthusiasm caused a shift and surge of interest in gender mainstreaming within my own section and among her colleagues, the elected members. She became a champion of gender mainstreaming, and is a very valuable ally because she is in an influential position. It is important to find someone who is both influential and committed as a strategic ally. Our officials are now beginning to take account of what gender mainstreaming means.

As regards taking a gender approach in services, we are sometimes looking at the other side of the equation. When I approached our Education Department to talk about the needs of young women in school, for instance, they pointed out that their greatest problem, in fact, was with difficult boys who are excluded from school and end up on the street; the local authority is then involved, since the boys are being picked up for petty crime. Lewisham also has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the country. These young women, who are not getting enough attention, clearly have enormous needs in terms of education and support if they are not to produce the next generation of school underachievers. What we learn from these situations is to make the most of the available opportunities. We have learned to think about what is going on that is relevant and topical at national or local level, and about what is going to energise people; we then build a gender perspective into those areas.

A final remark about our Equalities Committee. It is scrutinising 'best value' to see how it addresses equalities. In its own workload, some major activities in terms of 'equality proofing' include looking at how the council collects its data, setting up a select committee on data analysis for the council, and building an equalities perspective into the budget. We hope that our local politicians, not just those from the Equalities Committee but those who sit on the Finance Scrutiny Committee, acquire the skills to do that analysis as well. And we hope that by the time the next EU equal opportunities programme comes round we will have something that we can share with other parts of Europe, perhaps in another transnational project. But the most important thing for us, I feel, is to have aware and supportive local politicians who feel they have something to offer.

The time of our lives: Winning positive flexibility in the workplace

Jo Morris, Senior Policy Officer, Equal Rights Department, Trades Union Congress

The TUC – the Trades Union Congress – is the national centre for trade unions in the United Kingdom. It has over seventy affiliates and just under seven million members. That makes the TUC the largest non-governmental organisation in the country. Along with its sister national trade union centres in other European countries it has an official role as a social partner. For those not familiar with this European terminology, the social partners are the trade unions, on the one hand, and employers, on the other. In the European Union there is a legal obligation for the social partners to be consulted on many aspects of new legislation; in some situations it is the social partners who negotiate and make the legislation.

The UK has a very successful export – the flexible, deregulated labour market. Between 1979 and 1997 the Tory government developed ways of reducing employers' liability and responsibility, and the UK had one of the most deregulated labour markets in the Western world. It is in this context that the project I describe here was conceived.

In the UK we have experienced flexibility as an entirely negative process, linked with low pay, casualisation and layoffs. The mere mention of the word 'flexibility' to a British trade unionist can produce a hostile reaction. So, with the arrival of the new Labour government, we asked whether there could be a model of flexibility that would work for both employer and employee, and, if so, what it would consist of.

We obtained funding from the European Union for a pilot project exploring the potential for innovative patterns of work. I stress the phrase 'innovative patterns of work', because I think that how we organise our work in the context of the modernisation of services is enormously important when we are looking at gender roles. The modernisation of work affects all of us in different ways, sometimes highly negatively, sometimes more positively, but in particular, the ways work is modernised should touch the changing gender roles of workers. An analysis of these changes takes us very much into the European Union employment strategy agenda.

Creating a 'win-win' situation

We were interested in developing a model of labour flexibility that would be 'win-win' for both employees and employers. The win-win concept is at the heart of a number of EC Directives on part-time and temporary work recently agreed through social dialogue between unions and employers at the European level. We asked ourselves a number of questions: first of all, is a win-win outcome possible? Can there be flexibility which benefits employers and employees? And can we at the same time enhance the quality of service delivery and the sort of service local authorities, in particular, need to deliver in the context of our increasingly 24-hour society?

In the UK, as in many other countries, people now expect to be able to get a bank statement at 11 p.m., or to shop in the local supermarket at 9 p.m. Some supermarkets are open all night. People increasingly need to do these things outside working hours; the typical British family of the 1950s, where the man went out to work while the woman

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was at home during the day and could shop, pay the rent, or go to the bank, no longer exists. So there is an increasing pressure on services to deliver at non-standard hours. This poses a dilemma for trade unionists: we use 24-hour services, too, but it is our members who are being expected to work at non-standard hours. The challenge is to find a way of providing services at non-standard times while at the same time increasing workers' choice and control over their working time. All our research has shown that what employees want is choice and control over when and how they work; they do not necessarily insist on working 'nine-to-five' but they do want working hours that fit in with their own personal commitments.

The pilot project

After a year's background work, pilot projects were carried out in Bristol in the UK, in the Netherlands, and in Modena in Italy, a city which has developed interesting and innovating examples of how time-use can be changed, in an imaginative project called 'Time in the cities'. We worked with the national employers' organisations, a partnership which is highly important in this kind of initiative. When we are talking about working time and service delivery it is our thesis that a satisfactory result can be achieved only if employees are involved in the process of deciding how and when the services will be delivered most effectively, and if employers work in partnership with unions.

We chose Bristol for a number of reasons. It is a medium-sized, self-contained city in the south-west of England. It also has other features that made it a strategic choice as an example of good practice. I want to underline the importance of choosing a place where our work was likely to succeed and be an exemplar for other work in the future. In Bristol we knew there was a good relationship between the employers and the unions, and a woman chief executive in the council who was imaginative and supportive.

We sought the support of the trade union and the council's senior management team, and then identified a number of

pilot departments where we could set up joint management–staff steering groups to look at particular services. We chose two departments: leisure services, and health and environment. In the Leisure Services Department the library and museum service presented a particular issue. The council wanted to extend library opening hours into the evenings and on Sundays. Not surprisingly the staff objected. We held a meeting with the staff and suggested that this was a chance for them to seize the agenda and be proactive. The joint steering group became a very important vehicle for changing workplace relations between managers and the trade union. For the first time the staff and union representatives felt included in decision-making: they were asked jointly to identify the problem and to make suggestions for a joint solution.

We then initiated a survey of working hours. The UK has a history of very long working hours, particularly for men: British men work the longest hours in Europe, though women are more likely to work part-time and shorter hours. People were asked what hours they currently worked, what hours they would like to work, and whether they would actually like to work in the evenings or on Sundays. As an obvious example, two working parents with small children could be helped rather than hindered in their child care arrangements if one of them worked at weekends. The survey revealed that there was a demand from both women and men for changes in worktime patterns. Men and women wanted to work different hours and in different patterns, for different reasons. The women wanted to change their working patterns so that they could take advantage of opportunities to train for lifelong learning and education. The men, on the other hand, wanted to have more flexibility in their worktime so they could spend more time with their children and in leisure pursuits.

At the same time, we asked the managers in the department to identify areas where a more responsive service delivery was desirable in line with 'best value'. The library and museum service was an extremely good subject: everyone can see why it is beneficial to have

libraries open on Sundays. And we held discussions with staff about the organisation of work and better ways to deliver services. We organised joint seminars looking at strategies such as self-managing shifts and the use of homeworking in a way that didn't disenfranchise staff but enhanced their worktime, and we generally encouraged joint problem-solving.

The specific issue of Sunday opening of libraries was resolved as a result of this project. It was the staff, in fact, who came up with the idea of managing their own shifts. One of the problems staff faced was insufficient notice in timetabling: staff who worked in different branch libraries around the city often didn't know where they would be working more than ten days in advance. This caused problems for them, for instance with arranging child care. For some reason, the managers weren't able to draw up staff rotas sufficiently in advance, so the union suggested that the staff try drawing up their own shift rotas. We held some joint training for managers and staff on operating a self-managed shift.

Self-managed shifts are not the only solution; another strategy considered was annualised hours, where the total number of hours worked over a year is totalled up. Some councils have this arrangement with council gardeners, who do not need to work much in the winter, but need to work long hours in the summer. However, it is vital that this arrangement be jointly agreed as a partnership deal.

Results

As a result of Sunday opening of the libraries there was enhanced library use, in terms not only of numbers but also of use. Different people used the library on Sundays, in different ways. The city centre library is next to a supermarket, and people began to bring their children in; whole families were using the library in a different way that they used it on weekdays. This was in line with 'best value', and there was also a marked increase in staff morale and a sense that innovative management is possible and can work.

In conclusion, our project demonstrated in a small but significant way that:

◆ the opportunity exists for more choice and control over working hours so as to suit individual needs

◆ this opportunity can be used to enhance service delivery

◆ imagination is necessary, but a better service can be delivered, suiting a greater diversity of user needs

◆ staff commitment, insight and experience of delivering a decent public services are a crucial resource in designing this kind of change

◆ trade union involvement in the partnership is essential; trade unions represent an enormous source of expertise and support, but they must be used in partnership and allowed to play a meaningful role in the process of developing public policy and public services.

Decentralisation and women's participation in the Philippines

Tomasito Villarin, Visiting Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

I want to discuss today the experience of increasing women's stakeholdership in local development in my country, the Philippines; but I shall first briefly outline the national context as regards women's participation in which that experience is set. Since we ousted the dictatorship fifteen years ago, national policies have been introduced promoting women's participation and gender concerns. We now have a National Commission on the Role of Philippine Women, which promotes policies on women's participation; civil law has been revised so that property within a family can be owned separately by wives as well as husbands; and women can retain their family names and no longer need their husbands' permission to apply for a passport. Land titles are issued by the government under the land reform programme in the name of both

husband and wife. Primary and secondary education is available for boys and girls. Crimes against women are now defined as crimes against the state, and incur higher penalties; legislation against sexual discrimination in the workplace has recently been passed. At the village (*barangay*) level there are mediation committees, as part of the village-level justice system, where conflicts in the family and in the neighbourhood are mediated and resolved. Women's participation in politics has increased over the past fifteen years.

However, in general, we still have a very strongly patriarchal system of government and culture, and a very conservative judiciary, which does not interpret many of the existing laws in women's favour.

Decentralisation and participation

The main focus of this discussion is the link between citizens', and especially women's, participation and decentralisation policies. This is currently a fashionable topic, for decentralisation is being widely seen as a way of promoting citizen participation.

A decentralisation law was passed in the Philippines in 1991, providing for administrative devolution of powers, authority, resources and accountability from national to local government. The law also provides for political decentralisation by ensuring that political reforms are made at the grass-roots level in terms of recognising the role of NGOs, people's organisations, the private sector, and others previously excluded from local councils in the planning process at the village level and representation in special bodies. Other avenues for participation include a system of recall of elected local officials, who can be recalled mid-term and can be dismissed by the electorate if they are not performing well. There are provisions for preferential treatment for disadvantaged sectors in the utilisation of natural resources in coastal areas; mandatory public hearings on local tax ordinances and those affecting the environment, and other provisions.

Yet, ten years later, implementation of the decentralisation policy is infrequent. Bureaucratic obstacles have been put in the way of the process of accrediting NGOs and civil society organisations in order for them to sit in local special bodies and local development councils, and to enter into joint undertakings and co-operative endeavours. The constitutionally-mandated and Code-mandated provision reserving seats on local councils for women, urban or rural workers, and a third sector (either urban poor, indigenous people, elderly people, veterans, etc.) has not yet been implemented; Congress, which is dominated by men and in particular landowners, says this policy is not implementable. An optional selective implementation accord is being used to justify optional implementation (or, in many cases, non-implementation) by local governments of the Code's provisions for participatory planning and budgeting, genuine consultative mechanisms, and mandatory public hearings on government projects that affect the environment. Poor or non-existent implementation of policies also, obviously, does not promote an increase in women's participation.

We are now looking at the law. We have seen that the law is not self-implementing; so we look at the provisions of the law and seek to maximise the opportunities it offers to demand its meaningful implementation and claim entitlements, using social pressure from below through work within the community and the mobilisation of people to influence public policies.

What we have done so far in the first three years is to link civil society organisations with social movements to build a political party, as a vehicle to challenge the domination of the political élite in the country. At the end of the three years we have not witnessed any radical shifts; but I would like to share with you our local government's approach to organising participation at the village level.

We promoted participation at the village level because the village is the basic political-economic entity in the country. The process involves a number of steps:

◆ mobilising the local communities to carry out participatory profiling and data-gathering

◆ participatory data analysis

◆ community visioning

◆ *barangay* (village) development planning

◆ organising project management committees at village level

◆ participatory resource mobilisation (holding stakeholders' forum, pledging sessions)

◆ participatory monitoring of the implementation of the plans

◆ annual review of the plans through the village general assembly.

The stakeholders in the process include the women, the farmers, the fisherfolk, and all the other socially excluded groups at the village level, and the process involves working inside and outside the local councils. After three years we have worked with five per cent of villages in the country. Some of the benefits of the participatory process are:

◆ greater participation by disadvantaged and previously excluded sectors

◆ tangible gains made by local communities through implementing priority projects identified by the people themselves

◆ reallocation of public funds from infrastructure (which is subject to 'leakage' of funds) to people's priorities (health, education, water systems, etc.)

◆ direct contact with local council officials in the process of local planning, budgeting and implementation, leading to greater transparency and accountability

◆ increased 'ownership' of planing process by stakeholders, improving sustainability of plan.

Gender aspects and women's participation

As regards women's participation, we can see some increases but participation is still low. There have been some gains and some losses. From 1978 to 1998 there has been an increasing trend for women's participation in the political process. Up to 1988, women had won only 9.7 per cent of seats in city and municipal elections; in 1992, women won 10.7 per cent of city council seats and 12.7 per cent of municipal seats; less than fifteen per cent of both city and municipal seats were won by women in 1995. In 1998 the figure grew to thirty per cent, so the numbers are gradually increasing. The general perception, however, is still that women in local councils are outstanding for their ability to apply 'housekeeping skills' and 'motherly concern for constituents'. Their success is often characterised by their involvement in fields such as cleanliness, orderliness, health and culture. The issue of reserving seats for women in local councils tends to be dismissed by legislators, mainly men, who say that affirmative action for women is not necessary.

Women's attendance in participatory local development planning has both negative and positive aspects. While attendance is high, many of the women who participate do so as 'substitutes' for their husbands. However, when they realise how empowering the process is, many women continue to participate on their own account and stay in the planning process until the end. At the implementation level, many livelihood projects are geared toward women, but most women see income from projects as an extra to household income. There are also instances where successful livelihood projects have been ended by men who envy women's projects and see their position as head of the household threatened.

Insights gained so far

In general our view is that participatory initiatives involving disadvantaged sectors should come from the grass roots. The state provides policies but these are not effective unless buttressed by strong democratic institutions at the grass-roots level. At the same time, people at the grass-

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roots cannot expect the state simply to hand entitlements to them; they have to mobilise and demand their entitlements. There are different routes and different approaches to getting entitlements; they include not only civil society actions but also political participation. That is why the support of a political party is an important aspect of our work. Fortunately, our political party has a strong women's movement and strong participation from trade unionists, NGOs, political activists, Marxists and others.

Finally, the challenge of increasing women's participation in local authorities is now a very live issue in the Philippines. Women make up fify-four per cent of our population, and in the public service there are more women than men. Achieving a strong component of women's participation is good for promoting democratic institutions.

Discussion

While welcoming the initiatives outlined in the three presentations, participants highlighted certain constraints, with examples from several countries. It is clear that, despite good initiatives on gender mainstreaming, attitudes are hard to change. Trade unions remain, as they have historically been, male-dominated: an example was cited from Bangladesh, where it was the trade unions, not management, who opposed the installation of women's lavatories in office buildings. Women's increased participation in politics is fraught with tokenism and stereotyping: where seats on councils are reserved for women by affirmative action, women who occupy such seats often have no power, control no funds, and are not taken seriously. In an example from Tanzania, women in the rural areas were not told about meetings being held to contest the reserved seats, so they did not come forward as candidates and the seats went to men 'by default'. When they do win political office, women may find themselves valued in ways that conform with stereotypes of femininity; this can have a positive side if it means that 'feminine' values such as attention to constituents' views and a preference for horizontal linkages are becoming more valued in political structures, but not if it simply

means that women policy-makers are shunted into quasi-domestic areas such as public health, children's issues and sanitation.

Terms such as 'participation' and 'empowerment' do not necessarily mean the same thing to central and local governments, NGOs, and ordinary citizens. Participation in itself is not necessarily empowering: grass-roots action to solve problems which should really be the responsibility of central or local government, such as the revolving funds set up by women in Ghana to pay health care bills resulting from international donors' imposition of user fees on the national government, is laudable and shows the resilience and resourcefulness of poor women, but also shows how even greater responsibility is devolved, in the name of participation, on to those who are already the most heavily burdened.

Participants emphasised the value of monitoring and especially gender auditing of local government as tools for ensuring the gender sensitivity of services. In a district council in Tanzania this took the form of monitoring the allocation of funds to male and female recipients; an example from the UK involved auditing the resources spent on dealing with domestic violence across a spectrum of local authority departments (social services, housing, education, health, etc.).

Although the case study on library services in Bristol showed that a win-win outcome is possible, participants' questions suggested that it is still more common to see trade-offs in which benefits for one service, or sector, may be accompanied by losses or stasis in another. In the UK context, 'competition' between different equalities, e.g. race and gender, inevitably occurs where resources are limited, pointing to the need to make stronger connections and forge common agendas between different equalities. In the global South, trade-offs are more likely to occur between resource allocations to services, requiring sometimes imaginative compromises (e.g. in the Philippines, basketball courts which double as grain-drying grounds) and between central and local government and what citizens can expect and achieve from either level.

Finally, a reminder was issued of the importance of making our own organisations gender-sensitive if we are to promote gender sensitivity in other institutions.

Panel II: Gender-sensitive basic services – two case studies

South Africa: A gender perspective on water and sanitation in 'Smartietown'

Mirjam van Donk, Co-ordinator, Local Government and Gender project, Gender Advocacy Programme, South Africa

The Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP) is a non-profit, independent NGO based in the Western Cape of South Africa. We began as a grass-roots initiative and now conduct research, engage in advocacy and lobbying for gender equality, and facilitate training in order to mobilise, link and empower women to lobby for equity between women and men in all spheres of South African society. There are six project areas: domestic violence; local government and gender; reproductive health; social policy and gender; women and governance; and gender advocacy and lobbying training.

In the local government and gender project area, advocacy and lobbying skills on gender issues are a strong component. We have carried out a variety of research projects in this area, because we feel that in order to be effective at lobbying we need to know what we are talking about. We also carry out training with CBOs and NGOs on how to engage most effectively with local government, since we have found that this is the sphere of government least well-known in communities.

With local government elections towards the end of 2000, one of our advocacy projects has been to identify political parties as a lobbying target. We organised a postcard campaign targeting the leaders of political parties and urging them to increase the representation of women on their lists for the next election.

In GAP, we see our position as bridging the gap between women in civil society and structures of governance. In particular, we focus on urban and rural women living in impoverished conditions. We pursue research on gender issues as part of our mission to empower poor black women to take their rightful place in structures of governance. These women's marginalisation is evident

when we consider that even knowledge about their degree of deprivation is hard to come by. Not only are poor black women seldom seen in the seats of power, where critical decisions affecting their lives are made, but they are also neither heard nor heard of. Among its other aims, the project described here aimed to fill the knowledge gap about poor black women, bringing in race and class as significant factors of analysis and countering the lack of information about the impact of basic services, or their absence, on the lives of poor women in South Africa.

A note on local government in South Africa

Local government in South Africa is a distinct sphere of government, not a smaller version of national or provincial government. It has its own structures, powers and functions, complementary to those of national and provincial government. However, in the course of increasing decentralisation, many more functions are being delegated and decentralised from central government to the local authorities. Since the early 1990s local government has been undergoing a lengthy transition process. Currently it is at an interim stage: policies have been developed, a White Paper on local government came out three years ago (and all civil society organisations have been involved in trying to influence it and the subsequent legislation), and various pieces of legislation, as well as different systems, structures and mechanisms of local government, are being developed, all leading up to the elections at the end of 2000. After the elections South Africa will have, for the first time, a fully democratic local government, free of the legacy of white and coloured minority influence that was still present in the previous elections of 1995.

Rationale for the 'Smartietown' research project

In 1999, GAP conducted a case study analysing the gendered nature of basic services, particularly water and sanitation, in an area of Paarl municipality popularly known as 'Smartietown' (because of the appearance of the brightly coloured houses dotting the hillside). The aim of

the research project was to address an issue which in local government debates is not normally considered gendered, and to demonstrate that it is, in fact, at heart, a women's issue. In this way, we intended to alert policy-makers in local government to the gendered implications of their work. We deliberately chose a core service, something that overtly affected the entire community, rather than, say, child care, which could easily be dismissed as a 'women's area'. We also wanted to contribute to current debates on local government transformation with an emphasis on service delivery transformation rather than institutional transformation.

The gendered nature of service delivery

Water and sanitation were chosen as our analytical focus because they are services that are seldom considered from a gendered perspective, yet are fundamental to women's health and well-being. To present a gendered analysis of these services is important. On the one hand, officials tend to say water and sanitation are gender-neutral because they benefit everyone equally and are a common good

regardless of who uses them. On the other hand, gender theory states that because of women's productive/ reproductive roles, they are the ones who use these services most. We wanted to see to what extent we could bring those two theories and assumptions together.

Theoretically, it is not difficult to demonstrate that a lack of water and sanitation delivery is particularly discriminatory against women. We may begin by considering the gendered aspects of class. Because women constitute the majority of the poor, they are most likely to live in informal settlements which receive no services. As such they are particularly likely to suffer from a lack of water and sanitation services. In South Africa, where a racially discriminatory capitalist system developed, race and class have become almost coterminous. The group most likely to suffer from a lack of services is that of poor black women.

While this paper focuses on water and sanitation, it does so within a holistic view of the position of poor black women in South Africa today. Years of growing

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Water and sanitation services in South Africa

Water:

◆ 44.7 per cent of households have access to water in the house; the remaining 55.3 per cent have to get water from other sources

◆ 19.8 per cent of households have access to a public tap

◆ 16.7 per cent of households have access to a tap on site

◆ 18 to 19 per cent have to walk to a river, dam or borehole or have no access at all

◆ 97.6 per cent of Indian households and 96.4 per cent of white households have access to water in their homes, whereas only 27.3 per cent of African households have such access.

Sanitation facilities:

◆ 50 per cent of households have access to a flush toilet or a chemical toilet

◆ 32 per cent have access to a pit latrine

◆ 5 per cent have access to a bucket latrine

◆ 12 per cent have no facility at all

◆ 99 per cent of white households and 98 per cent of Indian households had access to a toilet, while one in six African households have no access to any sanitation facilities.

unemployment, the present recession, and what may be referred to as our own, home-grown structural adjustment programme (GEAR) have placed poor South Africans under severe economic stress. Internationally, it has been shown that the differential impacts of economic crisis hit women in poor communities hardest, because women's gendered responsibilities make them the primary agents in ensuring the survival of the family and, by extension, the community. At the same time, women's gendered position of economic powerlessness makes them the least able to fulfil these roles.

The person most in need of water and sanitation is an African woman who has increased her working hours in the last few years, who is likely to be earning her money in a low-waged, risky and highly labour-intensive sector of the economy, and who does not enjoy any of the benefits due to employees. The gendered division of labour means that she is also the person most likely to supply water and sanitation services to a community not served by local government. She will spend an average of sixty minutes a day (in rural areas up to 100 minutes) collecting water, and will have a walk a distance of between 100 metres and one km (over one km in rural areas) to fetch water. Women (and often girls) in Africa tend to be the ones who have to fetch water and dispose of night soil. In urban areas, and particularly in informal settlements where population density is high, the practical question of where to dispose of night soil may raise insuperable environmental problems. Where there is insufficient access to clean, potable water and safe sanitation, diseases flourish and ill health is common. Again, because of their gendered responsibility, women will be the ones to do the extra reproductive labour. They will be the ones to take the sick to the clinic (where there is one), and to care for the sick in the home. The extra workload this imposes on women may readily be imagined.

Service delivery is, therefore, not just a basic need but an act that can liberate women in several interconnected ways. Direct provision of clean water and adequate sanitation will improve their quality of life both by improving community health and diminishing their

reproductive burden. It will free up many labour hours which could be turned to more productive uses, or simply allow overworked women to enjoy some much needed rest. Finally, it may enable women to expand their informal income-generating activities by making it easier to practice trades like hairdressing, taking in washing or day care.

Conducting a case study – linking theory to practice

Thus far the theory. What about the practice? What does it really mean to keep yourself and your children clean with the aid of nothing but a basin, a kettle and a fire made in an old tin drum? How do women do this for thirty years or more? Historically, this may not have been such a problem – a hundred years ago the only option to this way of life was to have servants to do the work. But poverty is relative. A sense of deprivation arises depending on whom you are comparing yourself. So the rationale behind service delivery is one of equality.

GAP's research project locates the theory in a country-specific context and uses the case-study method to add a richness of detail to broad generalization. It is not enough to argue abstractly that service delivery is a gender issue. It is also necessary to be aware of individual women's lives and understand their struggle to cope without the necessary services. Local government does not deliver to abstract categories but to real people. Therefore, GAP asked the municipality of Paarl in the Western Cape that it be allowed to conduct research in its jurisdiction.

Paarl was chosen for several reasons. GAP wanted a well-functioning municipality with a demonstrated commitment to transformation. This would allow our research to be proactive, in that it could analyse the effects of policy which many local governments have yet to apply. We also wanted the municipality itself to learn to experiment. We weren't just coming in to observe or to tell them what to do; we wanted them to be part of the process. Paarl is certainly an example of good practice. While it is perhaps not the perfect municipality in the best of all possible worlds, it is making a serious effort. The indicators chosen

were: progress towards organisational transformation, a high representation of women, compliance with national policy, and financial sustainability. In all categories, Paarl rated the highest of an initial shortlist of twelve municipalities in the Western Cape. It is also a municipality which has recently instituted a Gender Committee, is studying proposals on a sexual harassment policy, and may well introduce child care for all employees. It offered an opportunity to analyse the implementation of these measures.

The focus area in Paarl was a recently completed housing project called Project One, Groenheuwel Extension, comprising 760 houses. This area was chosen because it was ethnically mixed and included residents from all over Paarl. The residents call it 'Smartietown' because of the varied bright colours of the houses.

The main research elements finally decided upon were:

- the decision-making process and to what extent communities, community organisations and women are involved in decision-making

- resource allocation: however good the policy, if there are no budgetary resources connected to it implementation will obviously be ineffective

- institutional structures and mechanisms, and particularly the attitudes of public officials and councillors to the consumers and users of services.

Methodology

The case-study method enabled us to gather detailed and in-depth information about the particular issue. It also enabled GAP to establish a relationship with the municipality and hopefully to be a catalyst for further initiatives around gender equality, Finally, it allowed GAP to increase its knowledge of the lived experiences of poor black women. However, there were also some shortcomings to the method, for example, we may have done an injustice to the historical specificity of Paarl.

Questions arise as to how representative, and therefore how replicable, the findings are: the current social, economic and political reality specific to Paarl may not be applicable to other municipalities.

Sources

The sources used in the study were varied, and included:

- relevant documents produced by the municipality (e.g. the Integrated Development Plan [IDP] framework, public financial documents and human resource documentation)

- interviews with people in senior and middle management in key departments such as finance, human resources, planning and engineering

- interviews with councillors

- interviews with representatives from the Reconstruction and Development Programme forum

- interviews with women who had previously lived in shacks and who had recently moved to a new housing project, which included services like water and sanitation.

Findings

A full research report, with recommendations for Paarl municipality specifically and municipalities throughout the country in general, has been produced and is available from GAP. The following are some of the major findings.

Planning of service delivery

- Women had paid higher rates for basic services when they were living in informal settlements than they were now paying in the new housing project.

- There was insufficient disaggregation of the data that inform municipal planning. Such data as were available tended to be disaggregated according to race or gender but not both combined. Thus the poor black woman was statistically invisible.

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◆ Related to the previous point, there was also a mechanistic perception that 'gender' means women and 'race' means black, and there was a failure to draw any links between the two.

◆ There was an often racist perception that residents had no sense of responsibility for communal or private services, based on ignorance of black women's different uses of water.

◆ There was a lack of understanding that access to, and use of, basic services is mediated through factors such as race, class, age, and so on. Water and sanitation infrastructure was considered gender-neutral: 'A pipe is a pipe; it doesn't matter who uses it, it doesn't matter who delivers the service.' And there was consequently no recognition that service delivery has an enabling potential for gender equity.

Community participation

◆ The attitude of officials in particular was that community participation should be managed and facilitated by the political representatives, namely the councillors.

◆ Local government departments tend to outsource community participation processes to external consultants, very often without clear guidelines or parameters to facilitate the process.

◆ There was no understanding that methods of facilitating community participation can, intentionally or unintentionally, exclude certain groups or individuals in the community because of their gender, class, home language and so on, and that different groups in the community need different information and participation strategies.

◆ There was some recognition that women are under-represented in participatory processes, but it was very limited.

Municipal budget

◆ The complicated accounting systems used by the municipalities do not facilitate public participation and undermine the municipality's ability to monitor and evaluate the developmental impact of service provision.

◆ Decisions about resources are made by a small, knowledgeable élite; even councillors are not necessarily equipped to understand accounting and budgetary processes.

◆ Even where there is any community involvement prior to decision-making, there is very little feedback afterwards to inform the community of the decisions made and the reasons for them. The community has little opportunity to verify whether the performance matches the intentions.

◆ The community is expected to learn the technical language and jargon of local government, rather than there being an onus on municipal officials to make their language accessible to the community.

Organisational culture

◆ There is a clear link between organisational culture and service delivery: internal attitudes and processes have an impact on the nature of service delivery and the way local government representatives relate to the community.

◆ Water and sanitation services are delivered in a gap devoid of social context. Key officials in water and sanitation delivery do not show any sensitivity towards cultural and gender diversity, nor are they equipped to understand fully the social forces which condition the actions of the poor.

Recommendations

We made a series of recommendations on the basis of these findings. They included:

◆ Data on which service delivery will depend should be disaggregated. Service delivery cannot be well planned without full knowledge of who the recipients are.

◆ Strategies need to be targeted; certain sections in the community may require a different strategy from others.

◆ Targeted, inclusive strategies are also necessary to facilitate public participation; a variety of mechanisms for participation is required.

◆ A special feature of the new legislation is the provision to establish ward committees, which are a community-based structure intended to support councillors. There is also a provision that women should be equally represented on those committees. This presents an opportunity for civil society organisations to lobby for the establishment of those committees and to make sure that women are on them.

El Salvador: Women, roads and transport in the communities of San Marcos

Silvia Matus, Mélida Anaya Montes Women's Movement, El Salvador

Historically women in El Salvador have been disadvantaged as regards resources and decision-making. Women have been excluded from power at national and local level, which has made them all the more invisible in processes of community development. Women's considerable and often successful efforts to contribute to the wellbeing of their communities have been ignored or overlooked partly because women are confined to areas of little political power and their roles do not receive public recognition.

Growth of the Salvadorean women's movement

The first organisation of the Salvadorean women's movement was founded during the war, in 1986, by Nora Virginia Guirola, a guerrilla leader and feminist. Several other women's and feminist organisations have arisen since then, including our organisation, the Mélida Anaya Montes Women's Movement (MAM), which was founded in 1992. The women's movement is composed of many different strands, including women from the popular movement; peasant organisations; trade unions, as well as women students and teachers; ex-combatants of the FMLN; slum dwellers; women from different religious organisations; artists; and women fighting for the rights of political prisoners and the disappeared, exiles, refugees and returnees, and international solidarity.

In 1994 the women's movement drew up a broad Salvadorean Women's Platform, an eighty-six-point public manifesto, with the participation of about 1,500 women from many different sectors. The movement lobbies to increase women's political participation and get more women into public posts. In recent years the percentages of women in the Legislative Assembly and municipal elected posts have fluctuated: since they fell in 1997 to a low of sixteen per cent in the Legislative Assembly and ten per cent in municipal posts, we have kept up pressure for women to be involved in public life, demanding a thirty per cent quota for women's participation in the political parties.

In other areas, we have succeeded in getting various pieces of legislation introduced, for instance regulating the working conditions of women working in the *maquila* (assembly-line factories in export processing zones), and recognising violence against women as a crime.

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MAM's activities

MAM now has ninety-two groups in urban and rural areas and its work includes:

◆ capacity-building in strategies for dealing with poverty

◆ community participation and community management of services at local level

◆ women's economic development – credit and business training

◆ literacy

◆ feminist analysis and debate and education in feminist theories/ideas

◆ research on specific areas such as women's institutions and the women's movement

◆ elaboration of public proposals for legislation

◆ training for women in public administration

◆ promotion of women in public life

◆ promotion of women's labour rights

◆ promotion of co-operation and solidarity among women

◆ psychological, medical and legal help for women who have been victims of violence.

Municipal women's platforms

In 1996 MAM embarked on an initiative to draw up municipal women's platforms in seventeen municipalities in nine different departments (provinces) of El Salvador. Facilitators, women leaders and women's groups led workshops, meetings and seminars, and eleven areas of concern were identified: education, work, credit, housing, health, sexuality, maternity, violence in the home, political participation, community matters, and public services.

The platform itself highlighted several aspects of deficient public service provision: the poor state of the streets; poor or no water supply; very uneven electricity supply, water

and sanitation, and rubbish collection services; and little in the way of leisure services, public telephones, public transport or evening education provision. The platform was presented to the candidates of the different political parties to local authorities who signed their commitment to respond to women's demands if elected as mayor, including the successful candidate.

The case study: San Marcos

One of the municipalities studied was San Marcos, just outside the capital city San Salvador, with a population of just under 60,000, fifty-three per cent of whom are women. MAM already supports a clinic in the municipality, which was originally set up to provide psychological, legal and medical care to women victims of violence but carries out considerable health care work with the community in general. The study carried out for the San Marcos municipality women's platform showed that while domestic tasks were the main activity for women, seven out of ten women were also engaged in some kind of income-generating activity and many worked in the informal sector, in precarious conditions and with irregular income. Half of those interviewed earned less than 151 colones (roughly £10) a week. This poor financial situation further prejudiced their access to basic services.

Despite the continuing efforts of women locally, many of the demands expressed in the municipal platform were not met, so a new effort to support women's involvement in local development was undertaken, specifically aimed at actions and negotiations with short-term output. This initiative was called 'Involving Women in Local Development', and was an action-research project aiming to empower women to lobby for their demands at the local level, based on participatory research in which local women were the principal actors.

The project took place in three communities in the municipality. The villages are located on steep hill slopes in insecure and vulnerable locations which become treacherous in the long rainy season. They are also relatively isolated communities with high crime levels. The

streets are narrow and steep, making access difficult for vehicles and for public service delivery. Although in the municipality as a whole sixty-one per cent of households have access to drinking water, the villages researched have no water supply to houses and only two public water points per village. Some houses have electricity, but there is no street lighting and mugging is a serious concern.

A team of women was formed to follow up the proposal and the research. Later, some men from the communities involved participated in project management. The team met each week throughout the process to monitor progress and propose specific actions. This body still exists and has served to give follow-up to the other problems faced by the communities. It is a horizontal and democratic structure where all have an equal voice.

The project was carried out in the following stages:

◆ selection and analysis of the problem

◆ public presentation of the proposal

◆ analysis of causes and consequences

◆ definition of sample and participant population

◆ planning of visits to principal actors

◆ continuous evaluation.

It should also be kept in mind that the work of the project was carried out in parallel to the women's daily community activities on behalf of their families and community welfare, as well as their domestic work.

The project: Getting public transport to the communities

At a meeting held in November 1998 to follow up the municipal platform work of 1996, women from the three participating villages identified a list of unaddressed concerns, from which they prioritised three immediate issues: repairs to the access roads, public transport, and water.

'What we want now is to continue to campaign for transport, which is so necessary here as so many of us have to walk, carrying all our goods, all our shopping, as well as collecting our children from school. It is very exhausting. If there was transport our shoes would last longer. We would have more time, too, because when there is transport you know what time it is coming past, so you can plan when to go and fetch your kids or do your shopping. Everything is easier.' (Resident of Tránsito II, one of the participating communities.)

The Involving Women in Local Development project was then presented to open assemblies of the communities, where the focus for action was further narrowed to the issue selected by the assemblies as the most pressing and achievable short-term objective. Public transport was chosen: in view of the hilly location of the villages it was judged that the provision of public transport, by saving people time and energy, would benefit the whole community. Three representatives were appointed to a management committee, which was given the job of overseeing the progress of the proposal and staying in touch with the community.

Next, with the aim of identifying a possible transport strategy to include their villages, the women analysed the causes and consequences of the main problems, possible solutions, and institutions or persons who could implement the solutions. For instance, the repair of the roads would need to be taken up with the mayor's office and the ministry of public works, the lack of transport with the bus companies and consumer organisations. The nearest existing bus services were examined to see what changes might be proposed to get them to include the villages.

More research was done to find out how many people need public transport and why. Forty-nine women and thirty-four men were interviewed, and all were in favour of getting public transport to serve the communities. Both women and men were frequent users of public transport,

the men to get to jobs, mostly in construction; the women to ease the daily long steep walks with shopping bags, produce to sell, and children. Representatives of the committee then took their proposals to the mayor's office, the ministry of transport and the bus company. The bus company insisted that buses could not serve the community until the access road was repaired; the mayor would not consider authorising repairs to the road without a civil engineer's report. Despite their own lack of resources, the women of the community raised funds to pay for the engineer's report, by selling food and drinks and organising an Easter outing. The representatives of the three communities took their proposal, backed by the engineer's report, to an open session of the municipal council and finally won the mayor's pledge that he would give it his attention. The women were encouraged and supported in their tenacity by meeting women from a rural community where MAM works, who had, in 1995, succeeded in repairing the road leading to their village and getting a bus service to cover the route.

Once the road had been repaired there were further negotiations with the mayor, the transport ministry and the bus companies to extend the bus route as far as the villages.

Results

◆ A major result of the process has been the big increase in the confidence of the village women and their increased participation in community decision-making. Given the degree of machismo in Salvadorean society, it was a big achievement for the village women just to be able to stand up in an assembly and speak in public.

◆ The women have also entered the local political arena, through their experience of lobbying the mayor and others. Several of the women now have positions in the community committees, even as chairpersons and treasurers.

◆ The immediate practical goal of the project was achieved: the women succeeded in getting the roads

repaired and the bus routes introduced. They have solved the problem they set out to solve, and the whole community feels the benefit.

◆ The women managed to get the whole community, even the men, involved in an issue which tends to be seen as 'women's work'. Nothing would have been possible without the full participation of the women's groups and the whole community.

◆ In the process they made links with other communities which had experienced and solved similar problems, and this has reduced the isolation of the communities and broadened their experience.

◆ There were also benefits for MAM, in that we were taken seriously and respected by the communities, who do not always take the feminist movement seriously when it tries to work at the grass roots. Our action-learning methodology has become much clearer and firmer during this process and we have learned a lot about how women can engage with local government on service provision from a gender prospective.

◆ Finally, and importantly, the women will continue their work. They are going to push for their needs and engage with other actors at local government level.

Discussion

An important aspect of the case studies is the sense of history, the context and the political dynamics of the people involved. Both South Africa and El Salvador are countries whose histories of bitter oppression and conflict have generated strong processes of community and women's organisations. These histories, and the histories of women's movements and organisations such as MAM, are vital ingredients in the processes of change described. It is perhaps easy to forget, in technical discourses about development, that the bland term 'civil society' refers to people who have more than an institutional existence and are not just users or consumers of services but people with histories of oppression, exclusion and struggle. An example of 'good practice' almost always conceals a story of struggle, work and learning.

Both case studies involved questions not only of political will to get services but also of control of resources. Even where structures are in place for broad consultation with communities on the services they want, the provision of the services, and their quality, in the end depends largely on the availability of funds. At this level it is easy to exclude community participation: budgeting and accounting procedures are complex and technical and thus generally remain the preserve of an élite of local politicians and officials. Several participants stressed the importance of women's participation in budgeting, and mentioned existing women's budget groups in the UK and South Africa, both of several years' standing – although it was pointed out that in the UK, the Treasury has only recently begun consulting the Women's Budget Group, although it has existed since 1989.

Beyond annual budgets, attention to women's and gender considerations is also needed in longer-term planning and budgeting processes, such as the South African Integrated Development Plans, which are five-year plans for the municipalities. These provide another opportunity for community participation, but councils often employ external consultants to draw up the plans.

Longer-term planning is where decisions about public service infrastructure may be taken. A key message to get across to decision-makers and especially those who control budgets is that *neither services nor infrastructure are gender-neutral*. Unfortunately the argument that 'a pipe is just a pipe and a road is just a road' is all too frequently heard. Men and women use all services differently: they will use buses as different times of day, for instance. The example reported from Honduras, where citizens expressed very different priorities at open council meetings (*cabildos abiertos*) depending on whether women or men predominated at the meeting, is by no means unique. However, if these gender-specific concerns are to emerge from community meetings, it is essential that women are able to take part in discussions about service prioritisation. The Salvadorean case study shows clearly what can be achieved when this happens. Change often depends not so much on policies but on how people are brought

together to advocate for change and to participate in decision-making about service provision.

In this respect both case-study presenters confirmed the importance for community and women's groups of having strategic allies in the key institutions at the local and national levels.

Panel III: Access to gender-sensitive justice

The experience of Namibia

Milly Jafta, Legal Education Co-ordinator of the Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia

Local authorities in Namibia were well established before independence. Today there are many contradicting views on them, depending on whom you ask. The first comment you are likely to hear from some people in the capital, Windhoek, is that Windhoek is becoming a true African city: it is no longer what it was before independence – the standards are dropping. When you talk to other sectors of the community you will find that their view is that the local authority is now serving the people.

These opposing views have much to do with our history. Before independence Windhoek was often described as one of the cleanest cities in the world, but that meant mainly the white suburbs and the central business district, for the local authority directed most of its expenditure to the privileged parts of the racially segregated neighbourhoods and the central business district. That evaluation of Windhoek's cleanliness did not refer to the townships where the majority of the population lived.

However, in the last seven years, the face of local government in Namibia has changed completely. The previously all-white city, town and village councils have made way for black majority councils. Priorities have changed. In his annual report of 1999, the mayor of Windhoek referred in great detail to a cleaning up campaign spearheaded by the municipality in the largest predominantly black township in Windhoek, Katutura. When we talk about Windhoek now, it is no longer only the central business district and the leafy suburbs, but the Katuturas, the informal settlements, the shack dwellers, the open markets – in fact, the whole city.

The national context

Namibia is a large country with a relatively small population of 1.4 million. The sex ratio is ninety-five males to a hundred females, and the population is youthful, with

forty-two per cent of the population below the age of fifteen. The average household size is about 5.3 persons with sixty-one per cent and thirty-nine per cent of households headed by males and females respectively. In spite of rapid urbanisation Namibia is still mainly a rural society. It also has a very skewed income distribution, with great wealth disparities.

Namibia gained its independence on 21 March 1990 after a decade of colonial rule by South Africa. The incoming government faced great challenges: it had to deal with about 40,000 returnees coming back from exile; establish a central government out of the eleven separate ethnic administrations that had existed before independence; set up a unified defence force out of soldiers who previously opposed each other; take over the functions previously performed by South Africa, such as foreign affairs; and implement a policy of national reconciliation. But in spite of the urgent national agenda, the government has paid special attention to gender issues. The Namibian Constitution, adopted at independence, has been widely praised for its strong commitment to human rights and its specific focus on gender equality and the rights of women. The Constitution also uses gender-neutral language throughout and forbids discrimination on the basis of sex.

Legal instruments and the national machinery to promote women's rights and non-discrimination

The Namibian government is a signatory to various international and regional instruments on the rights of women, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Southern Africa Development Corporation (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development. Shortly after independence, the government established a Department of Women's Affairs, headed by a Director-General, in the Office of the President, which is the highest office in the country. Its mission was:

'... to promote gender equality by empowering women through dissemination of information, co-ordination in networking with stakeholders, mainstreaming of gender issues, promoting law and policy reform, and monitoring of progress to ensure that men and women can participate equally in the political, economic, social and cultural development of the nation'.

The department developed a national gender policy and a national plan of action in 1997 and 1999 respectively, and identified ten critical areas of concern that need to be addressed in Namibia. These are:

◆ gender, poverty and rural development

◆ gender and economic empowerment

◆ gender and management of the environment

◆ gender balance in power and decision-making

◆ gender balance in education

◆ the girl child

◆ gender in reproductive health

◆ information, education and communication

◆ violence against women and children

◆ gender and legal affairs.

The department was elevated to the level of a full ministry in 2000, just after the last elections, and its mandate was extended to cover child welfare.

The national gender policy also provides for monitoring mechanisms, of which the proposed Gender Commission is one. This should have been established in 1998, according to the national policy, but it is not yet in place.

Article 140 (1) of the Constitution states that all laws in force at the time of independence should remain in force until changed by legislation or declared unconstitutional, so we still have many laws on our books that might be discriminatory. However, in 1992 the government

established a statutory body, the Law Reform and Development Commission, whose mandate is to review all discriminatory legislation and to make proposals for its amendment. A Women and Law Committee was established under this commission to give special attention to law reform on gender-related matters. Limited human resources constrain the commission's effectiveness: its members have other full-time jobs, and there is not enough staff to carry out research and draft laws. None the less, the Law Reform and Development Commission has been instrumental in passing one of the pieces of legislation in Namibia that has had the most far-reaching impact for women: the Married Persons' Equality Act of 1996. This Act has changed the legal status of married women from that of virtually a minor to that of a major in terms of the law.

Namibia has done a great deal to provide the legal framework for equality and non-discrimination. However, gender issues are still perceived mainly as women's issues. This puts a great responsibility on our women councillors to put gender issues on the agenda of local authorities.

The Namibian Constitution also makes provision for the devolution of administrative decision-making and advisory powers to the sub-levels of government, namely from central government to the regional councils and local authorities. According to the Director-General of the National Planning Commission:

> 'The government believes that regional and local administration is an instrument of bringing government closer to the people and the promotion of participatory development by the people through their elected representatives in their regional councils and local authorities.'

Three levels of government

Namibia has three levels of government:

◆ *The central government*: this consists of the Cabinet – the president, the prime minister, the deputy prime minister and the appointed ministers. The National Assembly is the first chamber of parliament. Fewer than thirty per cent of the seventy-eight members of parliament are women.

◆ *The regional councils*: Namibia has thirteen administrative regions, each of which is divided into constituencies – ninety-five constituencies in total. From each region two regional councillors are chosen to represent that region in the second chamber of parliament, the National Council; thus, the National Council has twenty-six members, of whom only two are women.

◆ *Local government*: the Local Authorities Act of 1992 establishes three types of local authority: municipalities, towns and villages. Local authority elections take place every five years, and local councils are responsible for managing the provision of services and other administrative affairs of the local authority. Although women are under-represented in two of the three levels of government, they are very well represented at the local level. Currently 136 of the 329 local councillors (43.1 per cent) are women.

The role of affirmative action in local government

The large number of women councillors is due mostly to the statutory affirmative action provision in the Local Authorities Act, which stipulates in section 6 (3) minimum numbers of female candidates that each party list should contain. When the first local authority election took place in 1992, according to the party list system, the 1,006 candidates put forward for the election contained 382 women. This was more than the affirmative action requirement; however, in research conducted just after the elections it was found that some lists did not contain the required minimum number of women candidates and had

to be referred back to the local party structures for review. Of the 362 councillors elected, 114 were women, representing 31.5 per cent of the total.

The second local authority election (1997) was supposed to take place according to the ward system, without any affirmative action provision for women. However, the party list system was extended to the second election, as all the measures were not in place for elections according to the ward system. Moreover, the elections were postponed until 1998 and the affirmative action provisions were strengthened, the amended provision stipulating that party lists for local authorities with ten or fewer members had to include three women candidates and lists for those with more than ten members had to include five women. The result was, as I have mentioned, that more than forty-three per cent of local councillors today are women.

The research carried out after the 1992 elections concluded that affirmative action alone was not the reason for the high number of women elected to local government. According to interviews conducted shortly after the election, the regional councils – the middle level of government – were perceived as serious political bodies, whereas the local authorities, being involved with social and community issues, were seen as less political. It was also felt that women might have more confidence to assert themselves at the local level. Despite these limitations, however, affirmative action has given women the opportunity to take part in local government as decision-makers.

There are several constraints on making the activities of local authorities more gender-sensitive which cannot be solved by the mere presence of more women councillors. First, although women are sitting in the councils, there is no specific provision that women should be included in other structures such as the management structures of the local authorities. Even in women-dominated councils, such as Windhoek (eleven women councillors out of a total of fifteen), the mayor is male. However, the greater the presence women have in the local authority, the greater their chances of being elected to other structures.

Secondly, owing to Namibia's history of division along ethnic lines, gender issues have to compete continuously with race and other pressing local issues. Namibia is still overcoming the legacy of the former South African governments with their policies of racism and repression, where government was conducted by whites and differential levels of services were provided along colour/ethnic lines. At the time of independence, the activities of the councils were confined mainly to the predominantly white areas. There is a serious backlog in service provision of all kinds – housing, paved roads, street lighting, water and sanitation facilities, etc. – for black communities, and the principal emphasis at present is on redressing the balance in terms of facilities.

Third, men and women in the street feel that the issues on which local government is currently spending time and resources are not the issues of greatest importance to the communities. Much effort in three of the largest local authorities, for instance, has gone into restructuring staffing levels. In certain sections of the community it was felt that this was not a priority but rather a tactical exercise to get rid of certain officials. Similarly, local authorities have been criticised for spending resources on changing the names of streets to reflect the current political realities.

All these factors mean that gender issues are not automatically on councils' agendas. Very specific efforts must be made to make gender equality part of those agendas.

Numbers are not enough

Getting large numbers of women on to local councils is only a first step. They need to be trained, and their training should include gender training as well as traditional areas of training, which tend to concentrate on the Acts which govern their work, procedural issues, decision-making, time management, and the like. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare reported in 1999 that government had trained both men and women in gender issues at higher levels of government, but made no mention of gender training for local councillors. The

Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) has also identified this anomaly.

Namibia has a favourable legal environment for promoting gender equality. Local councillors, especially women councillors, should take advantage of government's positive policies on gender. The government should commit itself to involving more women in the law-making process. In doing so it should ensure that all the proposed legislation undergoes gender analysis. Courses on gender analysis, tools and skills should form part of training for councillors.

Councillors, especially women, urgently need support in terms of research and advice, especially on issues of a technical and legal nature. Lack of research capacity is a problem not only on the local but also on the national level, as we have seen in the understaffing of the Law Reform and Development Commission itself. Women in the constituencies should be identified and mobilised to assist local councillors with research, as well as experts who could give technical advice. As many women councillors as possible should become computer-literate.

Women councillors should continue to be easily accessible and to participate in community activities. One of the strengths of our female councillors is their accessibility. They come from the communities they serve and have an intimate knowledge of them. They are known in the community. Once municipalities and councils were seen, particularly by most black people, primarily as places where you go to pay the rent, water and electricity bills. Now, through community meetings and other activities, councils are seen as being run by people, for people – people who can be approached and with whom problems can be discussed. Informal meetings with the constituency and the community also provide the opportunity for feedback on projects that were implemented for the community.

Women councillors can also use every opportunity offered by their post to gain experience and confidence. They have a special responsibility to pave the way for other women to

follow. The current president of ALAN told an interviewer that when she was elected to a large municipal council she declined the position of mayor, because she felt she lacked the confidence, with the result that an equally unqualified man took the post. Later, however, she went on to become deputy mayor, is currently a member of the management committee and president of ALAN, and has been elected to chair the Task Force on Women and Local Government of the International Union of Local Authorities in Namibia.

It is also extremely important to push forward the gender agenda across party political lines. Namibians are 'party animals': they tend to vote for parties, not individuals or issues. Party loyalty is very high. Local authority members are elected on a party list basis, and recent research has suggested that local government elections are mechanisms to cement party support rather than important platforms for local issues. Candidates are accountable to the party first, the electorate second. This may mean that councillors feel more accountable to their parties than to the issues at stake. In this context it is vital for women councillors to press forward gender agendas across party lines, whether or not gender equality is a priority for their individual parties.

Namibia has various laws and structures in place to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality, and has numerous women in political decision-making positions at least at the local level. But these are not enough to ensure access to gender-sensitive justice. Education and changing behaviour and attitudes are of vital importance. The gender agenda needs to be advanced with assertiveness and persistence; progress must be monitored and evaluated. As far as possible, civil society should assist local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities. I believe we have been concentrating on quantity in terms of gender balance in governing structures. We are now in the process of looking at ways to promote gender balance in terms of quality.

Discussion

Discussion in plenary after the presentation examined gender aspects of the justice system in Namibia in closer detail, clarifying the role of the courts and the police as regards women and gender issues. Milly confirmed that women and men are equal before the law; there is an ombudswoman, and women have redress from the courts if treated unfairly. However, the courts are male-dominated – there is only one woman judge and six male ones. Magistrates are mostly men, though, as usual, the gender balance is better at the lower levels. As in many other areas, more attention so far has been given to advancing towards racial equality than gender equality in the higher levels of the judiciary.

The fundamental structures are in place to ensure equal access to the courts for everybody; but in practice access is easier for some than for others. Namibia's vast size (800,000 sqare kilometres) and inhospitable desert landscape are an inhibiting factor. Every service of any importance in the country, including the justice system, is centralised in the capital. Language is a barrier: English is the language of the legal system. All this is offputting to rural women. A rural woman may not be prepared, or even able, to travel hundreds of kilometres to Windhoek, visiting it perhaps for the first time in her life, having to pay for travel, accommodation, and possibly a translation service at court, to get a divorce.

The Legal Assistance Centre offers support in this respect. It gives people advice about their cases and about practical matters such as where to find affordable accommodation in the capital, how to find the court, etc. The centre also takes on litigation in certain cases with human rights implications. In cases of rape, for instance, where the victim is the only witness, her evidence is unconstitutional in the High Court. In such a case, where constitutionality comes into conflict with human rights, leading to unfair treatment of the victim, the human rights section of the Legal Assistance Centre would litigate on the issue.

A number of training programmes are being implemented to promote gender sensitivity in the police force; the British Council is active in this respect. Gender-sensitive women and child protection units have been set up. The Legal Assistance Centre has developed a human rights manual for police officers.

A particular issue discussed was that of grass roots or 'traditional' systems of justice and the extent to which they could meet the needs of rural people for whom access to the national legal system is difficult. In Namibia there are traditional authorities, which were in place at the time of independence. Efforts are being made to strengthen the best aspects of them; but if they make decisions which are unconstitutional, they can be overruled. Comparison was drawn with Bangladesh, where some organisations with which One World Action works have concluded that the formal legal system is remote and alienating for poor, rural women, and their chances of access to justice through it are very low. Some NGOs and village councils are looking at adapting and transforming 'traditional' village-level mediation mechanisms to solve disputes to do with property, domestic violence, and divorce, for example. In the presence of an abusive and gender-biased judiciary these mechanisms can be a useful alternative. However, the organisations themselves see these traditional systems as a transitional arrangement rather than the ultimate form they would envisage for a people-friendly and gender-sensitive justice system.

Responses to the first day's presentations

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen

Chief Programme Officer, Gender and Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

I would like to congratulate One World Action and the British Council for organising this seminar and to thank all the presenters on our collective behalf for their presentations. The presentations we have heard today offer us a composite map of where we have arrived, twenty-five years after the issue of women in development was first put on the tables of the United Nations and other agencies of global governance. My own interest in the issues comes from various perspectives, and this will inform my summing-up. First is my view that we have to think about these issues in their international, global, political and economic perspective. Second, we need to be clear what we mean by governance and at what levels it works; whether we are talking about notions of democracy, or national versus local government, or legislation, or the participation of civil society, or the linkages between these different elements. A third perspective for me is the developmental perspective; and finally there is my feminist perspective.

The importance of context

I was particularly interested to see from the presentations the link between the 'macro' issues, at the national level, and the 'micro', at the level of basic services. The presentations also made it very clear that national, regional and global contexts, and the interactions between those contexts, are of vital importance. The examples from the UK that we saw are taking place in a developed-country context, with democratic institutions embedded in national and local government. There is a direct link between the political will of the current government and the immediate response at local government level, which we saw in the Lewisham presentation. In the British context, the Trades Union Congress can grapple with gender in an international context of introducing flexibility into the labour force, which is totally different from the Indian experience.

On the other hand, the South African example shows a developing country perspective. In the struggle against apartheid, a national liberation struggle, the entire society became involved in the process of dismantling structures of inequality; and hence South Africa has a post-apartheid constitution in which there is a national ethos that links gender equality with race and ethnic equality, age, class, and the rural–urban divide. Thus South Africa has a context and a framework of social organising and awareness which allows people to think about local government and basic services in a very structured kind of way; it allows them to think about dismantling political institutions and also about the way in which civil society engages with other institutions. These differences in context are very important.

Mainstreaming and political decision-making

Another strong theme in today's presentations is the multiplicity of approaches to gender mainstreaming. Even when speaking of the most basic provisioning – and clearly those of us here today represent many different levels and many different experiences – we have to take a multi-layered, multi-pronged approach to mainstreaming. Among the threads emerging that play a part in mainstreaming are the political will of the state and the government; individual leadership (e.g. the chief executive officers of institutions) and the important role individuals play in making a commitment to change and bringing it about; the relationship between a critical mass of women in decision-making, at either the local or the parliamentary level; and the actual transformation of institutions and processes.

The theme of women in decision-making arose repeatedly, because we can't really talk about transforming basic services if some of us are still grappling with the task of getting more women into political decision-making. This is a basic precondition for the provision of more gender-sensitive services: in a situation where there are only two women in political decision-making positions in national or local government, it will be impossible to transform the way local governments work.

As regards the link between advocacy and political representation, I was very interested in the Ugandan

example, which made the connection between grass roots and rural women and their women representatives in local government and the national parliament, who had in fact been appointed to these positions by a quota system. The challenge now for those women is, now that they are in a position of power, whom and what they choose to represent. While, theoretically, women representatives may be no more accountable with regard to gender equality than men in the same position, it is reasonable to ask women representatives to be accountable to their natural constituency – women. But it is also our responsibility, in our various locations, to help them and feed them with the kind of information they need to enable them to do that work.

Research

As regards research, the South African experience showed us the new kinds of research questions that need to be asked about services. Does a particular service benefit women and men equally? Which women does it benefit? How? Disaggregating data by sex, race, ethnicity, class and so on, gives a completely different picture, and mapping it in the way we saw in GAP's case study provides a basis for challenging and engaging with local government or any other authority or institution.

Grappling with national processes

Co-ordination of efforts between central government, local authorities, trade unions, NGOs and communities as active participators in the process is essential. I found the pilot experiences of the TUC and Lewisham Council interesting, as well as the South African and other experiences. But how do we progress from 'small and beautiful' pilot projects into embedding the same principles in huge local authority structures at all levels of local government and, further, at the national level? Here the link to larger processes such as the national budgetary process and national planning processes becomes relevant.

When I began working on gender mainstreaming, I quickly discovered that, in order to grapple seriously with national planning processes you have first to understand how they work. You can't simply insert a gender dimension into an existing process, such as a national budgetary process, and expect it to have an effect. You must think about the psychology of those involved in the process, their own processes, what their assumptions and methodologies are, how their process is linked to international budgetary processes, the calendars of institutional meetings, feedback and interaction between the national and international levels, and many other factors. We have to map these processes thoroughly before we can target them for intervention.

Different gender strategies for different services

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A major issue in the gender mainstreaming of basic services is that of translating generic gender equality concepts into an analysis of basic services in order to transform service provision. This needs to be done service by service, not by applying generalised basic concepts to all services. With water and sanitation, for example, the question is mainly one of access. However, if we 'unpack' education we find a variety of aspects: gender role socialisation, the organisation of schools, curricula, the way textbooks are written, sexual harassment, sexist perceptions and attitudes, gender stereotyping of school subjects, classroom interaction, informal interaction, and sexual education within the school system. Mainstreaming gender in the education service thus implies analysing and transforming each of these aspects. We need to stand inside the intellectual and political parameters of a particular service or institution in order to deconstruct it from a gender perspective.

Training for gender awareness

The issue of training and awareness-raising was not discussed much today, but I think we must see training as a huge investment. Service providers, policy-makers, parliamentarians, local government officers, councillors,

civil society, NGOs, and communities all need gender awareness; but we should also be embedding this kind of training in school and university curricula, transforming knowledge of what services are and how to analyse them. Information and communications technology is clearly a useful tool here, which should be further explored; the new analytical tools should also be more widely used.

Men and relations of power

Interestingly, men have not been discussed much. Yet men's issues are emerging in a number of regions. In the Caribbean, seventy-five per cent of university graduates are women, and the issue of male marginalisation is fast gaining political weight and is shifting policy-making on gender equality issues. We need to take account of this. More broadly, we need to re-emphasise that gender does not simply equal women. This has relevance to service provision: for instance, women and men have different and specific health care needs. We need to engage with gender-disaggregated data in a way that allows us to see the different needs and positions of men and women.

However, we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that women are unequally placed in most respects. Gender is about transforming relations of power, and any gender analysis must aim at deconstructing and transforming power at every single level in society.

Sarah O'Brien, International Development Officer, Local Government International Bureau

Speaking as a local government specialist rather than a gender expert, I have been very interested by the challenges and achievements demonstrated in this afternoon's presentations and the light they throw on the problems of working with local authorities and the difficulties involved in influencing local government service delivery. I represent the Local Government International Bureau, the international arm of the Local Government Association, which works with local authorities in England and Wales. I have two main roles. The first is capacity-

building in developing country local authorities and local government associations, mainly with a view to improving service delivery. I try to set up partnerships between UK local authorities and their developing country counterparts, and also between the UK Local Government Association and developing country local government associations. The second part of my role is promoting the role of local government internationally; my organisation is part of a network of local government associations and a member of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). I am also a member of the IULA Women in Local Government Task Force, which is a group of practitioners from local government associations involved in looking at women's issues from a local government perspective and has representatives from most continents, especially Africa.

I have three very general points to make on the presentations this afternoon. The first concerns information. I have recently been involved in a DFID project aimed at encouraging local authorities in developing countries to work more closely with very poor communities. In the course of this project I visited a large, informal settlement of about 8,000 people living in very poor conditions near Harare. We were told about a savings scheme set up by women, which worked with most of the settlement's households and data had been gathered on the number and make-up of the households. In fact these very poor women had information that the local authority didn't have, and were able to use this information in negotiating for land with the local authority. The experience alerted me to the fact that often people living in precarious conditions have information to which formal government structures may not have access.

My second point concerns the similarity between the experience of local government in the UK and South Africa and the emphasis on community participation and the developmental role of local government. I think UK local authorities are facing similar challenges to those in South Africa in, for instance, the government's modernising agenda. Local authorities and councillors in the UK are all currently concerned with how they can improve community participation.

This relates to my third point, which is that UK local authorities have a lot to learn from experiences in developing countries, particularly in relation to the different strategies used in different countries to increase the number of women elected members and the support of women in political posts. Our partners in Uganda, India and Namibia have certainly made headway in that respect.

Finally, I would like to link the experiences we have heard today to some current international policy work, outlined in the IULA *Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government*. This document has been developed through the IULA Task Force on Women in Local Government. The declaration deals with two main subjects and how these affect women:

◆ the role of local government as a service provider and an enabler of sound living conditions

◆ the role of local government as an employer in a strategic position to influence local society.

The declaration was launched at the United Nations in 1999 and has been ratified by several international local government associations. It is a policy tool in that it can be used by communities to lobby their local governments, but it can also be used by local governments to lobby central government.

Discussion

Two main points arose in the day's final discussion, both picking up on points made by the respondents.

Accountability

Participants agreed that it is time that individual citizens and civil society organisations demand accountability from both local and national governments and service providers. The ability to do this depends on citizens understanding their rights and having the capacity, skills and power to make people accountable. An example

mentioned here was the tendency of medical specialists to protect themselves from demands for accountability by the mystique of their professional and technical knowledge: women who have been badly treated by doctors can complain in general terms but not usually with technical exactitude.

In this context the attitudes of local elected representatives and local officials can be critical to determining whether or not services are accessible, appropriate and gender-sensitive. Both a change of attitude on the part of officials and the necessity of access to technical information for service 'consumers' need to be addressed through training and supported by political will.

Costs

The high cost of making services gender-sensitive is very often cited as a disincentive for change by national and local governments. Depending on national context, they will invoke international debt, commitment to IMF programmes, or more urgent policy priorities. However, a useful lobbying point is to consider the costs involved in not making services gender-sensitive, which may well be greater than the costs of gender-sensitive services.

In a related exercise in New Zealand, the cost to the state of dealing with violence against women was quantified: the cost was approximately $NZ 1.2 billion, equivalent to two per cent of GDP and equal to the entire national welfare bill. Numerous studies of the labour market and growth show that gender discrimination *per se* has a cost to the economy as a whole. If based on sound calculations, these are useful arguments to put to those who control budgets.

Women's movements creating change

Georgina Ashworth, CHANGE

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen and Sarah O'Brien highlighted that the political, geographic and social context is critical, not only to the appropriateness of the service delivery, but also as an opportunity which women's movements can and

do seize upon to open up and create change through the state. Sometimes the openings for change are very narrow, but women's movements are now demanding services from the national and local government, and this is a big shift.

Basic services that involve women need to fulfil women's basic needs and basic rights. Therefore, gender mapping and gender analysis are essential, but so, too, is analysis which cross-cuts with race and socio- economic class in order to make sure that services are delivered to all the community. One size does not fit all, nor one system of gender mainstreaming, in part because of the different kinds of services. That is why the principle of deconstructing is common to all; deconstructing in order to identify the gender aspect. Lastly, making durable change involves all levels of government and all layers and levels of institutions, which means that any women's group or movement has to be very astute, inventive, tactful and have good timing for lobbying and advocacy. The tools of gender analysis are essential, especially to convert the successful pilot into national practice.

Panel IV: Strategies for developing gender-sensitive service delivery

Integrating gender-sensitive policies into service delivery

Stephanie Segal, Stephanie Segal Consulting and Training

In 1975–76, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act became law in the United Kingdom. Public-sector bodies were instructed to review their services and ensure that in all aspects of their service delivery the spirit of the Acts was implemented. As a result, government departments, local authorities and all public-sector organisations began to review their services and to develop ways of working that integrated both gender and racial equality into the mainstream of service delivery. Many London local authorities and other metropolitan authorities were in the forefront of developing extremely imaginative services, starting from the late 1970s, including women's units and racial equality units. More broadly, these two Acts, Britain's major pieces of equality legislation, have had immense repercussions on every area of service delivery in the UK.

It is true that, in the beginning, racial equality and gender equality were not complementary and on occasion could even clash. In local authorities and public-sector organisations that is no longer the case, as the two equalities have been merged institutionally and work jointly to develop performance indicators and benchmarking of services, from both a gender and a race perspective.

The Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality were set up by the government to monitor the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act and to monitor and evaluate organisations that did not seem to comply with the legislation. Their impact has been felt in every area of public-sector development, and can be seen, for instance, in the changes in educational curricula for boys and girls. Anyone who has been at school since 1975 will have had a very different education from mine, where I was not allowed to play football or learn chemistry or physics because these were not considered suitable subjects for

girls. Now, twenty-five years later, mainstreaming equalities has become the norm in the UK public sector.

The Equal Opportunities Commission defines mainstreaming as the integration of equal opportunities into every aspect of policy development, implementation, evaluation and review processes. By mainstreaming equal opportunities, public-sector organisations can agree corporate strategies and fully integrate all management and operational aspects into their strategic planning processes. New government initiatives, such as the Modernising Government agenda, have focused all public-sector bodies on reviewing and scrutinising their political structures, the separation of executive and s crutiny functions, and reviewing the strategic processes in service provision on an annual basis. As a result, many local authorities which, it must be admitted, were fairly weak as regards gender-sensitive service delivery, are starting to revisit these areas and are making some very creative changes.

'Best value' is another new government initiative which will be monitoring every aspect of service delivery on a regular cycle – annually for internal monitoring and triennially for external monitoring by the Audit Commission. Consultation with the community should result in new consultation mechanisms, review processes, targets and plans, and contract and partnership agreements with voluntary organisations linked to good service provision, aimed at ensuring that all services cater to the needs of the local community. Most local authorities, and specifically those working in metropolitan areas, are ensuring that there is a gender basis for a performance indicator comparison and that all service delivery links into evaluating the needs of the community in terms of gender and race. The 'best value' initiative should result in improved service review, better performance management, both of services and staff, and a much more detailed monitoring. Comparison with other, similar departments and agencies should ensure that organisations cannot remain complacent and that all service provision is regularly reviewed and delivered at reasonable cost. As part of this process, gender models in other public-sector organisations will be

compared and therefore good gender practice should be high on the agenda.

Both central and local governments use the Business Excellence Model in their planning, linking people, processes and results and analysing organisational performance by three main categories:

◆ people satisfaction

◆ customer satisfaction

◆ impact on society.

Performance indicators should also be reflecting the needs of the community in a different way. Every local authority and public-sector organisation in the UK has the statistical profile of its population and has to make sure that the delivery of services actually addresses all issues of class, race and gender. Officers will now have to ask questions such as:

◆ How do you know who gets the service you offer?

◆ How do you know that the service you are delivering meets the needs of the community?

◆ How can you be sure that everybody in the community, every socioeconomic group, is taking up your service?

◆ Can you tell if the money spent on specialised services is the most effective use of those funds?

◆ Is the standard of the service you deliver the best it can be within the limits of the resources available?

The measurement and reporting of outcomes, as defined by very detailed performance indicators, should link into all strategic planning, departmental annual plans, team objectives, and each staff member's annual appraisal, and review and monitoring should be part of every service delivery.

Race and gender equality performance indicators are a way of attempting to ensure that services and employment opportunities are accessible to everyone. Monitoring

information from performance indicators will help to improve the quality of services and employment opportunities by assisting in the identification of issues. In employment, for example, statistics on the ethnic composition of the workforce can be used to uncover areas of under-representation by level and grade. In service delivery, monitoring can show who is benefiting from services, who has access to them, areas of low take-up and whether the service meets needs appropriately.

Performance indicators obviously help provide a detailed picture of how people use services, but how do local authorities and public-sector organisations consult? How do performance indicators linked to sustainable development, poverty reduction, social inclusion, community safety, lifelong learning, improved health, and regeneration also ensure that local authorities' work links with all the different initiatives on gender issues?

Many organisations in the public sector have initiated community consultation forums. These can consist of different kinds of women's groups, women's voluntary organisations, other voluntary organisations and NGOs in an area. Links can be made with religious and community leaders. Other mechanisms are drop-in suggestion boxes at housing estate offices, reception desks at libraries, schools, nurseries, crèches, shopping centres and supermarkets, or consultations through the local media, citizens' panels, neighbourhood committees, focus groups, and more unusual forums such as football clubs. The London Borough of Islington has set up stands at the Arsenal Football Club ground to canvass local people's views, since the team has strong support locally not only from men but also women. This was one of a series of consultation exercises in which the local authority sought the views of the local community. Very innovative ways are being used to reach the community and make sure that they have their say about service delivery.

A good example of how this works in practice is in the area of leisure services. Local authorities, especially those in metropolitan areas, are offering a much wider range of leisure services. In the past, service facilities have very often

been bastions of masculinity typified in body-building or football classes; we now have special classes such as swimming lessons for pregnant women and yoga. Swimming pools are open on specific days exclusively for women and people from different religious groupings. There is also a range of classes for elderly women and men that are held separately, addressing a need that has been identified by many organisations.

Innovative programmes on housing estates, where women complained that the local authority was not sufficiently concerned with women's safety issues, have included the provision of new lighting, new paving and safer access to buildings; women's safety programmes have been introduced into the training of caretakers, whose work programme integrates gender-sensitive service delivery. Working with a group of caretakers from a local authority, I was extremely impressed with the way equal opportunities had been integrated into their work programme. One of the things that they had to do every morning was to go round their estates and remove any offensive racist, sexist or homophobic graffiti. This task was at the top of their work agenda, and it was there because the community and the people had made their views known on the offensiveness of graffiti. Another of the caretakers' priorities was to check the access to dark corridors in buildings, to make sure they were safe for women. Many local authorities have introduced special late-night buses or minicabs, often with women drivers, so that women can travel to certain areas safely.

Minivans, caravans and other forms of transport are being taken to places where health programmes, such as breast cancer screening, are being carried out, bringing the services to the people rather than expecting the people to come to the services. In social services, there is also a highly inventive range of gender-based activities.

I have recently been working with a charity which, through an initiative of the local authority, identified a problem of hidden alcoholism among women in the Asian community. As a result, the local authority has funded the charity to run counselling sessions by Asian women

facilitators who are mental health and health professionals, so as to address women's needs in a culturally respectful way in this sensitive area. Likewise, local authorities are looking at other sensitive issues, such as drugs. They are looking at gender-sensitive ways of working with refugees and asylum seekers, asking questions such as: Are there crèches available everywhere and are there problems with access that need to be solved? Are issues around domestic violence publicised in numerous languages?

Other areas where local authorities are active include family-friendly hours of service provision, good child care provision (with fathers as well as mothers in mind), parental leave for public-sector staff, challenging stereotyping, and innovative uses of new technology.

For those of you who would like to explore these areas in greater depth, the web site <www.open.gov.uk> gives access to every central government, local government and public-sector organisation in the UK. For those interested in exploring the strategic processes of mainstreaming, the Equal Opportunities Commission has produced an excellent publication, *Mainstreaming gender in local government*; the EOC's web site, <www.eoc.org.uk>, is also very helpful, and many of its publications can be downloaded.

Gender mainstreaming sector-wide health programmes in Bangladesh and Chile

Barbara Evers, School of Economic Studies, University of Manchester, and **Jasmine Gideon**, School of Geography, University of Manchester

We are shifting in this session into looking at what governments are doing to try to improve service delivery to the poor in a gender-sensitive way. I shall illustrate this using the example of health sector reform in Bangladesh, where I have worked on mainstreaming gender into a sector-wide health programme with the Netherlands Embassy. My colleague Jasmine Gideon, who has been

working in Chile and looking at health sector reform there, will talk about a particular aspect of health sector reform – community participation.

Health sector reform is part of a larger reform process that is taking place globally. It is happening in countries all over the world, together with reform of many other sectors, such as transport, finance and education, and usually with the support of the World Bank and bilateral donors. The approach is called the sector investment programme approach, or the sector-wide approach (SWAP). Governments, multilateral institutions, particularly the World Bank, and also the African, Asian and Latin American regional development banks, are supporting the delivery of services.

The reform process takes a similar shape in many countries. Sector-wide reforms involve a process and a programme that is allegedly tailor-made to suit each country, just like structural adjustment, but there appears to be little country-specific tailoring in sectoral programming.

In Bangladesh, health sector reform is taking place in the context of a very strong central government role. The public sector is extremely important as a deliverer of services. The health status of both men and women is poor compared with that in most other countries with a fairly similar per capita income. The health status of women is particularly poor, and this is directly and commonly related to the dangers of giving birth. The maternal mortality rate is extremely high, about four to six per thousand (compared to less than one per thousand in Europe), which is comparable to some of the very poor countries in Africa, where the infrastructure is not as good. Moreover, this is widely considered to be a low estimate. But Bangladesh is also known as the country which has successfully reduced the maternal mortality rate, through a very aggressive, widespread family planning campaign.

What is the health sector reform recipe?

Health sector reform is a donor-led process in which programme aid is given to support a government-designed sectoral or sub-sectoral health programme. As with a structural adjustment programme, several donors together negotiate a sector-wide programme. It is designed as a collaborative effort between donors and the recipient government, undertaken in accordance with a mutually agreed budget and set of policy reforms. This form of assistance is much wider in scope than traditional project aid and usually covers many activities of the health ministry.

Donors contribute to a large global fund, which is allocated to central government and to the ministry of health. The ministry of health then negotiates a sector strategy with the donors, which is meant to be tailor-made and suited to the needs of the country. The government and the donors assess policies, strategies and budgets in the light of goals or milestones set at the beginning of each programming period. The World Bank is the lead donor in this process. It provides the bulk of finance, usually about fifty per cent, although this may vary depending on the programme.

The basic recipe is much the same, whether in Ghana, Bangladesh or Chile. The elements are as follows:

◆ *Implementation of new public management systems*
   This involves reforming the ministry of health with the aim of making it more efficient and supposedly more accountable and transparent.

◆ *Reorganisation of the health ministry*
   In many cases this brings together the family planning and health wings of the ministry. For historical reasons these two functions are separated in many low-income countries: some donors, including the United States, have supported family planning and contraceptive use in the health sector, whereas others are more interested in supporting health in general. This merging of the family planning and health wings as part of health ministry reorganisation causes considerable institutional conflict, with gender implications. For instance, women tend to be strongly involved in the family planning side, while men, doctors in particular, tend to dominate the health side of the ministry.

◆ *Decentralisation of sector activities*
There has been much debate about the benefits and problems of decentralising sector activities. Ostensibly it appears to be positive, devolving some measure of control over services to local people and local communities. In practice, however, local communities, and particularly local women, tend to be used as a cheap labour force to build community clinics and roads. However, decentralisation is a complicated issue and can mean many things and take many forms in different contexts.

◆ *Improvement in stakeholder participation and accountability*
Again, the value of this element seems incontrovertible; but, as we know from experience in Bangladesh, in practice the most important systems of accountability are those of financial accountability, principally to the funders of the programme, the donors. It is far less common to see the establishment of systems of accountability that refer back to the community and the people, who are the supposed beneficiaries of health sector reforms. Although the stated objective of the reforms is to improve the delivery of services to the poor and most vulnerable, this is not often reflected in their systems of accountability.

◆ *Cost recovery*
The role of government is changing with health sector reform, but it is not withdrawing; on the contrary we see a very active government taking quite a lot of control over decision-making and developing strategy in the sector. Increasingly, also, it is instituting costs, user charges and social insurance. Different forms of insurance to support and finance health services are seen as the latest panacea. This is another area where much work is being done as regards the gender implications, because such insurance often does not cover certain services (such as maternity services) which women use, and also because social insurance is often linked to employment, and women, as we know, are often located in the informal sector, not in formal employment.

◆ *Redefining service delivery priorities*
Evidence shows that in many middle-income as well as low-income countries, it is the relatively rich who tend to benefit from services. A beneficiary assessment of the kind our South African colleague mentioned yesterday reveals that the urban élite tends to benefit most, because they use the hospitals, which are usually located in urban areas. Accordingly, one of the objectives of health sector reform is to reprioritise service deliveries so as to place a greater emphasis on primary health care in rural areas, with a focus particularly on preventative health care and 'essential services'. Among the essential services, reproductive health is particularly emphasised, including emergency obstetric care, safe motherhood, and child health. The focus on essential services is clearly better for poor people. However, there are some serious gaps in the provision of essential services; for instance, older women and men are among the groups whose needs are not addressed.

Where is the gender sensitivity?

Among the donors in the Bangladesh health sector programme, the Dutch government and some of the other bilateral North European donors are the most gender-sensitive and poverty-sensitive. We have not found DFID particularly gender-sensitive in its programming and allocation of resources in Bangladesh, which is a serious source of contention for many of us who have been working with DFID for years.

The more gender-sensitive donors in Bangladesh, such as the Dutch government, are trying to make health sector reforms an opportunity to incorporate a degree of gender sensitivity into this major transformation in the health sector. There are many barriers to mainstreaming gender in the health sector. One is *lack of will*. In practice individual donors and governments are not accountable to gender mandates. But lack of will is evident not only on the part of individual donors but also in terms of policy. Policy evaporates once we get to the implementation level;

the rhetoric may be impressive, but we see few resources underpinning the integration of a gender perspective into sector programmes.

A second major barrier is *lack of expertise*. Health ministry institutions are very weak in gender expertise; in practice, no one really knows how to integrate gender into sector-wide programmes. There is little analysis of the sector's institutions and their gendered power relations, and such gender analysis as exists tends to 'target women' rather than address gender inequalities in the sector. Gender priorities in service delivery are not backed up by management strategies, monitoring or evaluation.

Finally, there is a *lack of support for women's voices* at the policy, professional, community or household levels. Women's participation in policy design and decision-making is low; the voice of grass-roots women is not heard.

Mainstreaming gender in the health sector programme

At the sector level, in a country such as Bangladesh, mainstreaming is a huge process, requiring large human and financial resources. We tried to identify the most important and strategic areas for mainstreaming gender, and concluded that management of the sector-wide programme was of major importance. Systems of accountability, both to communities and to women, needed to be incorporated into the sector-wide programme. Especially, the resources being allocated to gender priorities needed to be tracked and analysed, which implied involvement in the budgeting process. It is extremely important to make gender inputs at the early stages of budgeting and to get gender sensitivity into the earliest planning documents.

We have produced a paper which shows how important it is to get gender commitment embedded in all the main policy documents and to follow that commitment through with implementation. It is also critical that this process be linked to supporting the participation of women's NGOs

and women in the community. Without women's participation, the programme is pointless. Finally, systems of accountability must ensure that gender priorities are linked both to service delivery and to supporting women workers in the sector.

(Barbara Evers)

As Barbara has pointed out, community participation and accountability to the community are obviously integral to health sector performance. I have tried to examine this, not from the perspective of the donors but from that of the people involved at the 'micro' level. How do they become actively involved in health sector reform? I worked in El Bosque, a low-income community in the south of Santiago, the capital of Chile, where a large number of health groups have been working, and looked at how they have become involved in the health sector programme. Bangladesh and Chile are clearly very different country contexts: in a recent WHO survey of health systems in the world Chile scored relatively highly. However, surveys can be deceptive, and this result hides the fact that many of the costs of health sector reforms have been absorbed by women, and particularly low-income women.

'Health with the people'

In the 1970s and 1980s Chile had many NGOs which were very active in service provision and opposed to the dictatorship. Since the return of democracy in the 1990s, successive governments have tried to use this community participation. But they use it in a rather different way, as is shown by this definition of participation given by the Ministry of Health in 1995:

> 'The aim of participation is for individual and communities to be protagonists of their own health. Participation gives people the opportunity to exercise some degree of control over the health system and support the development of better, healthier societies.'

In 1995, the Ministry introduced a new programme called

'Health with the people'. It focuses strongly on working with community groups, which is how the leader of the new programme, Judith Salinas, defines participation. The programme:

'recognises all the community groups and organisations that are active at the local level. In contrast to many of the NGOs that the Ministry previously supported, these groups are all voluntary, and are often solidarity groups run by people who have religious or political motives for organising around health care issues ... many are self-help groups. The new programme is concerned with developing links with these groups and opening up new spaces for dialogue with them'.

The programme clearly relies heavily on unpaid labour provided by grass-roots groups. Participation is defined as social progress, through which organisations, institutions and social actors intervene in the identification of health problems and form an alliance to define, try out and put into practice solutions to the problem. This is a very narrow definition of participation, and it is not one that empowers people.

The new programme aims to encourage self-help and change individual behaviour and attitudes so that a more healthier lifestyle is adopted. It emphasises strengthening the formative role of the family in health processes, a feature which is obviously controversial from a gender point of view. It aims to mobilise resources and increase the capacity of people and communities to contribute to the creation of responsible communities. What does this mean in practice?

The experience of the women's groups – limits to participation

One of the first stages of the 'Health with the people' programme was to identify all existing health groups, starting in the metropolitan region of Santiago and later extending across the country. In 1998 some 800 organisations had been included. I worked in El Bosque alongside three informal health groups involved in the

programme. All three of the groups consisted entirely of women; they had made no decision to exclude men, the men were simply uninterested in joining them. All three groups had been active since the 1980s, and all had begun life as a political response to the dictatorship but had carried on working into the 1990s.

Viewed from a gender perspective, the 'Health with the people' programme gives rise to a number of concerns. It is clear that the type of participation promoted in the health sector reforms merely transfers the cost of health care from the productive to the reproductive economy and reinforces the gender division of labour. The groups are aware of this. However, as Jenny Ortiz, a leader of one of the groups, the Health Committee of El Bosque, explained, although they recognise the limitations of the current model of participation and realise that they are carrying out tasks that were previously the responsibility of the health centre, they feel they have no alternative. This leader explained that, although some of the groups have been set up at the initiative of the users, rather than the health centres, they still perform a limited and specific function and do not really represent participation of the users in a political sense. Often the groups are just carrying out unpaid work for the health centres and are not autonomous.

That the women's groups have survived (although other community groups disintegrated during the 1990s) is due, according to Jenny Ortiz, to the individual commitment of each member. At different times in the groups' lifetimes they have all had paid work, and they are of course all housewives and mothers, but they have also continued their work with the group and have managed to maintain a commitment. However, as a group, they no longer have the same energy as they had five or ten years ago. This highlights a particular problem with this type of participation: long-term sustainability. Since the women are all involved in other activities – having their family responsibilities and their paid work as well as the health group – it is a very short-term strategy to rely on their unpaid labour, because they lose the energy to maintain that commitment over the years.

The experience of these groups highlights some of the gender-based limitations of this type of participation through work. The triple workload of low-income women limits their participation and jeopardises the long-term sustainability of voluntary community work, as women's time is not infinitely elastic. Inevitably this type of group gets 'burned out', and younger women and men are not stepping in to replace the older women and maintain the groups.

The kind of community participation envisaged in the Chilean health sector reforms also fails to recognise the interaction between the paid and unpaid economies. This is highlighted particularly in the timetabling of the groups' meetings and activities. Since most of the voluntary workers in the groups are women, they need to fit their activities around their own productive and reproductive responsibilities. It is easier for them, therefore, to organise activities in the evening. But the majority of paid health centre workers are also women, and are very poorly paid, like most workers in the public sector in Chile. The women who work in the health sector have their own reproductive responsibilities, so they are unable – and sometimes unwilling – to commit themselves to further working hours, especially since they are not paid overtime. Why should they work a longer day than they already do? This produced a lot of friction between the voluntary groups and the health workers: the programme expects volunteer groups to work alongside the formal health sector, but in this case they could not schedule mutually convenient meetings, and this left the health groups feeling unsupported by the health centres apart from a few individual allies. By failing to integrate informal groups into the formal sector, the 'Health with the people' programme leaves them effectively excluded from any meaningful participation.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that the participation programme points to a number of areas of concern. The narrow definition of participation with which the programme works means that it does not empower individuals, but simply uses their labour power to get jobs done. Although the women in the groups were aware of

this, they felt that they had little choice in the matter. The programme contains and underlines a contradiction that reflects an important gender-based distortion: while on the one hand the rhetoric of the ministry aims to reinforce the role of the family in improving health, on the other hand, it increases women's burden through the transfer of costs to the reproductive economy. As in most countries, the gender division of labour in Chile already makes women predominantly responsible for caring for the sick and for the health of their families. If they are doing more and more unpaid work in the community, they have less time to dedicate to health care in the household. This contradiction does not help the Ministry to achieve its aim of 'strengthening the role of the family in the organisation of health care'.

Discussion

The three examples – from Chile, Bangladesh and the UK – of the problems facing gender-sensitive service delivery warn us that participation is not always what we are told it is, and reveal how universally it is women and gender equality that fall into the all too familiar policy–practice gap. In the UK, while there are some excellent examples of gender-sensitive service delivery and good community participation, performance that does not match up to the ambitious scenarios of the modernising agenda can be hidden behind reporting and accounting procedures not designed to measure gender sensitivity. However, the current developments in British local government are very new, and while this generates a tendency to describe initiatives as though they were already happening before the ink is dry on the plans, it also suggests that there is space and a favourable policy environment for greater participation by people and greater gender sensitivity.

In developing countries, by contrast, the policy–practice gap can be lethal. A chilling anecdote from Tanzania showed how potentially good ideas at the centre can evaporate at the implementation stage. Even though the Tanzanian government has given assurances that women should have perinatal attendance free of charge, a rural woman and her baby died for lack of money to pay the

fees that were demanded for a hospital birth, either because the doctor involved was venal or because central government's message had not reached that remote rural area.

In El Salvador, the women's movement views health reform simply as another word for privatisation, with decentralised primary health care being devolved to the communities and fees for specialised and hospital treatment being affordable only by the well-off. There is doubt as to whether the government's advertised preferential treatment for poor people will be translated effectively into practice. Cost-intensive diseases such as breast and uterine/cervical cancer and AIDS, increasingly prevalent in El Salvador across all socioeconomic groups, are not covered by social insurance and have not been addressed in the health sector reforms.

It was pointed out that in most poor countries health care has always been a private-sector activity. In Bangladesh, for example, only two per cent of all women give birth in hospital. The rest, who give birth outside the hospital system, pay informal charges to birth attendants. However, as the Chilean experience illustrates, the way in which health care reforms transfer the burden of cost-sharing on to civil society, and particularly women, is not so much gender-blind by default as actively based on gender-biased notions of women as carers. An example from Brazil showed that this is not confined to the health sector. The World Bank-led educational reform recipe in Brazil calls for 'parental involvement' – making families share accountability for children's school success and emphasising homework, which implies more work for parents, especially mothers. At the same time, research in north-east Brazil has found a correlation between mothers' levels of schooling and children's performance in school. The education reform thus effectively perpetuates the cycle of educational underachievement.

Most disturbing of all is the extent to which sectoral reform programmes in developing countries are donor-led and donor-controlled. The World Bank, again spearheading the exercise and offering a model to other donors, appears to have learned few lessons about the importance of gender analysis and stakeholder participation from structural adjustment and the damage that it has done to public services in developing countries. Recent work by Cambridge Education Consultants with the Overseas Development Institute found that in many sectoral programmes, the reforms are disproportionately concerned with reforming budgetary processes, particularly with a view to satisfying donors. This emphasis tends to channel so much energy into making sure donors' priorities are met that energies are diverted away from implementation of the programme. The programmes tend to become coextensive with their own management and financial accounting processes and to forget that their purpose is to implement a service for people.

Yet perhaps the World Bank approach, though problematic, is not beyond rescue. The Bank and donors in general are increasingly sensitive to well-organised and well-targeted public criticism. Development NGOs and women's organisations need to scrutinise sectoral reform programmes and their implementation closely so as to develop a sound critique and propose gender-sensitive alternatives, and then decide whether they want to engage with the reforms and change them for the better, or to discredit and discard them.

(Jasmine Gideon)

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Working groups

Much of the second day of the seminar was devoted to three parallel working groups, which explored different but interrelated areas of strategy for developing gender-sensitive service delivery. Each working group based its discussion around a number of short case studies. The key conclusions of the working groups are listed in this section together with the case studies.

Group A: Strategies for developing gender-sensitive basic services

Case study one

Stephanie Segal, SSCT, London: Social care and social provision in London local authorities

The Community Care Act of 1990 and other social policy legislation in the United Kingdom encouraged public-sector providers of social care and provision to make sure service delivery met the needs of the client, incorporating cultural, gender and religious sensitivity into all working practices. This was coupled with new legislation concerned with children, an offshoot of which was that no child could be placed for adoption or fostering without careful attention to issues of culture, race and religion. It is fair to say that practice did not always match policy in this respect. At the same time, various new initiatives emerged in education which put more emphasis on cultural, gender and religious needs. Also, as a result of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act, many local authorities scrutinised all their service provision from this perspective.

The Modernising Government agenda and new ways of working, such as the 'best value' initiative, have encouraged service providers in the public sector to ensure that all their strategic planning reflects the needs of local communities, evaluating their services according to race and gender performance indicators and targets, and comparing their services with other appropriate services that are providing the same services to the same

population. It is hoped that this will result, among other things, in greater sensitivity to race, gender and other equalities.

London has an extremely diverse population, and its local government has had to be particularly creative in the development of gender-sensitive services. London's thirty-two local authorities work with huge multicultural, multiracial populations and in many areas of high poverty. An overarching Greater London Authority has just been introduced, but it is difficult to say yet what kind of responsibility it will have for London-wide strategic planning, particularly in social care and social services provision.

Each local authority has a social services department which offers comprehensive services, working often in partnership with community and voluntary organisations. Strategic planning offers services that cover statutory responsibilities but also link into local community needs, so each London local authority's annual plan will be different from another depending on the characteristics of its population. Annual plans incorporate performance indicators linked to staff teams' objectives and targets. All local authorities are attempting to ensure that race and gender equality is mainstreamed into all service delivery and employment practices. Services are monitored and evaluated by race and gender. From 2000 onwards, all services will also be regularly monitored externally by the Audit Commission. However, introducing the appropriate changes in ministries and other public bodies will not be rapid – it could take up to ten years.

Planning appropriate services

An example of appropriate service planning comes from an inner-city local authority with a very large, multicultural population. The local education authority has identified sixty-seven different languages as primary home languages. Many refugees live in the area, and there are pockets of severe poverty.

In order to ensure that the local authority's services were

catering to the needs of the local community and were gender-specific, a group of women was nominated by community and voluntary organisations and met on a monthly basis with social services managers. Health and education managers attended many of the meetings. As a result, new projects were integrated into service planning. Local councillors involved in the planning, budgetary and strategic planning process began to realise that services for women were not always funded appropriately. New projects included funding groups for women with mental health problems in a variety of different community settings, facilitated by professional mental health workers working in community languages. The groups were held at times convenient for the women. Crèches were provided by the local authority as well as trained staff, toys and books.

Other groups were set up for elderly and isolated women and men and for those with alcohol dependency. These projects were closely linked to appropriate professional teams in touch with the social services, community mental health, education, and housing departments, and to specific training initiatives (including classes in English as a second language and IT skills training). Distance learning packs have also been made available, so women can learn at home, if they wish, with the supervision of an external tutor.

Additional resources are now being sought to expand these projects and increase the number of community outreach workers employed by local partnership organisations. The projects have also enabled the local authority to gain access to key community women leaders in order to publicise important projects and to raise awareness on important projects, such as initiatives around domestic violence, sexual abuse, and women's safety, and to focus interest on different women's and children's health programmes.

Case study two

Maria Eulina Pessoa de Carvalho, NIPAM/UFPB, Brazil: Gender and education in Brazil

During the 1990s the Brazilian education system underwent a series of reforms and improvements. In that decade, Brazilian women surpassed men in educational attainment at all levels and in all aspects, including basic literacy, average number of years of schooling, and school and university enrolments. Paradoxically, one of the factors contributing to lower male educational enrolment is the early entrance of boys from low-income families into the informal labour market.

However, these advances do not indicate that gender equality has been achieved in education, or in society at large, in Brazil. The following details are illustrative:

◆ Although women are in the majority in both primary and higher education, women in universities still tend to enter traditionally 'feminine' courses of study.

◆ Gender equality is an invisible issue in Brazilian society, and the study of gender relations and awareness of its implications are still in their early stages in the educational and cultural fields. New national curriculum guidelines include gender relations as a content unit within sex education (a transversal curricular theme).

◆ Political and social action by and on behalf of women has grown rapidly in the 1990s, but women still have only seven per cent of all political representation.

In 1999–2000, DFID and the British Council supported two projects in João Pessoa, the capital city of Paraíba state in north-eastern Brazil, which were implemented by the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) with the collaboration of the feminist NGO '8th of March Women's Centre', the municipal education authority, and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies of the University of Leeds. The projects, using the media of radio and writing, aimed respectively at promoting women's participation in

public policy-making and raising gender awareness among teachers in João Pessoa.

Women and public policy – connecting female politicians, women's movements and radio audiences

Five radio programme series (a total of twenty-five programmes in CD format) were produced on different aspects of public policy as it relates to women, involving UFPB communications students, female politicians at legislative level, and women's movements and NGOs across the state. A competition for communications students selected five projects, which were developed by eight female students with the assistance of three university teaching staff. Five series were produced and recorded, on:

◆ health: reproductive health, including STD and AIDS, and public health services

◆ political participation: unions, popular associations, women's movements, parties, and affirmative action (quota system)

◆ violence: domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, trafficking in women, and male impunity

◆ education: family-differentiated education practices, sexist education, lives and careers of female teachers, and sex education

◆ work: gender and work, women's double shift, differential pay, globalisation and introducing flexibility, and female ghettos in the labour market.

Each programme began with a 'mini-soap' dramatising a problematic situation. This was followed by a dialogue/ debate between a programme host and various interviewees (local, state, and national level politicians; women's movements and NGO leaders; professionals and university professors; and 'ordinary' people), and participation by the audience and by local public figures in

a 'phone-in'. The project created opportunities for journalism students to develop capacity in socially relevant and gender-aware news production; for politicians to address women's issues; and for debate about public policy for women to be widely heard. Five AM/FM radio stations, reaching a total of 100 municipalities in the state of Paraíba, committed themselves to the transmission of the programmes (April 2000 onwards), reaching an estimated audience of 300,000. The project also engendered creative collaboration between the university and women's movements and increased the outreach of women's organisations. The impact of the project, the first project in the city in the area of radio-journalism to address gender issues, is potentially very wide.

Gender awareness among educators of the municipal school system of João Pessoa

The objective of this project was to promote gender awareness in primary education (grades 1–8) by sensitising educators (including teachers, headteachers, curriculum co-ordinators, counsellors, psychologists and social workers of the municipal school system) through talks, readings, study groups, a writing contest, and publication of a book. A writing competition for teachers was held, inviting works on the themes:

◆ my female and male students

◆ being a teacher and a woman

◆ masculine and feminine in the curriculum.

Four prizes were awarded and the winning essays were published in a book together with other materials. A preliminary reader was also produced to publicise the competition and the issues among educators.

Participation in both the writing competition and the programme of talks was low. It seemed that the activities were not a strong enough incentive to cause the teachers to break their usual routines, given their shortage of free

time and the expense of transport. The few participants were already to some extent aware of gender problems. However, a key indirect result of the project was the creation of an interdisciplinary gender studies centre (NIPAM) at UFPB, stimulated by the exchange with Leeds University's Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies which was part of the project.

This project raises several challenges: making time for teachers to attend extra-school activities; promoting basic gender awareness among educators and education authorities (either male or female), who consider it irrelevant compared with other economic and political problems; and changing organisational culture in schools.

Working group conclusions

In a wide-ranging discussion, issues were raised and many cases and examples from several countries (UK, El Salvador, Brazil, Bangladesh, South Africa) were mentioned. The following list shows the chief points for developing strategies that were discussed, most with clear consensus:

◆ Context (national, cultural, political, economic) is important. Although there are certain broad basic principles that apply relatively generally, there is no single, 'one-size-fits-all' recipe either for delivering gender-sensitive services or for increasing women's political participation. As regards resources, some local governments may have far more limited resources than others.

◆ Working across cultural contexts, town twinnings can be a useful strategy for the exchange of experiences and for building gender alliances on the basis of shared/compared experience. They should be treated with caution, however, given the differences in context and available funding, but there are good examples of information flows in both directions between South and North.

◆ Mechanisms to ensure the accountability of officials – for example, monitoring and evaluation systems,

feedback of results from audits, evaluations, consultations – are very necessary. There was a discussion of the gender indicators which are relevant to women's needs and priorities. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are necessary, using participatory research.

◆ There are cases where specific gender indicators are important, but it is vital that gender be integrated throughout systems and form part of all indicators.

◆ Local organisations need to document actual practices versus declared policies and use this as a lobbying tool to expose the policy–practice gap. At the same time, policy rhetoric emanating from the centre can give legitimacy to work at the local level even when working through the centre would not be successful.

◆ Influencing service delivery involves understanding technical issues and engaging with technicians. This includes learning their language in order to be able to influence them.

◆ Technical approaches tend to exclude issues such as gender. Having even one gender specialist within a service delivery team can remedy this. Both gender training for service providers and technical training for gender experts are necessary.

◆ Service providers at all levels need gender training. In particular, doctors ideally should receive 'gender' in their basic training.

◆ Governments may sometimes be following international priorities set by donor organisations such as the World Health Organization, even when they may have national problems of greater importance. This can affect their gender sensitivity; on the other hand, gender equality can and should be mainstreamed into all issues.

◆ Gender policies cannot be implemented by agencies that aren't gender-aware. NGOs need to be more gender-sensitive. Staff must inculcate gender sensitivity into their own lives and behaviour, not treat it solely as a training issue. At the same time, it must be

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recognised that changing attitudes and practices is a long, slow process.

◆ Gender sensitivity at grass-roots level is a major factor. If it is understood there, people will push for gender-sensitive services and elect appropriate people.

◆ The gender agenda is at least as important as the women's agenda. Concentrating on issues of women's political participation should not divert attention from the aim of changing the balance of gendered power relations.

Group B: Strategies for working with officials and the judiciary

Case study one

Angela Kiryabwire, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Uganda Association of Women Lawyers: *Access to justice for women in Uganda*

This brief presentation outlined the main activities within the access to justice programme run by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in Uganda and the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers.

The main objective of the programme was to ensure the protection of women's and children's rights by providing middle consultation and court representation. Four legal aid clinics had been established in the capital and regionally. These were primarily 'demand-led', being based on initiatives and issues of importance to women and poor communities. Representation in court had been provided through lawyers, including men sympathetic to the issues raised.

Legal education included teaching people how to write wills and how to deal with domestic disputes, because these were issues of importance to them. Needs assessment took place at the district level and the project was then piloted in two districts, with the district leaders providing an initial point of contact and mobilising people to attend basic training workshops.

The educational programme also involved working closely with the police, who were very co-operative and provided access to the police training centre. Issues covered included sensitivity to gender and the importance of handling cases sensitively in the initial stages. Subsequently women's desks were set up at police stations, facilitators provided and networks, including co-ordination with the Ministry of Gender, were established. Research on issues such as domestic violence and the domestic relations bill, was undertaken.

The programme also benefited from the support of volunteers. There are approximately 140 members, including students who gain valuable work experience, and six lawyers at the main office.

Working with the judiciary involved lobbying on the way women and their cases are handled by the police and in the courts. Lobbying and awareness-raising can change the attitudes of important decision-makers. An interesting example comes from the issue of rape. In a rape case, the term 'bad manners' had been used by the victim (this is a popular euphemism for rape in parts of Uganda). Rather than dismiss or overlook the term the judge had made a point of establishing the meaning of the term in court and reaching a common agreement or understanding of what was being described. She was seen to be taking the case seriously. For lobbying purposes, it is significant that female judges in Uganda have their own organisation and are also members of an international body, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), with national branches in several African countries.

The educational programme also targeted men and children, the latter through workshops in schools and rights clubs established as a forum for children to discuss issues and feed into the debates.

There were some attempts to reconcile customary law with formal law (for example, on laws of succession) by producing booklets, translated into local languages, explaining the legal procedure in these cases. Influencing attitudes on customary law had largely been facilitated by

district leaders as part of their continuing role in providing support within literacy programmes. A local drama production based on some of the issues was staged publicly and proved to be a successful and enjoyable way of raising awareness.

Discussion

Discussion following this presentation occupied most of the rest of the session. Questions helped to place the case study in the context of Uganda and generated wider debate and a sharing of experiences on access to justice programmes in different countries. The discussion highlighted a number of themes which were brought together to form the conclusions when considering strategies for working with officials and the judiciary:

Access to justice programmes and strategies for working with officials

It was felt that there were a number of key elements to access to justice programmes and that gender sensitivity had to be present in each of the following components:

◆ *Legal education and awareness-raising*
Workshops, seminars and training might include the following themes: how laws are made, different stages in the legal process, the supporting machinery for addressing legal issues, people's rights under law (women and children's rights were often specified), and ways of simplifying the legal process and better understanding the legal system. Educational programmes were often demand-led, as in Uganda (writing wills).

It has been particularly important to address the contradictions between customary law and formal law. In Uganda and Namibia, attempts have been made to reconcile the differences through educational booklets, translated into local languages.

In both Uganda and Namibia, men have been targeted in educational programmes. Men's groups against violence are growing in Namibia and an

awareness-raising process is starting on gender (not just women's issues) and issues of identity for African men. Children also had been brought together to discuss issues and learn about their rights, often in schools and rights clubs.

◆ *Legal aid*
Clinics and legal aid centres were felt to be a useful resource; they were generally funded by NGOs, but there were also examples of government-run legal aid programmes (e.g. Uganda).

◆ *Policy, advocacy and networking*
There was discussion about the need to create greater access to justice by actually changing the legal system, influencing policies, and raising awareness of issues. This was considered important not only at an official level, within the formal legal system, but also at the local level in traditional forms of dispute resolution. It was agreed that some aspects of traditional systems can be influenced in a positive way to ensure, for example, greater gender sensitivity.

However, legal education and changes to the legal system do not in themselves create justice. Success measured in terms of achieving changes to laws in the books can be deceptive. Rape again provided an illustration. Even in the UK, where there are strong lobbying and advocacy groups, access to justice in cases of rape is still highly problematic. Currently only one in ten cases ends in conviction, and this is a sharp drop from the one in three convictions that were achieved a few years ago.

On a more positive note, laws on rape in Namibia have been changed to protect more vulnerable groups, to include boys, and to include an understanding of the concept of coercion rather than consent. In this respect legal education must keep up to date with changes in the legal system so as to keep people informed of their rights. It is also important to distinguish issues clearly so that they can be tackled in a meaningful way. For example, domestic violence is not a separate issue in Namibian law and therefore has been difficult to challenge; progressive proposals

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are currently on the table for reforms.

Strategies for policy and advocacy include:

◆ working with relevant ministries (justice, women/gender, children's affairs, etc.)

◆ nominating 'honorary' women to promote issues proactively

◆ engaging with principal parliamentarians

◆ identifying the right allies at the right time

◆ acknowledging officials who are helpful.

◆ *Research*
Research was felt to be important in order to identify the major issues (for example, domestic violence and the Domestic Relations Bill in Uganda). In Namibia, violence against women has cut across colour, ethnicity and party politics more than any other issue, and recognition of this has enabled media coverage and considerable lobbying potential (see *Unifying themes* on page 67).

Independent research is also important to challenge official records. For example, in Namibia NGOs and support groups estimate that one woman is raped every hour of the day, but this contrasts with a much lower figure on police records, because many of the cases will not be reported to the police.

◆ *Auditing*
It was recommended that state budgets should be more informed and more sensitive to gender issues.

◆ *Co-ordination with officials*
Co-ordination with the police was felt to be important in terms of the initial stages of any case. The Ugandan experience had been positive. (It was noted that a similar strategy of working with the police and establishing women's desks had been adopted in Nicaragua.) In the Philippines, police stations employ women desk officers to help with cases of rape, but it continues to be difficult to get people to report cases.

In Uganda, the issue of maintenance for children had been taken up in co-ordination with the police so that the judiciary could take the necessary action (for example, taking individuals to the children's court). Progress is slow, but at least children's issues are now on the agenda.

Other strategies for working with officials include: identifying incentives, performance appraisals, training, working together and co-ordinating activities with the local-level administration, and integrating the activities of civil society organisations with officials to encourage dialogue and links between different groups.

Working with the media was seen to have enormous potential for education, awareness-raising and lobbying. In Namibia, local radio stations have been used to promote issues through plays in local languages. Campaigns have been promoted through the media. Talk shows, in which local people can participate, have been a particularly popular and cost-effective way of carrying out awareness-raising programmes. However, misdirected media coverage could be dangerous, as in the Philippines when the death penalty was introduced for rape. There were even debates there about banning media coverage of this issue entirely because of its role in promoting 'knee-jerk' reactions to the problem, including suggestions of televising the executions, rather than seriously raising awareness and questioning the wider causes of the problem.

◆ *Working with lawyers and law students*
Issues around the role of lawyers, from the funding of a career in law to working with law students, cropped up in overall discussions on access to justice programmes. In the Philippines, preparing for a career in law is extremely costly and therefore exclusive, whereas in Uganda, the government pays for most law students and they are entitled to practice independently once they qualify. In Namibia, a bursary is available to enable law students to carry out internships. The Legal Assistance Centre has taken on foreign students to carry out research. These arrangements have been

beneficial to the centre, as the students carry out high-quality research at low cost, making the services more accessible and freeing-up time for lawyers to provide the legal aid support.

In Uganda, volunteer lawyers provide an important human resource in this respect. In a relationship of mutual co-operation, the ministry of justice draws on their skills while providing them with valuable work experience and support in their careers.

◆ *Funding*
The cost of lawyers is just one aspect of the problem of access to justice. Access to the courts and the legal system is also an expensive and lengthy business. In Uganda, many opt instead to avoid the courts and resolve their disputes at village level. People are encouraged to have minor issues dealt with by the local council where there is no need for lawyers, relieving the pressure on the upper levels of the system.

Access to justice programmes are also generally short of resources and their potential for working with the media, to lobby and create networks is often undermined by lack of funds.

◆ *Working with men and children*
Bringing everyone 'on board' in a more holistic and inclusive way seemed to be an increasingly popular and successful approach.

Men's groups have emerged largely as a result of the educational and awareness-raising programmes. Namibian Men for Change was established this year following a conference on men against violence and marked a national effort by men to respond to violence against women. The Legal Assistance Centre funded this group to organise and establish itself in the first instance. It was noted that similar groups have emerged elsewhere, for instance the group of men against violence in Nicaragua.

Rights clubs in Namibia offer children the opportunity to learn about their rights and take part in changing attitudes.

Unifying themes

The group spent some time reflecting on the unifying themes and common problems that span country, class and race, and how identification of these – while maintaining awareness of context – has helped to raise awareness about issues such as domestic violence.

Questions about working with customary law and traditional dispute resolution, and the relationship between these and the formal system, were also raised. One concern was that decisions taken at the village level (for example, in order to relieve pressure at mainstream judicial level, as in Uganda) might serve to reinforce traditional power structures, which may or may not be representative of women. Although women are represented at all levels in Uganda, it is not fully clear how women's issues are addressed at the different levels.

Angela highlighted the difficulty of separating the law from the community in Uganda, pointing out that the formal legal approach can be very difficult to reconcile with traditional values and can have a negative impact on other members of the community or family. For example, following a strict application of the law it might, in some cases, be necessary to remove the male head of household, which can have an even more negative impact on the women and children.

As noted above it was felt that some aspects of traditional systems can be positively influenced to achieve, for example, greater gender sensitivity, so that the enhanced systems might become a more suitable form of resolving the issue than the application of formal justice measures.

The difficulty in the Philippines of dealing with issues such as domestic violence within traditional systems of dispute resolution was highlighted. Incest is a common problem and is still seen as a 'private matter' to be dealt with at local level (unlike crimes against the state, which are dealt with at a higher level), and many cases of it go unreported.

On the other hand, dealing with these issues at a higher level can also be problematic. In the Philippines, the high incidence of rape attracted media coverage and ultimately the state imposed the death penalty for the crime, an action against which many NGOs have campaigned. A staggering 300 of the 860 people on death row were involved in cases of rape and the government's policy of severity appears not to be working as a deterrent.

There was also discussion of the need for a greater understanding of the issues around a crime like rape and the dangers of the 'old boys' club' syndrome, where high-ranking politicians and other powerful people become exempt from prosecution.

Case study two

Carolyne Dennis, SOAS, University of London:
Women's associations and the district administrators in Ghana

The presentation of findings from Carolyne's work with women's associations and the district administrators in Ghana provided an opportunity to reflect on some of the wider issues raised in the main part of the discussions. Her research showed that women's community-based organisations played an important role beyond the more obvious one – representation of women and women's issues – and the workshop on which Carolyne reported emerged as a particularly positive experience of co-ordination with the district-level officials.

There is a high presence of donors in Ghana and the region, and decentralisation, forced by donors, has made a big impact inasmuch as resources at local level are tapped for most projects. With a return to party politics and governmental elections eight women representatives had gained a high profile, although there had been a backlash against these women which seemed to coincide with the privatisation of the press.

In Ghana women play a significant role in income generation, and women's associations, economic (traders')

associations and religious associations are important providers of support to women in illness and improving access to credit. They also provide a source of social networks.

In a workshop to present selected research results to members of a variety of community-based organisations (CBOs), different groups' interpretations of the role and importance of women's organisations were revealing. Important questions were asked of the district officials and the women's organisations independently and their responses were recorded:

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1 How do women's organisations contribute to their communities?

A *District officials*

- increase women's incomes

- contribute to water facilities, sanitation

- improve market facilities.

B *Women's organisations*

- provide money and food to entertain visitors

- mobilising communal labour to clean town

- help build development projects

- mobilise teenage girls

- advise on teenage pregnancy.

Women's associations appeared to focus on income generation, women's role in health, and creating a reputation for women. Interestingly, the workshop highlighted the impact of donors in the community and particularly on women's organisations. The district officials, on the other hand, who tend mostly to be men, located women's role in money-related matters, labour, the market and services.

2 How could district administrations assist women's organisations?

A *District officials*

◆ need for women and development sub-committee
co-operation to appeal to aid agencies to come to district

◆ organise training.

B *Women's organisations*

◆ provide training

◆ provide financial assistance

◆ provide boreholes

◆ provide farm implements, seeds and marketing facilities.

3 Suggestions from the workshop

◆ District administration should keep an inventory of women's organisations.

◆ NCWD offices at the assembly should co-ordinate women's groups activities.

◆ There is a need for co-ordination among women's organisations, district officials and regional officials.

◆ There is a need for budgetary allocation for women's organisations.

◆ District administrations, assemblies, and ministries have to be informed of the activities of women's organisations.

The second question was particularly instrumental in helping district officials to appreciate the role of women's associations in attracting aid agencies and, therefore, donor funding to the area. Attracting donor funds into the area was clearly seen to be a role for women, but this had largely been taken for granted up until now. However, the women's organisations' good relationship with donors won them some respect in the eyes of the district administration.

Finally, the workshop participants were asked to identify needs and make suggestions.

The conclusions from the workshop were particularly important in relation to the status and potential impact of women's organisations. As a result, they were seen to be playing a significant role in a donor-led community and it was therefore recommended that they co-ordinate with the district level and feed into national-level women's organisations.

The role of women and grass-roots organisations in different contexts became a point for discussion after the presentation, illustrated by a number of examples. In the Philippines, studies had shown that the rates of returns on credit programmes had been higher for women's groups than for co-operatives, making them a more popular group to fund where credit programmes were concerned. In Uganda, the Ministry of Gender had also found it particularly useful to co-ordinate with local women's groups; while in Namibia bilateral aid agreements mean that most grass-roots organisations find it crucial to have a good working relationship with the government.

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Group C: Strategies for working with and within the local council

Case study one

Kate Phillips, Active Learning Centre, Glasgow: *Rights-based education for accountable services in Uganda*

Devolution of power in Uganda has shifted decision-making over major services such as water, education, health and community development to local councils. As with a number of African governments, Uganda believes that bringing decisions on services physically closer to the community and placing them in the hands of local community representatives will make basic services more accountable, especially to rural communities, where women are the majority of the voters. Accompanying decentralisation, an affirmative action programme has brought a number of previously excluded groups including women, young people and people with disabilities, into the democratic process at local council level through a system of quotas.

However, decentralisation is not without its problems, particularly as regards its gender aspects, and affirmative action is not always a panacea. The project described here is a co-operation between the Active Learning Centre (ALC) at Glasgow Caledonian University and the Ugandan NGO Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), which focused on training trainers to work with local councillors elected under this system of special interest groups, to develop services which were accessible and accountable to women, young people and those with disabilities. ALC works for people's rights through education and training, especially developing skills for people's participation in decision-making. FOWODE, which emerged from the women's caucus in the 1994–5 Constituent Assembly, works to sensitise and educate women on their rights and equip them for political participation, and, in collaboration with women's groups in the community, to identify strategies for increasing women's representation and participation in decision-making.

Key questions

◆ How do we ensure basic services meet the needs of real women in the community as opposed to providers' notional ideas of women?

◆ If women in decision-making positions have the potential to develop more gender-sensitive services, how do we strengthen that potential and help to build transparency and accountability?

◆ How do we give women representatives the skills to uncover the needs, and make demands on behalf of, the poorly educated and less vocal women in the community?

A rights-based approach

Decentralisation and affirmative action from 1997 onwards have brought a large number of people into the political process who are inexperienced in government and often have little basic education. There is an enormous need for education and training of local councillors; few of those from previously excluded groups have the confidence or capacity to be effective at the levels of public responsibility into which they have been thrust.

The project used a rights-based approach; that is, it took as its starting point the idea that in order to make local services more accountable, greater participation by local women in local decision-making was necessary. This may be contrasted with gender-planning techniques which would concentrate on a gender-needs analysis and the mainstreaming of these needs into service delivery.

Feedback from the councillor education sessions indicated that the discussions about rights were very lively. Contrary to expectations, people wanted to debate the many ways in which lack of rights and low expectations breed poverty, corruption and suffering in daily lives. During the project evaluations the trainers reflected on the way in which rights

and development go hand in hand. They highlighted the importance to poor people of being able to influence public spending on water, education and health services and directing these to where they are most needed for rural and inner city development.

Women as active agents

A rights approach focuses on people as active agents rather than recipients of policy, drawing attention to the shift from those in power defining the needs of the poor and vulnerable to people's participation in decisions about their own situations. It uses a 'bottom-up' rather than a 'top-down' methodology, and empowers women to pursue solutions to their own exclusion from shaping essential services.

CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was a key document for the project, along with the Ugandan constitution. This provided a legitimate basis for women's action. Both the convention and the constitution confirm the principles of equality of men and women. We have found that CEDAW provides a useful framework for a rights-based approach to tackling women's exclusion, because it addresses the main areas of discrimination faced by women with special attention to the rights of rural women. Unlike other international conventions, CEDAW is concerned with both the individual and collective development needs. It talks of women's exclusion from many fields of life, including decision-making.

The programme

The eighteen-month project took the form of a training of trainers programme in local councils in Uganda, using the cascade method. Training of trainers was chosen because the target population of women was very numerous, multilingual and widespread. Interested women councillors were trained as trainers, because of their motivation, their capacity to be trained, and their involvement in the wider political process.

The structure of the programme was similar in each case and included, as well as the initial needs-assessment and the training of trainers, community workshops to develop materials and carry out planned activities related to follow-up, evaluation, reporting, and development of a range of educational materials. The training of trainers focused on:

◆ women's rights, including their democratic right to participate

◆ skills necessary for participation in public life and representing people in a local council

◆ flexible adult education skills for work with people with low schooling levels.

Skills training subjects included:

◆ reading of budgets

◆ taking part in meetings

◆ representing people

◆ campaigning

◆ lobbying

◆ public speaking

◆ assertiveness

◆ organising time.

The community workshops involved training to feed back the communities' reactions, and to enable the communities to develop their own training materials. They gave space for people to consider and work out what the role of representatives is: for instance, whether in Uganda it is explicit that women councillors are women's representatives.

Understanding and making budgets was an important area of training, and was commented on favourably in feedback on the project, but equally important is the challenge of achieving a level of representation or capacity to make alliances to increase strength in the

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council, in order to pass the changes wanted. Training in lobbying, campaigning and communication skills was important in view of the need to form coalitions with other excluded groups.

The training for trainers in participative, flexible adult education skills and adaptation of materials for different audiences was important for the sustainability of the activities beyond their immediate lifetime. Many of the trainers trained in this project continued to offer education skills beyond the life of the project, for instance providing training related to Uganda's forthcoming multi-party democracy referendum.

Case study two

Maria Angela F. Perpetua, AKBAYAN (Citizen's Action Party) and Institution of Politics and Governance, Philippines: *Training village-level community leaders and government officials*

In responding to the Asian crisis, women as household managers have borne the burden of inflation, rising interest rates, falling employment, cost-cutting in the public sectors, and rising costs of food, health and other services. Women are marginalized in formal decision-making at local level, and, although women's involvement has increased in recent years, it is still very low. Women's struggle at local level is for increased representation, and gender equity. However, increased representation of women in itself is not necessarily the answer. Women argue that women politicians are more likely to reach and represent the interests of other women and that, in the process, they can change the way power and policies work.

The Local Government Code creates opportunities for civil society engagement at the local level. The Institute of Politics and Governance (IPG) is the secretariat of a consortium of NGOs and non-profit organisations in the Philippines, which includes AKBAYAN. They seized the opportunities provided and carried out a project training women in local government to develop resource

materials. A particular emphasis concerned participatory development planning, of which with the overall aim was to mainstream women's agendas and perspectives in local government.

The following are some of the outcomes of the training and issues:

◆ Previously, women had often participated in local government as substitutes for their husband or other male relatives. Women began to put their own interests forward in the *barangay* development planning processes.

◆ Working with mixed organisations, women faced men's resistance to the issues of concern to women.

◆ In two political parties, women began to organise to press for thirty-five per cent female representation.

◆ The greater participation of women may have had some impact on the allocation of resources. For example, a woman mayor, who was approached by a woman councillor after their training, made efforts to eliminate corruption in her council and to take control of the budget. She discovered that 400,000 of an annual 700,000 pesos of council expenditure is paid in bribes and 'sweeteners', and reallocated this money for other spending.

Case study three

Mwajuma S. Masaiganah, Tanzania: *Participation, local governance and poverty in relation to gender*

Participatory exercises with villagers in Tanzania illustrate their dissatisfaction with local government. In fact, they often see local government structures as either peripheral, or an obstacle to development, for example, in the way that land allocation is handled. Resources are often withheld by district councils which should be allocated for development. A participatory study was therefore undertaken looking at citizens', and particularly women's, participation in the local government processes. These are some of its findings.

History of local government in Tanzania

Local government in Tanzania in its current form began under British colonial rule in 1926. In 1950, local chiefs were vested with powers of indirect rule. Following the political struggle for citizens' power throughout the 1950s, independence was gained in 1960. In 1967, under the socialist government, the Arusha declaration ushered in the Ujamaa system ('villagisation', requiring people to live in communal village settlements), which sought, among other aims, to enable more efficient delivery of services.

In 1972, a local administration act created regional level structures. This emphasised greater participation of people in decision-making processes and gave more power and responsibility to local councils. It was also intended to enable central government to distribute resources more equitably, through the local councils. However, the result, in fact, was to lengthen the chain of decision-making and hamper distribution of funds and implementation. District committees never represented the 'common man' and were concentrated at district level. Most people considered the traditional chiefdoms relatively effective compared with the more recent system.

Since 1996, however, a new decentralisation programme has been in operation, which sets out principles for making local government autonomous, democratic, transparent and accountable. The principles include greater women's participation in local government structures. Bodies such as ward development committees and even district councils are not widely regarded as important or efficient institutions of governance.

Women's participation in the local government process

The Tanzanian constitution provides for a role for women in decision-making, specifying:

◆ at village council level: twenty-five per cent women

◆ at district council level: five per cent women.

Political parties have quotas in parliament, and there are some women at ministerial and deputy ministerial level. However, active participation by women is very low at all levels, since the majority of voters are men, and men, therefore, control all decision-making. At the village and sub-village levels, women's participation is equally limited, for several interrelated reasons:

◆ culture and tradition – for example, accusations of witchcraft against older, wiser women; seclusion of sexes for religious reasons

◆ men's attitudes and behaviour – for example, traditional sexual division of labour; men spend household income on drinking, so women don't have respectable clothes for meetings; domestic violence

◆ lack of education for girls – general fall in enrolment since the 1970s, when Tanzania achieved universal primary education; demands on girls' time at home rob them of time for private study; early pregnancy

◆ women's low economic power in society.

Interventions to address women's lack of participation

Using participatory methodologies, activities with women and men were undertaken in a number of villages over a period of some months, to stimulate a dialogue around these problems. These included discussions of what power and well-being meant to women and men, and drawing comparative daily activity profiles for women and men, and girls and boys. Capacity building was carried out in communities to address these issues. Some changes in patterns of behaviour ensured: for example, a shift from women collecting all the water manually to men assisting with water collection using bicycles. Work was done with villagers to reintegrate older women who had been previously excluded from the community as 'witches'. Also, in response to villagers' opinions that local government institutions were of no use to them, arrangements were made for villagers to meet higher authorities at district and regional level. Although initially

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reluctant to speak up, the villagers did eventually challenge the authorities, for instance 'naming and shaming' some district representatives who had never visited villages for which they were supposed to be responsible; the representatives were subsequently ordered by their superiors to spend time in the villages.

Women's views on power

Lack of power in terms of the ability to take one's own decisions or influence those of others emerged as an issue in all the study areas. Women who have limited decision-making powers within the household particularly mentioned this issue. This is most obvious in women's lack of choice of husband. The women of Mwang'anda, for instance, complained that their fathers often told them to marry husbands much older than them, who would provide many cattle as a bride-price. Refusal may incur a beating. At Bukundi, about ten women had been forced to marry against their will, and they were usually not the first wife. (Mwang'anda PPA report.)

Case study four

Kripa Ananth Pur, Development Consultant, Mysore, India: *Women in local self-governance in India*

This presentation is based on the experience of the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) in the state of Karnataka, India, which were created by decentralisation from the district level to village assembly, creating new tiers of local-level government institutions, and including quotas of seats for women.

The activities of the project with which Kripa Ananth Pur was involved included training for women in local governance structures and creating a lobby for the effective participation of women, through:

- awareness-raising
- training
- conventions
- networking
- exchange visits.

It was important to reach women in the home, who have very little access to information as men do not share information at household level.

Among the activities was the production of a thirteen-week radio soap opera, which gave information on different facets of the decentralised structure.

There are two different types of training: that provided by government through the state training institution SIRD, which reaches mostly men; and NGO training which reaches many more women. The NGO training programme trains trainers from a range of fields, e.g. agricultural extension or adult education workers, who then go on to train elected representatives. This is done in five phases.

The project and its impact

The NGO, SEARCH, held conventions of 150 to 200 women elected representatives to allow them to discuss and explore together the meaning of process and their achievements in their role as elected representatives. From the women's point of view, simply attending a meeting can be an achievement but some women have since taken up social justice issues, and some have taken up issues from their wards.

A 'lifeline' methodology was used for working with women, chronologically mapping their lives from childhood. This was a very powerful tool for unlocking the women's analysis of their own experiences. One example given was that of an illiterate woman who used in her map flowers to represent her happy childhood, birds to represent her husband and children, rocks to represent obstacles such as

difficult experiences after marriage, a stream emptying out when her husband died, sunshine to represent a family friend who encouraged her to stand for election. She represented herself as a bird with one leg, signifying her lack of a husband.

Networks were created to feed back and discuss problems encountered. This was also very powerful as a strategy. The example was given of a woman who was having problems with getting control over a piece of land, and who mobilised others from her network. When a large group went to the relevant office to deal with the issue, a result was achieved, which would probably not have been the case if the woman had gone alone.
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Men in local government are now also starting to take notice. Few of them have benefited from training, either, except for the local president, and when they see how women representatives are beginning to know more about processes and procedures they realise that they too could benefit from this knowledge.

Constraints and challenges

Men in the communities put up constant obstacles to women's participation in the *panchayats*. They demand, for instance, that only 'educated' women may be elected, although the same criterion does not apply to them. More seriously, women who were elected in the last elections are not being selected as candidates in the next one, even though a large majority of them are eager to continue. Although sixty to seventy per cent of the women were highly motivated to contest a second election, their communities did not allow them to stand. Traditional, informal governance structures at village level, which are mostly bodies for the resolution of disputes, blocked them. These bodies are dominated by male elders and women are not involved in them, or even allowed to speak on matters affecting them. Consequently, a large question mark hangs over the sustainability of women's participation in the *panchayats*.

Women have also begun arguing for equal (fifty per cent) representation on the councils. With the current mandatory women's representation of one-third, women cannot veto men's decisions on the allocation of funds. For example, when the Ford Foundation provided resources for a participatory process in which villagers would put forward their own proposals for microprojects, to decide on the use of untied funds allocated to the PRIs, the women wanted health, water source and a public toilet, whereas the men wanted a community centre and support for fishing. Although men agreed to women's demands in discussion, because they had a two-thirds majority, they could overrule the women when it came to the vote.

Case study five

Ajaya Kumar Mohapatra, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India: *Gender and participation in local self-governance in India*

The participation of women in formal politics in India is not high. The highest percentage of women's representation in Parliament ever achieved is 7.7 per cent in 1984–89, and, in the current electoral term, which began in 1996, it is just 6.4 per cent. The highest percentage of women in state legislatures was 11.9 per cent, in Madhya Pradesh in 1957. In most states of India women's participation in the state legislatures has declined over time, increasing only in four of the ten states between the 1950s and the 1990s. Women's participation in national political parties has also been low. PRIA carried out a study in ten states which showed that women's participation in politics has declined from the mid-1980s onwards.

Several factors contribute to this situation: the political parties' reluctance to field women candidates, rigid patriarchal structures inhibiting women's participation in the public sphere, and women's own hesitation to enter the political process. PRIA's study examined women's political participation and assessed the effect of affirmative action measures, chiefly the reservation of seats for women in local government institutions.

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Affirmative action to bring women into the political process

In 1974, the Committee on the Status of Women pointed out the low status of women and recommended affirmative action to reserve positions for women in the political process to reverse the decline and provide an opportunity for women to articulate their views. It was argued that if women entered the corridors of power they would be able to take up women's issues and legitimise them in the eyes of the people and the political parties.

In 1978, the Committee on Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) recommended the reservation of two seats for women in each *panchayat* and co-option of women on to these bodies. This was followed by a national debate on the issue, initiated by the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. During his period as prime minister the National Perspective Plan for women was introduced, in 1988, recommending the reservation of thirty per cent of seats for women at all levels, from the local-level, *panchayats* to the national parliament and suggesting that thirty per cent of office-bearers in the Panchayati Raj bodies should be women.

After further debate, a provision for the reservation of women in political structures was incorporated into the constitution as the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992). The 73rd Amendment provides for 33.3 per cent of seats reserved for women members and chairpersons in all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj institutions (village, intermediate and district levels). This is the first time in India's history that there has been an opportunity for the entry of such a large number of women into political participation.

Profile of the women *panchayat* members

A profile of the elected women representatives in 1997 showed that they tend to be in the age group twenty to forty, and many were illiterate. Most of the women had been elected for the first time and had no prior political experience, an expected result of the sharp expansion of

opportunity for women offered by the reservation system. They tended also to have been elected largely by consensus, and their self-motivation was low. However, the community's perception of the women *panchayat* members was that, although inexperienced, they were easy to communicate with and were sensitive to people's problems. Funding for their campaigns came from their families, suggesting that the women representatives belonged to relatively high socio-economic strata, especially in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

The women's experience in local government

Although the reservation system enabled more women to enter the arena of political decision-making, it was difficult for them to participate meaningfully. A number of barriers was identified, including resistance and non-co-operation from their male counterparts and apathy on the part of government officials; suppression of the women on the basis of caste, class, gender, education and the *purdah* system; the women's lack of confidence, lack of awareness of their duties and responsibilities, and need for training in these respects; and informal (male) political networks which nullified the efforts of the women representatives.

Conclusions

A major conclusion of the PRIA study was that lack of adequate information about their roles and responsibilities and the workings of the *panchayat* system was a big hindrance to the functioning of the women representatives. Better dissemination of information to the women, as well as capacity-building focusing on the workings of local government, is vital. Efforts also need to be made to change the attitudes of village-level officials and to encourage government officials and others, including the media, to support women representatives.

Working group conclusions

The five case studies from four countries, enriched by inputs from other contexts in the discussion, concentrated

on constraints to women's participation in local politics and how to overcome them, and drew intersections between service provision and the political level, for instance in the budgeting process.

The different experiences described in the case studies focused the discussion on a set of issues that included the following:

◆ To what extent are constitutional processes supporting women and gender equality an enabling environment? As well as the evidence from Uganda, it was noted that in Scotland, constitutional support for women resulted in almost forty per cent women's representation in the Scottish Parliament, which has led to a mainstreaming policy and to more systematic consultation with women. On the other hand, as many examples showed, mere numbers of women in decision-making positions are not enough.

◆ Can the decentralisation process engage with gender equality? The case studies show that quotas and reserved seats for women in a decentralised framework are not guaranteed to work for women.

◆ Case studies show that male-dominated informal political structures often overrule or ignore elected women representatives and oppose grass-roots women's participation, for example, in participatory research. An example from India showed that although there have been great gains for women in electoral structures, their participation has been undermined by informal village or district power structures. If women's organisations higher up identify these biases, local-level patriarchy is more strongly challenged.

◆ The link between decentralisation of politics and decentralised service delivery was not fully 'unpacked' by the group, but it was noted that the redefinition of citizens as customers or consumers, and the multiplication of areas in which they are invited to have influence, has a fragmenting effect. For example, in Bangladesh, twenty different women's groups are organised around obtaining different services, but they do not come together as women.

◆ Whom do women representatives represent? Can women represent other women? The issue is very complex; what divides us? Often, once women enter parliament or local government, they stop operating as women and operate as MPs, having to balance the needs of their 'natural' constituency, women, with those of their electoral constituency. In Uganda women are constitutionally mandated to represent women's interests, whereas in the British parliament women represent their party and their geographical constituency, not necessarily women's interests.

◆ There is a need for a greater support base for women in political institutions.

◆ All services are by nature delivered at local level, but the resources for delivering them come from other levels. This is why stakeholder participation at all levels is necessary. Local government lobbies central government to get it to deliver services back at the local level.

◆ NGOs and intermediary organisations are critical in linking the central and local levels, but NGOs often don't trust central government or donors. Intermediary organisations also need to be politically independent: in Zambia, for instance, the women's national organisation is part of an NGO platform, and quite strong, whereas in Kenya the national women's organisation is part of the ruling party and therefore cannot speak independently for women.

Strategies

In suggesting some strategies, it proved useful to revisit the questions asked in the Uganda case study, and to group the strategies accordingly.

1 How do we ensure that basic services meet gender needs?

   ◆ Greater and more meaningful participation of women at all levels of central and local government

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is an important part of the answer, but it is not the whole answer. Changing formal and informal gendered power relations is also essential.

◆ Consultation with women and men, monitoring and evaluation, and design of gender indicators are all vital strategies.

2   How do we equip women in decision-making to develop more gender-sensitive service delivery and build transparency and accountability?

3   How do we give women representatives the potential and skills to uncover the needs of the poorest and least vocal?

These two questions may be considered together strategically, since training and capacity-building were seen as the most important strategy in this respect. There was a variety of experience and views on training, but consensus on points such as:

◆ Gender training should be not only for women but also men – although a warning was issued that men's training can tend to absorb the lion's share of gender training budgets, leaving special budgets for women starved of cash.

◆ Appropriate capacity-building for women representatives needs to go beyond gender analysis and be practical, 'how-to-do-it', skills-based, and rights-based. It should include such issues as how and where decisions are made, how budgets are planned and allocated and how they can be made gender-sensitive.

◆ A rights-based approach is appropriate for uncovering and legitimising the needs of the poorest and least vocal sectors.

◆ Design indicators for local accountability. Women need to know they have a right to information, for example, on budgets and expenditure.

To these a fourth question may be added:

4   How do we encourage men to change?

◆ Challenge patriarchy at the local level (partners, family, informal power structures).

◆ Raise awareness among boys of gender issues at grass-roots level.

◆ Gender training to change the attitudes of hostile or apathetic local officials (usually men).

◆ Women and girls do not use services fully because of demands on their time. Invest in reducing and redistributing women's workload.

◆ Engage with political parties, to begin to deal with patriarchy.

Closing responses and discussion

Unifying themes from the seminar

Milly Jafta, Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia

We have shared an extremely varied range of issues and experiences over these two days, and I would like to reflect on a few constant themes, from my own perspective.

Context

Several times we have been reminded of the importance of context: whatever happens, happens within a certain cultural, political and economic environment. Thus, we cannot look at local government and women's participation in it, or the provision of effective, gender-sensitive local services, without taking into account the realities of the community within which we work at the local, regional and national levels.

The policy gap

Another important issue in our discussions has been the policy–practice gap. We heard a shocking example of this from Tanzania, where, although there is a national policy whereby women and children do not have to pay hospital fees if they cannot afford them, a woman died as a result of not being able to pay for this service. This gap exists in my country too, where, for instance, education is constitutionally free of charge and children are supposed to attend school until the age of sixteen, yet we often hear complaints that children cannot go to school because their parents cannot afford the school fees.

Party politics and women

The third issue I would like to raise concerns women's participation in party politics. We are advocating in Namibia for women to get to know their political parties – their structures, and the people who decide on the party list – and to either get themselves on the list or lobby for other women to be selected, and to vote for women. We heard an example from India of women who enter the political system at the local level but never move any

higher. We have found this as well: a few women representatives have been re-elected to local governments, but none has moved up to the regional level.

Learning the technical language

I have mentioned that one of the successes of our office in terms of gender is that one of our researchers is a qualified lawyer. When we go to lobby people in the judiciary or discuss a case with legal people, she is able to use the language they understand and speak. I know it is difficult to learn the technical or professional language of everyone we deal with as gender activists, but I think it is very, very important as a way to build strategic relationships.

Women's organising around common themes

In Namibia, although women are divided along lines of politics, colour and income, we have been brought together as women by a particular issue: violence against women. We are interested in analysing what factors have made our actions around this issue so effective and whether we could use this model for further lobbying and advocacy on other themes. We should look for other common issues around which we could organise women, especially *vis-à-vis* local government. Even in a local community there are many different strata of women, for instance in terms of wealth, that could lead women from different strata to advocate for a number of different services – not every woman needs child care, for instance. But I believe it would be a useful strategic starting point to identify some common issues on the basis of which all women could mobalise themselves.

Evaluation and monitoring

Several of our presentations and discussions have confirmed that a strategy alone is of little use without a process of evaluation, monitoring and auditing. It is crucial to have a way of measuring the outcomes after a strategy has been implemented. Together with this is the

development of standards or indicators against which implementation of a strategy can be measured.

A rights-based approach

The point was eloquently put by Group C that a rights-based approach is more strategic than a needs-based approach. A rights-based approach, which emphasises making demands not because you need something but because you have a right to it, is a more empowering approach.

Education and training

Education of our constituencies at the grass roots is also vital. If the most appropriate approach is rights-based, people need to know what their rights are. That is the principle that underpins legal education programmes. People need education first in what their rights are, and then in how they can access those rights. They also have a right to information about the kind, and the quality, of service they should expect from those whose job it is to deliver a particular service to them.

Linked to this is the education and training of local councillors, again using a rights-based rather than a needs-based approach. Increasing women's political participation is not just about putting numbers of women, or men for that matter, in decision-making positions. If we want them to do a particular job, they must be helped to develop the skills and capacities they need to carry out the tasks that we as a community expect of our representatives in local government.

Promoting public accountability: The role of the Department for International Development (DFID)

David Wood, Deputy Head, Governance Department, DFID

Since the change in government in 1997 and the new White Paper on international development, DFID has been rethinking its work in the light of a firm commitment to poverty eradication as the objective of development co-operation and development more broadly and a rights-based and rights-centred approach to achieving it.

Accountability is fundamental to changing institutions, in our view. We strongly believe that changing behaviour requires more than changes and formal rules, more even than performance appraisal systems or budgets. Essentially, it depends on changing accountability. I would endorse the emphasis on that issue that has been evident in this seminar.

In many developing countries we have seen that the quality of governance is directly related to the volume of non-domestically generated revenue. We find that the more donor-dependent a country is – and many of the poorest African countries rely on donor financing for up to eighty per cent of their development budget and up to forty per cent of their total expenditure – the greater its problems of governance. The performance of governments and their accountability to local populations, when governors do not derive most of their revenue or their income from national revenue or national sources of revenue, is a very real concern.

This is also true at the institutional level. We divide accountability, for most public-sector organisations, into three components:

1   *Political accountability*. DFID's ministers regularly face questions in parliament, and the minister is responsible for decisions to Cabinet. Well-defined political accountability mechanisms apply to British government

departments. However, this is not necessarily the case in many of our client countries, where parliaments tend to be weak, even powerless, and local governance in particular does not control revenue, and where, therefore, the basic institutional preconditions for accountable governance are not present.

2 *Legal accountability.* We are governed by the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act. We are pursued in the press and by parliament when DFID is believed to have contravened that Act, and, generally speaking, the legal framework for our operations is taken fairly seriously. Again, that component of accountability does not always apply in the public-sector institutions we are working with. In Ukraine, for example, there are 240 pieces of legislation governing the role of the Cabinet of Ministers and about 230 of them are contradictory; so there is, in effect, no legal framework governing central government activities which would allow accountability to be demonstrated.

3 *Public accountability*. This refers to the responsiveness of public-sector organisations to their clients and the users of the services they provide. We are now giving much more emphasis to this form of accountability, and it is probably the main focus of our current work on accountability. In the UK, between seven and ten development policy forums are held every year throughout Britain, where DFID responds publicly to questions raised by members of the public and NGOs about its work. Continuing public accountability is also ensured through members of parliament and parliamentary questions; whether or not people consider this an adequate mechanism is a matter of judgement. In many of the countries and public-sector organisations with which we work, there are no such effective avenues for public accountability.

We are currently supporting work in many locations to try and improve public accountability, in several ways:

◆ Participatory poverty analysis: the 'Voices of the poor' initiative is being used to document and compile

evidence on what our target group – poor and vulnerable populations – consider to be priorities. DFID has had a fairly prominent role in this exercise. Its findings have demonstrated very clearly that poor communities in the South have overwhelmingly negative views on government services and their experiences of dealing with governments. It has been, in fact, an appalling indictment of government performance in the South.

◆ Improving diagnostics of poverty, compiling evidence on the nature and characteristics of poverty, including gender statistics and the gender dimensions of poverty in the South, is another major piece of work.

◆ Working with civil society organisations concerned with accountability issues: for example, one of our projects supports civil society in interpreting, understanding and criticising government budgets in the South. There is also a project designed to support civil society in analysing budgets in terms of their gender impact. This is extremely important in terms of the relationship between power and accountability. If you do not know where governments are spending money, you are excluded from promoting with the government the particular interest you represent.

◆ Working directly with public-sector organisations on the process of understanding user priorities and requirements. This programme has different labels in different countries – in Tanzania it is called the 'social pact' and in Uganda 'results-oriented management' – but it is basically about giving a voice to the end users of government services, so that they can articulate their priorities and can participate in government departments' processes of decision-making about priorities in services.

At the political level, we are working with countries to improve the political representation of vulnerable groups and minority groups, including religious minority groups and women. We are working with the government of Pakistan on new local government legislation, and the legislation does, for the first time, offer the prospect of

reserving thirty per cent of seats for women at the most grass-roots local government level. However, it would be difficult to hold up any particular example as a model, and that is not my intention. I want merely to illustrate the various approaches we are taking.

In the more traditional areas of training programmes, sensitisation programmes and support for civil society organisations advocating reform and change, DFID's approach to civil society has changed fairly fundamentally in the last few years. Three or four years ago civil society was seen primarily as an alternative provider of services to communities, where governments were unable or unwilling to provide them efficiently and effectively. Secretary of State Clare Short has challenged that view. Real transformation of governments and reform of systems requires, above all and in the first instance, voices and advocacy for change. Accordingly, our view of the importance of civil society organisations has undergone a corresponding change in emphasis.

When I talked to the Council of Churches in Kenya recently, for example, they expressed the view that if they had undertaken political advocacy in the 1970s, they would have had much more impact on government performance than they had by concentrating their activities on providing church schools and church clinics. Broadly speaking, I think we subscribe to that view. On the one hand we need to give communities a voice, and on the other hand we sometimes need to give governments hearing aids so they can hear that voice. But the fundamental issue is that of accountability.

Discussion

Plenary discussion in this session focused chiefly on power and accountability. Following Millie's remarks there was a brief discussion on the strategic importance of locating different sources of power: political power, power to control budgets and resources, and, at the grass roots, power to mobilise and press for change. The location of power also varies according to context and will condition the strategies of those working for change.

The idea that power and accountability go hand in hand was also expressed, but a warning was issued about greater accountability and responsibility and less corruption, as well as higher educational standards, being demanded of female elected representatives than male ones. Women have a right to be elected on an equal basis with men. Paradoxically, however, women often get elected precisely because the electors hope women representatives will be more accountable than their male counterparts.

The discussion of accountability was further developed with specific reference to DFID's development co-operation after David Wood's presentation. One questioner had asked about the accountability of donors to their clients, and specifically what DFID's view was of its accountability to recipient governments and communities. David's remarks addressed this question, but also raised again the question of the policy–practice gap and the fact that gender indicators and requirements are not well embedded in DFID's current practice, for instance in sector-wide programming (SWAPs) and in the terms of reference or reporting requirements of consultants employed by DFID.

David drew attention in his reply to the changes DFID has undergone since 1997 and its change from being primarily an aid agency, putting money into projects in client countries, to a development agency which attempts to take a more holistic view and to promote a favourable policy environment in the recipient country as a precondition for the effectiveness of development aid. These have been quite far-reaching changes for DFID, and the new aid paradigm is more demanding of a thoughtful, strategic and politically delicate approach than simply designing and delivering projects. In this process of change, it is inevitable that practice will lag behind policy development. DFID is specifically engaging with gender issues in its interventions in cases such as the Bangladeshi police's mistreatment of women and landless people, but participants thought its achievements in this respect in the SWAPs so far implemented, were patchy.

DFID's new approach is influenced by recent developments in the World Bank's thinking about development, which is now manifested principally in the sector-wide approach, discussed earlier in the seminar, and the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), which seeks to see development as a process of social transformation and has identified twelve 'pillars' of change including legal change, cultural change, productive sector change and others. However, the CDF, remarkably, pays very little attention to gender equality beyond emphasising the importance of health care and education for women.

It is not just disappointing but alarming that in 2000, with national and international policy instruments for mainstreaming gender equality firmly in place, major aid donors are still doing so little to address gender considerations in large aid programmes. One possible explanation suggested was that resources tend to be devoted to the planning and policy levels and not to service delivery level. But at all levels and stages, it is clear that resources must be put into mainstreaming gender equality and sensitivity, including changing attitudes towards women and gender issues, designing relevant, qualitative gender performance indicators, and training professional specialists in gender analysis, preferably at the time of their formal professional education.

Lessons of the seminar

Helen O'Connell closed with a summary of the principal lessons of the seminar, recalling that one of its aims had been to look at the process by which services could be made gender sensitive and affordable, accessible, and appropriate:

1 The *policy–practice gap* is extremely important. Narrowing is a key strategy, but it must be given serious political commitment and must have sufficient resources allocated to it. The gap must also be addressed in all areas and at all stages of service delivery, from policy-making, planning and budgeting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

2 'A water pipe is not just a water pipe.' *Nothing is gender-neutral*: women and men make different uses of any service – transport, water, housing, health care – and have different needs with regard to it. Gender-sensitive service delivery must recognise this as a starting point.

3 *Context is critical*. This does not mean that we cannot learn lessons from each other or have meaningful exchanges of experience. But it does mean that any kind of approach to developing gender-sensitive services is a multi-faceted and multi-layered project, and we must tackle the problem at different levels.

4 This is the first time OWA has concentrated so closely on gender-sensitive services. The seminar showed clearly that *services are different*: questions about gender-sensitive provision of water and sanitation services are quite different from questions about gender-sensitive education, health care, or justice. We need to look at them separately, service by service, even though there are also cross-cutting issues.

5 Some good pilot projects and isolated initiatives exist in all the countries represented at the seminar, but examples of *good practice* have not been generalised to the national level.

6 *Mobilisation and organisation* continue to be vital. To relate more effectively to officials and to elect representatives, women and men need to be much more efficiently and effectively organised. In particular, we need to identify our allies – people who will help us to move the agenda forward – in official structures, political parties, government cabinets and other governance structures.

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