

Gender equity and local governance

A study of the San Salvador municipal gender equity policy

Michael Clulow



LAS DIGNAS



Las Melidas



Grupo Venancia is a feminist popular education collective based in Matagalpa, Nicaragua where it has worked for over 12 years. The group's principal objectives are: the strengthening of collective and individual leadership of women of all ages; the transformation of discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and practices; and the promotion of a culture of equity, diversity and creativity.



The Women's Association for Dignity and Life "Las Dignas" was founded in El Salvador in 1990. Since then Las Dignas have sought to contribute to the struggle of

the women's movement through four principal areas of action: anti-sexist education; the improvement of women's economic conditions; gender violence; and political participation and leadership.



The Mélida Anaya Montes Women's Association (Las Mélicas)

celebrated its tenth anniversary in July 2002. During those

ten years, this Salvadorian organisation has been active in widely varying areas of work including: feminist education; political participation and citizens' initiatives; health; domestic and gender-based violence; socio-economic development; and workers' rights.



The Women's Support Centre, Tierra Viva was created in Guatemala in 1989

with the mission to confront the inequality, subordination and discrimination of women. The group seeks to influence political decision-making; support the creation and growth of local women's organisations; and to contribute to raising the awareness of all Guatemalans about women's rights.



The Women's Study Centre-Honduras (CEM-H) has worked for

15 years to promote: women's human rights; participation and leadership; the eradication of violence; and sexual and reproductive health. The centre's principal strategies are lobbying, public mobilisation and the strengthening of the women's movement.



One World Action works for a world free from poverty and oppression in which strong democracies safeguard the

rights of all people. To this end, it provides money, expertise and practical help to organisations committed to strengthening the democratic process and improving people's lives in poor and developing countries. One World Action also helps its partners to forge closer links with decision makers in Britain and the European Union, and influence them.

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y la Vida (Las Dignas)

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Contents

	Introduction	2
	Summary	3
1	Context	5
	1.1 The Salvadorian women's movement	5
	1.2 The San Salvador Municipal Council (SSMC)	5
	1.3 San Salvador and the SSMC	6
2	Summary of the policy	7
3	The development of the policy	8
	3.1 Women and local government	8
	3.2 The need for a policy	8
	3.3 The policy's guiding principles	9
	3.4 Steps in the design and approval process	9
4	Implementation of the policy	11
	4.1 Internal actions	11
	4.2 Action in the community	14
5	Factors which have facilitated or obstructed approval and implementation	18
	5.1 The Salvadorian Women's Movement	18
	5.2 Political factors	18
	5.3 Personal factors	19
	5.4 Resistance to the policy	19
	5.5 Human resources	20
	5.6 Funding and international aid	20
6	Impact and sustainability	22
	6.1 Impacts within the council	22
	6.2 External impacts	22
	6.3 Perspectives for the future and sustainability	23
7	Conclusions	26
8	Principal lessons learned	27
	Annex 1: Position in the SSMC structure of bodies specifically responsible for gender equity	29
	Annex 2: Information sources	30
	Notes	33

On the 18th of November 1999, the San Salvador Municipal Council (SSMC) approved the Municipal Gender Equity Policy. Thus, the capital of El Salvador became the first municipality in the country to formalise and institutionalise its commitment to gender equity in an integrated way and became one of relatively few Latin American municipalities to do so. The approval of the policy¹ was the result of a process promoted by the women's movement over the course of several years in which hundreds of people participated—politicians, public officials, feminist activists, members of women's NGOs and women from the general public. The progress that has been achieved during the first three years of implementation is also due to the efforts of a similar variety of people from within the municipality and elsewhere.

We consider that the process by which the policy was designed, approved and has been implemented provides valuable lessons for the promotion of women's rights and participation as citizens, not only through local government but at all levels. Consequently, we are publishing this study which presents the opinions and analysis of a wide range of individuals and organisations that have been involved in the process. The information presented here was collected through individual and group

interviews as well as analytical meetings conducted during September 2002 and through the review of the policy and other related documents².

Author's note

The difference in the publication dates of this document and the original version in Spanish mean that a very small number of minor differences exist between the two versions. The most important of these relates to the results of the March 2003 elections which were held subsequent to publication in Spanish.

Summary

The overall objective of the San Salvador gender equity policy is that women “have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the diverse aspects of municipal development as men”. Action is proposed in relation to citizens’ participation, education and culture, work, health, security, infrastructure and services. The policy also includes a set of strategies which, in the first instance, are directed towards the council itself thus recognising that gender equity must become a fundamental principle underlying its organisation and approach.

The policy was developed in the context of wide ranging political advocacy dating to at least the 1994 national elections when the first national women’s platform was developed. During the 1997 local elections the mayor, Hector Silva signed the women’s platform presented to election candidates. Shortly after his election, the Consultative Commission for Gender Equity was established as a forum for coordination between the council and women’s organisations and this commission began to promote the development of the policy. Over the next three years proposals were drafted, consultations held and revisions made with the aim of producing a policy which would respond to the concerns of the women of San Salvador whilst being viable, based on a solid conceptual and legal foundation, and reflecting the council’s plans and mission.

Over the three years following approval of the policy progress has been made in its implementation. Among the actions and achievements to date, the following are of particular note:

- ◆ technical bodies, spaces for citizen’s participation and the designation of gender focal points throughout the council’s structure have been created;
- ◆ 40% of staff have received gender training and a gender focus has been integrated into the majority of training courses on other topics;
- ◆ there are more women in decision-making posts and women have been recruited as municipal police officers;
- ◆ hundreds of residents of the municipality have participated in awareness raising activities;
- ◆ Women’s Centres have been established in three districts; and
- ◆ sexual harassment in public places has been prohibited.

A number of factors have facilitated the approval and implementation of the policy. Crucial amongst these are the determined and persistent action of the women’s movement and the commitment of women councillors. In addition, the council’s citizens’ participation policy helped to promote dialogue with women while funding from international aid agencies made the implementation of many activities possible.

Needless to say, there have been difficulties and it must be recognised that work in several areas has barely begun. *Machista* attitudes within the council have been shown by different types of resistance, especially in relation to the appointment of female personnel. Also, very limited resources—financial or human—were assigned for policy implementation during

the first two years following approval. Fortunately, starting in 2002 resources began to be increased with some staff appointments being made and funding specifically for the policy being provided.

The most important impacts so far within the council include the legitimisation of gender equity as a theme for council action and changes in attitudes. Several of those interviewed considered that the policy provides support for the positions and demands of women in the community, that a significant proportion of the staff have identified with the policy and that it has helped reduce discriminatory behaviour. At the community level, the policy has contributed to political, organisational and awareness-raising processes.

For the policy to become sustainable the dedication and creativity of the consultative commission, the appointment of qualified staff and the availability of funding need to be continued and increased. At the same time, the creation of the women's centres provides an opportunity to consolidate policy implementation. National level factors which may support the process include the growth of the cross-party National Association of Salvadorian Women Councillors, Mayors and Alderwomen, ANDRYSAS. Beyond these factors, sustainability will also depend heavily on the commitment of the council members. For that reason, at the time this study is being published, the main challenge will be to continue to make progress in the institutionalisation of the policy once the new council elected in March 2003 takes office.

Members of the women's movement interviewed for the study were very clear that this is an important way of promoting gender equity and they drew several lessons from the experience which could be

applied more widely. Those lessons include:

- ◆ the strengthening of local women's organisations and their action are crucial;
- ◆ it is important that formal spaces be created for interaction between local governments and the women's movement;
- ◆ gender equity policies should be situated in the reality of local governments, especially when resources are limited; and
- ◆ internal bodies responsible for the implementation of gender policy require direct funding and a position of authority in the institutional hierarchy that reflects the commitment to integrate the policy throughout the institution.

1 Context

1.1 The Salvadorian women's movement

The Salvadorian feminist movement is quite young. Several of the movement's organisations have their roots in the revolutionary movements involved in the civil war of the 1980s and were created around the time the conflict ended. Among those are Las Dignas and Las Méridas which supported the present study and which have played a very important role in the development and implementation of the gender equity policy.

One of the movement's most important organisational spaces is the "Prudencia Ayala" Coordinating Committee (*Concertación "Prudencia Ayala"*) which brings together a number of women's organisations. This network was very active in political advocacy during the 1990s including the development and negotiation of the policy. At present the committee is relatively weak³ but there are many other bodies which are very active. A large number of local women's organisations have grown up and there are important new networks and coordinating groups such as the National Committee of the World March of Women, the Women and Economics Network, the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocacy Group, and the Suchitoto and Jiquilisco women's coordinating committees.

The building of relations and coordination between the women's movement and state institutions is a relatively recent experience and has its roots in attempts to fulfil women's demands and in the creation of small spaces for action within public institutions.

1.2 The San Salvador Municipal Council (SSMC)

Local elections are held every three years in El Salvador. The present council was elected in early 1997 and re-elected in 2000⁴. The mayor, Hector Silva, leads a coalition of four groups: three political parties—the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, FMLN)⁵, Acción Popular (Popular Action, AP) and the Centro Democrático Unido (Democratic Union of the Centre, CDU)—plus the civic and political movement *Iniciativa Ciudadana* (Citizens' Initiative). As it is not a formally constituted political party, *Iniciativa Ciudadana* can not participate directly in elections but does so indirectly through negotiations with the parties involved in the coalition. No other parties participate in the council as, under the Salvadorian electoral system the winning group fills all the seats in the council. The electoral law does not include proportional representation for local councils nor does it allow for the participation of independent candidates. These factors mean that the pluralistic nature of the San Salvador council is novel in El Salvador.

An important aspect of the current council's approach is its commitment to citizen's participation, which it has promoted through a municipal policy approved in 1999 and the creation of a number of mechanisms for promoting popular participation. This approach provided openings for dialogue with the women's movement and enabled the voice of women in general to be heard.

1.3 San Salvador and the SSMC

According to 1997 figures, the population of San Salvador is about 500,000⁶ of which 53.8% are women. As well as being the principal population centre of the country, the municipality is where the most important political and commercial activities take place. In accordance with the scale of the city, the SSMC is a large organisation with around 4,000 employees distributed between seven directorates as well as a number of bodies which answer directly to the councillors, the mayor or the general management. Geographically, the city is divided into seven districts, referred to numerically from 1 to 6 and the recently created Historical Centre.

2 Summary of the policy

The overall objective of the policy is:

“To develop an administration which promotes gender equity and equality through interventions which seek to improve the conditions and position of women in the municipality such that they have the same opportunities to participate in and benefit from the diverse aspects of municipal development as men do”.

The policy has a somewhat complex structure and is ambitious in its scope. There are six specific objectives, eight strategies and seven areas of action: citizens’ participation, education and culture, work, health promotion, citizens’ security, community infrastructure and municipal public services. Each area of action has one or two strategic objectives and includes from three to ten actions. These actions were defined through a wide ranging consultation process but also reflect the strategies:

- ◆ Identification of the obstacles to equality of opportunity for women in relation to council management positions.
- ◆ Awareness raising and training for all personnel in gender and specific methodologies for practical mainstreaming.
- ◆ Placement of qualified staff in key areas of the institutional structure so as to facilitate municipal action on gender equity.
- ◆ Systematic monitoring of implementation.
- ◆ Coordination with governmental and non-governmental organisations to ensure access to institutional, human and physical resources.

- ◆ Seeking to generate multiplier effects by learning from and imitating those that make most progress.
- ◆ Promotion of the participation and leadership of women in all areas of the council’s work.
- ◆ Transformation of the council’s internal and external communications into a catalyzing factor for gender equity.

Throughout the policy another central strategy is evident, that it seeks both internal and external change. There is a clear perception that gender equity can not be achieved by action in the community alone, but that it must also be accepted as a fundamental principle of the municipality’s own organisation and action.

3 *The development of the policy*

3.1 Women and local government

The policy was developed in the context of wide ranging political advocacy on behalf of Salvadorian women's rights. An important step in this process was the development of a national women's platform during the 1994 election campaign –the first election campaign after the 1992 peace accords which ended the armed conflict. During that campaign, members of the women's movement identified the need to also work at the municipal level, considering that local governments could play an important part in the resolution of women's problems.

Practical steps in the implementation of this approach were taken during the 1997 local elections when women's platforms were developed in several municipalities and the inclusion of women candidates was promoted. Other municipal level actions include training for councillors and women mayors, the creation of the cross-party council women's association, ANDRYAS and coordination with local councils.

It is important to stress that San Salvador is not the only municipality in the country which has included the promotion of gender equity among its objectives. For example, the Soyapango council has promoted gender equity since 1997, achieving increases in the number of women directors, the recruitment of some women to technical and other positions normally associated with men, greater participation of women in community leadership as well as the implementation of a number of community level initiatives.

However, up until now San Salvador is the only municipality which has approved and is implementing an integrated gender equity policy.

3.2 The need for a policy

In the opinion of Councillor Morena Herrera, one of the people most involved with the policy, one of the keys to the fulfilment of municipal plans for gender equity is their transformation into formal policies with a central position in local development proposals. Members of the Consultative Commission for Gender Equity expressed a similar viewpoint when they indicated that the policy was conceived as a means to institutionalise the women's platform, in this way converting its demands into a more formal, internal commitment by the local council.

Members of the Citizens' Participation Commission were in agreement with the importance of this factor. They also expressed the need to overcome the limitations of the commitments made in relation to the 1997–2000 women's platform. They considered that those commitments would have led to the creation of an area of work within the council rather than the mainstreaming of gender equity throughout the work of the SSMC. In addition, they felt that the demands made in the platform were too idealistic, including commitments signed by the candidates for the post of mayor which they felt were unrealistic for the mayors to fulfil.

3.3 The policy's guiding principles

The following principles which guided the design of the policy also played a key role in convincing the councillors and high ranking municipal personnel that it was valid.

- ◆ Care was taken to prepare a conceptual basis which was sufficiently well argued to justify the proposed measures but without being so complex as to become an obstacle in negotiations with councillors and council staff.
- ◆ A legal basis for the policy was drawn up on the basis of national and international instruments including: the Beijing Action Plan; the Convention for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women; the Family Code and Family Legal Proceedings; several penal reforms; the women's law; and the 1997–1999 National Women's Policy.
- ◆ At the institutional level, the policy was related to the SSMC modernisation plan and the municipal government's mission which seeks to transform San Salvador into a city which is safe, democratic, prosperous, healthy and pleasant, and with cultural activities. Consequently, the policy proposes that:
 - *security implies the prevention of sexual and domestic violence;*
 - *democracy implies women's participation in decision-making;*
 - *prosperity requires investment in women and their productive capacity;*
 - *for the city to be healthy, sexual and reproductive health policies must be implemented.*
- ◆ Likewise, the policy is intended to be both relevant to women's lives and viable. Women's disadvantages in diverse

areas of social life—education, health, employment, housing and others—were analysed on the basis of the systematisation of district level women's fora (see point 3.4). Subsequently, ways in which municipal services could respond to these needs were identified, taking into account both direct attention and coordination with other sectors.

3.4 Steps in the design and approval process

During the 1997 local elections, Hector Silva and two candidates as councillors signed the women's platform, making clear the commitments which the municipal government would assume in relation to the demands made by women's organisations. Shortly after their election the Gender Equity Roundtable was created as a forum for discussion, with one woman councillor and the representatives of five women's organisations as members.

In February 1998, the roundtable publicly presented their first proposal for a municipal gender equity plan. A series of meetings were held and other actions taken to improve the proposal leading to the presentation of a second version in November 1998. At the end of that year more than 800 women participated in five district level fora held to investigate their needs and priorities.

In 1999, three consultants were hired to provide technical support for the preparation of the final version of the policy. The priorities expressed by the women in the fora were systematised and a study and consultation process conducted, which included the following activities:

- ◆ The preparation of an analytical framework through which possible solutions to the needs presented in the

fora were analysed in relation to the responsibilities of different official institutions, so as to identify those which could be addressed by the municipality. This was necessary because the majority of the proposals arising from the women's fora were about needs which could not necessarily be resolved within the framework of local government responsibilities⁷.

- ◆ Interviews with high ranking municipal officials. These meetings were used to analyse the responsibilities and areas of work of each municipal directorate with two aims: the identification of possibilities for the incorporation of the vision and actions on gender into the work of each area, and the proposing of actions by officials which they themselves would have to implement.
- ◆ Analysis of the SSMC modernisation proposals so that the policy's proposals could be harmonised with other institutional processes.
- ◆ Preparation of a draft document which was presented and debated in workshops with leading women in the municipality, women's organisations, women councillors, council directors and the Citizens' Participation Management Committee.

Following approval by the Municipal Council, the mayor publicly presented the policy in an event which was attended by around 250 people.

4 Implementation of the policy

4.1 Internal actions

4.1.1 Bodies and individuals charged with implementation⁸

Consultative Commission for the Gender Equity Policy

During the first half of 1998, the Gender Equity Roundtable was constituted as a consultative commission. As in the case of the roundtable, the commission is a space for citizens' participation which includes representatives from the council and from San Salvador's feminist organisations. The commission was further institutionalised through the approval of its regulations in mid 2000.

The commission has played a very important role throughout the process: it drafted the first version of the policy, promoted and supervised the preparation and approval of the final version, and promoted and facilitated its implementation. One of its principle difficulties has been its dependence on a small number of organisations—the number of representatives of women's organisations specified in the regulations has never been fulfilled. Attempts have been made to widen the participation of social organisations in the commission but the results have been limited. Another difficulty which was identified by commission members in June 2000 and which continues to be a problem, is the tendency of the commission to act as an implementing body rather than one which makes proposals and monitors implementation.

The Gender Unit and the Women's Department

The Gender Unit was created in August 1999 and given responsibility for evaluation, the development of proposals and the provision of gender advice for all municipal offices. The importance of the unit should not be underestimated as, up until 2002 it was the only council office with direct and exclusive responsibility for gender. Nevertheless, its ability to fulfil its role has been limited by a series of factors:

- ◆ the unit is staffed by only one person;
- ◆ prior to 2002 there was no specific budget for the actions it proposed;
- ◆ the unit had very limited infrastructure—until 2002 it had no computer and was located in an ex-storeroom; and
- ◆ its position in the SSMC structure as a low ranking unit in the Citizens' Participation Sub-directorate limited its possibilities to effectively promote the mainstreaming of a gender focus throughout the council.

During 2001 the consultative commission investigated ways of strengthening the unit. Initially, it was proposed that the unit be relocated in the SSMC structure. This proposal was rejected by the councillors leading to a second proposal to create the Women's Department which was approved in December 2001. The department has been given authority for coordination with the various directorates and sub directorates while the Gender Unit is to be involved in implementation of the policy with the districts. The department is managed by the women councillors and an executive director, who was appointed in 2002.

The creation of the Women's Department has increased the resources available for this area of work. There are now two people working exclusively on gender in the council and the quality of physical infrastructure has been improved. There has also been an increase in authority of the Department as it is structurally located at the same level as the units responsible for other council policies. Nevertheless, the Department's resources and its position in the council structure continue to be limited in comparison with its responsibilities, and so it will require considerable support from the councillors.

The Council Commission for Gender Equity

Beginning in early 2000, a broad informal group of women councillors and others monitored implementation of the policy. This group had some advantages due to its horizontal structure but its informal nature limited its ability to act. Consequently, it was replaced in July 2002 by the Council Commission. As well as four of the five women councillors, the commission includes several high ranking women members of staff, the director of districts and the sub directors of citizens' participation, human resources, records and services, and the executive director of the Women's Department. The composition of the council increases its capacity to combine the promotion of positive actions for women with the mainstreaming of gender sensitive measures in the municipality.

Gender focal points

The appointment of gender focal points in each district and the 21 directorates and sub directorates of the SSMC began during the last phase of the policy's approval process, in the second half of 1999. These people have received training to enable them to promote the implementation of the policy more effectively.

4.1.2 Work with SSMC personnel

Appointments and promotions

One of the aspects of policy implementation most mentioned by those interviewed for this study was the number of women occupying decision-making posts in the SSMC. In September 2002, women headed three out of seven directorates and four of 14 sub directorates. The goal of women occupying 35% of decision-making posts, which was set in the 2000-2003 strategic plan has not yet been met. However, it has been surpassed at the level of directors (43%) and was close to fulfilment at the level of sub-director (29%)⁹. The proportion of women in decision-making posts was lower in middle management, with only 23% of department and unit heads and 16% of heads of section were women.

Human resources policy

A study conducted in 2001 with support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation showed that the gender policy had been very weakly integrated into human resources policies. Although the Internal Working Regulations prohibited gender discrimination, in practice selection and promotion criteria were discriminatory. The gender of personnel was stipulated for most operational posts while the descriptions of the majority of all posts tended to be masculine. At the same time, the regulations contained no provisions with respect to matters such as the reconciliation between employment and family responsibilities or sanctions for sexual harassment in the workplace.

A second phase of the study, with a greater emphasis on recommendations was conducted during the first half of 2002. This study reviewed human resource norms and procedures and made recommendations

which have now begun to be implemented. Job descriptions and personnel selection and promotion procedures were reviewed and improvements made.

One innovation which has been made is the introduction of a “responsible fatherhood bonus”. In addition to the concrete support that this provides for council staff, the bonus constitutes an instrument for the promotion of responsible paternity.

Awareness raising and training

Many of those interviewed considered that there had been a significant improvement in the gender awareness of staff. For example, the Sub-director of Human Resources, Beatriz Quintanilla, considered that the heads of areas within her sub-directorate were genuinely convinced of the importance of gender equity for their work. Training has been an important factor in this process even though, according to the estimates of the Gender Unit Coordinator, Ana Silvia Gonzalez only around 40% of staff have received such training.

Staff training began during the policy’s design phase. For example, women’s organisations conducted training for officers of the Municipal Agents Corps (CAM), previously known as the municipal police, and for social promoters. During 2000, 400 members of staff and a similar number of residents of the municipality received training about the policy. Workshops on local development, citizens’ participation and gender equity were also held. These were attended by 680 people, of whom the majority were local residents, although some administrators of markets also participated. A series of workshops to provide training to greater numbers of staff with funding from UNICEF were planned for 2001, but the disasters caused by earthquakes at the beginning of the year

led to the decision to reassign the funding for psycho-social workshops. Nevertheless, a gender perspective was incorporated into those workshops which were attended by 2,500 people affected by the disaster, including some SSMC employees.

One important training activity was the participation by district gender focal points, some other district employees and a small number of CAM officers in the Diploma in Gender Equity offered by the National University in coordination with the Salvadorian Institute for Women’s Development (ISDEMU).

An investigation of training needs was included in the study of human resources policy and it was notable that only one director identified gender as an area of need. Therefore, the human resources sub-directorate took the decision to integrate a gender perspective into the majority of training courses rather than to provide specific training on the theme. Despite the added difficulty presented by the need to find trainers who are able to fulfil this requirement, the results to date have been positive. According to Quintanilla, up until September 2002, 20 courses had been conducted in this manner and the majority of those trained were positive about the inclusion of gender. In this way, it has been possible to relate diverse areas of the council’s work to gender equity.

4.1.3 Information

Gender-disaggregated statistics have been compiled on many personnel matters allowing different types of analysis to be carried out, for example the frequency and motives of requests for time off work. To facilitate this process, 16 people were trained in a course offered by the National University. Another type of information

which has been generated and which reflects a gender focus, is the monitoring of salary deductions for child maintenance payments.

4.2 Action in the community

4.2.1 Bodies and individuals charged with implementation

Promoters

At district level, the social promoters are responsible for the implementation of the policy with one being designated as the gender focal point. This has the positive effect of bringing the policy close to the community. However, the promoters are overworked. There are few promoters and all of them, including the gender focal points, have many areas of responsibilities. This problem has recently been recognised and other council members concerned with gender are working to free the district gender focal points from responsibility for other issues.

Citizens' participation

Gender equity roundtables have been established at district level with the participation of representatives from community organisations. Five such roundtables were created in 2000 with 15 members each and there are now roundtables in all seven districts. According to Gonzalez, one difficulty has been the fear of both women and men that the participation of women in these bodies could lead to the break-up of families. One way in which this fear has been addressed is by promoting the participation of men and in four of the roundtables there are currently male members. A recent analysis showed that women consider the participation of men to be important.

4.2.2 Awareness raising and training

In addition to training provided to SSMC personnel and members of the public (point 4.1.2), members of the gender roundtables have received training and two workshops were held in 2000 with street vendors from the Historical Centre.

During 2002, two public awareness raising campaigns were implemented using illuminated advertising hoardings¹⁰ throughout the city. In March, 100 billboards displayed a message promoting women's leadership and participation. In September, students from the Don Bosco University designed posters with a slogan on gender equity which were placed on 50 hoardings. These campaigns were linked to a strategy that promotes greater identification of the city with women, for example through the naming of streets and public squares and the creation of monuments to women who have played important roles in the history of San Salvador. In this context, the official celebration of Soldiers' Day which was held during the city's anniversary has been replaced with Women's Day.

4.2.3 Women's Centres

As of June 2002, three pilot Women's Centres have been opened. These centres will provide a range of services including: support to obtain credit or in dealing with public bureaucracy, services etc; legal advice and emotional support; women's leadership training; and skills and vocational training. The centres will also provide space for cultural events. This range of activities is intended as a response to women's practical needs and at the same time as strengthening their participation as citizens in the municipality. The first centre

to open was in District 5. When visited in September 2002, classes in some crafts had begun with around 25 to 30 participants, while gender training and legal and emotional support were due to begin very soon.

The centres are being supported by a number of diverse organisations. The building used by the District 1 centre was restored largely through a twin town relationship between Taipei and San Salvador. This centre and the others have also been supported by the Dutch NGO, NOVIB and will operate through the participation of three women's NGOs¹¹ and in coordination with several state entities. Nevertheless, the support provided is limited and the premises being used are less than adequate. The centres have little funding for publicity, the vocational trainers are all volunteers as there are no funds to pay them, course participants must provide all their own materials and the centres have little furniture and even less equipment. The centres do not have exclusive use of their premises which could make some priority activities difficult, especially personal support which requires privacy.

Despite these limitations, the opening of the centres marks a new phase in implementation of the policy. In the opinion of Las Méridas, the centres could become important spaces for discussion of women's political participation and related issues. Similarly, Councillor Saenz Varela considered that the centres will provide extremely important support for women's development.

4.2.4 Miscellaneous issues

Public order and sexuality

In January 2000, the SSMC published the Public Order Regulations which establish

“norms to regulate those types of antisocial behaviour which without being criminal interfere with community harmony and well being”. These regulations are enforced, in the first instance by CAM officers. Two of the regulations' articles are related to the gender policy.

In one case the policy appears to have had a positive influence. Article 37 prohibits sexual harassment in public places including the use of “indecent phrases or propositions”.

Negatively, article 36 on trade in sexual services appears to contravene the spirit of the policy. Rather than having a people centred approach, which would prioritise the situation of sex workers, the regulations place them outside the law by effectively prohibiting what is a legal activity. In this case, the creation of the Women's Department may help to overcome this contradiction as it has already made proposals to the council regarding the development of policies with a holistic approach to dealing with sex workers. Another positive response of the SSMC is a programme supported by Spanish aid agencies which provides psychological, health and legal services for sexually exploited children and adolescents.

Violence

At the end of 2001 a series of fora and cultural activities were conducted in relation to the International Day of Action against Violence against Women. These activities were aimed at various audiences including the members of district gender roundtables, municipal employees and young people, and were attended by several hundred people. The psycho-social workshops held following the earthquakes also dealt with domestic violence.

Property ownership

The SSMC no longer automatically registers land or housing in the name of the male member of a couple. The land and housing registration programme, which is a priority service in informally constituted peri-urban communities, promotes the registration of property in the name of both partners, irrespective of their marital status.

Marital register

The law now recognises the option of women to retain their surnames on marriage and the council ensures that women are advised of this option.

The case of a district¹²

The executive director of District 3, Patricia Soriano, explained that work on gender began in her district in 2000 and has focused on four types of activities:

- ◆ promotion of equitable participation in community organisations;
- ◆ training in women's rights;
- ◆ integration of a gender perspective in the registration of housing and land; and
- ◆ public awareness raising on International Women's Day and the International Day of Action against Violence against Women.

One of the pilot Women's Centres was due to open in the district. However, the opening had been delayed due to difficulties in obtaining appropriate premises.

Among the achievements to date, Soriano mentioned public awareness of the policy and the participation of women in poor communities. The principal internal difficulty had been the lack of personnel. Within the communities, on the one hand the poverty of many women limited their possibilities of becoming more independent while, on the other hand, it was very difficult to achieve the participation of the better-off, men or women.

The Municipal Agents Corps (CAM)

With the appointment of Eduardo Linares as director in 1997, the municipal police embarked on a process of reform. Among the concerns that Linares brought to the CAM were the need to incorporate women officers and to eliminate the lack of respect, discrimination and even serious abuse of women committed by CAM officers. Serious abuses had included the rape of arrested sex workers. In this way, CAM began to pursue gender equity while the municipal policy was still in its development. The subsequent approval of the policy served to legitimate and strengthen this process.

To promote changes in the attitudes of the officers training was obtained from women's movement organisations. More recently, a gender team, including women and men has been created with responsibility for promoting the policy. Linares considered that there has been very significant progress in raising awareness within the CAM of the need for women to be respected and for them to participate actively in all levels of the corps. The number of women officers has increased from three to nearly 100 (about 15%).

5 Factors which have facilitated or obstructed approval and implementation

5.1 The Salvadorian Women's Movement

Without action by the women's movement it would have been impossible to develop the policy, and implementation would have been much weaker. In the first place, the initiative originated as one of the points included in the Women's Platform 1997–2000, and the organisations which participated in the "Prudencia Ayala" Coordinating Committee worked together to promote the policy. The movement's actions were not limited to political pressure. On the contrary, the movement provided many necessary resources, especially through participation in the consultative commission and also through training and by obtaining funding.

The presence of members of the women's movement in the Citizens' Participation Commission was also important during the policy's design and approval. The fact that several current councillors are members of the movement has also helped in the implementation of the policy. The Citizens' Participation Commission identified several sectors as priorities for its action, one being working with women. The commission coordinator, Marta Rauda, and another commission member, Rosa Siliezar, explained that several of the factors which influenced their position were informed by their analysis as feminists:

- ◆ the tendency of the majority of women to vote for Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (National Republican Alliance, ARENA¹³) seemed illogical given that this party did not promote women's rights; and
- ◆ the contradiction between the degree of involvement of women in community action and their very limited participation in the decision making levels of community organisations.

Support by the women's movement has been weaker with respect to the implementation of the policy. In part this is due to the weakening of "Prudencia Ayala" which has impeded concerted support by the women's movement. In addition, various individual organisations have become distanced from the process for a number of reasons including practical matters (they have no work in San Salvador), organisational factors (staff and management changes) and strategic considerations (assigning relatively little importance to work with local government). Despite this situation, several women's organisations are still strongly committed to the process and their participation continues to be critical.

5.2 Political factors

The participation of the FMLN in the council and the close association of many members of the women's movement with the Salvadorian left facilitated coordination with the municipal government. At the same time, the relative willingness of the FMLN and other groups in the council to act in defence of women's rights made them more open to engage with the women's movement than would have been the case with a council formed by ARENA or other right wing parties. An additional factor cited

by Councillor Napoleon Duarte was the stability of the coalition which has permitted progress in this and in many other areas.

It should be stressed that the gender policy is not an isolated innovation in the SSMC. On the contrary, it is both directly and indirectly related to the citizens' participation policy and the processes and bodies created through that. Both the consultative commission on gender equity and the district gender equity roundtables were created within the framework of the participation policy. Duarte considered that other bodies created through this policy, the District Citizens' Participation Roundtables, the Municipal Management Control Unit and the District Coordination Directorate have together provided a framework which is conducive to the implementation of the gender equity policy.

5.3 Personal factors

The attitudes and actions of the councillors are of great importance. Amongst them the actions taken by the women members have been crucial. Councillor Saenz Varela, who joined the council after the policy had been approved, explained his understanding that the policy had been the subject of vigorous discussion among the councillors and that the interventions of the women councillors had much to do with its eventual approval. Similarly, Saenz Varela, Councillor Hector Dada, the Women's Department Executive Director, Angelica Bآتres, Martha Rauda and Rosa Siliezar all expressed the opinion that the women in the current council have played a fundamental role in the implementation of the policy. For her part, Councillor Herrera emphasised the pressure exercised as a group by herself and the other feminist councillors, Norma Guevara and Cristina Rivas.

With regard to the male councillors, Duarte suggested that without the presence of men who were committed to gender equity it would have been much more difficult for the policy to be approved; those men played an important role in winning over the other men. Similarly, the personal commitment of the mayor, Hector Silva to citizens' participation and gender equity has had important effects given his decision making power.

Amongst council personnel, the post of sub director of human resources is key. In this respect, it is fortunate that the present sub-director not only is a woman but that she arrived at her post "through the ranks" – she has worked in this sub-directorate since 1997 – and that she was appointed as the sub-directorate's gender focal point in 2000. Thus, she was exposed to gender awareness raising and received training in this area before assuming her current responsibilities.

5.4 Resistance to the policy

El Salvador is a profoundly *machista* society. Gender discrimination is entrenched in the political sphere as it is in other areas of society. Within the council, *machismo* has been apparent in different types of resistance to the policy, especially in relation to the appointment of women personnel. In some cases the appointment of women has been criticised, for example men who were unsuccessful in their applications have complained that the successful women candidates were only appointed because of their gender. Members of staff have tended to oblige women to impose their leadership to a greater degree than they do with men whose suitability for management posts is more easily accepted. Initially, following

the appointment of the Finance Director there was veiled resistance to her by men in the directorate. However, this situation appears to have improved due to her ability and personality.

Such *machista* attitudes do not change easily. Although the male councillors interviewed defended the appointment of women to high ranking positions, they tended to use terms that they would probably not have used when speaking about men. For example, all of them praised the Finance Director for having been equal to the task of her appointment. One of the male councillors commented that sometimes women are unable to fulfil their responsibilities due to limitations in their academic background or in their experience. He followed this comment with the suggestion that the council should create conditions so that women are able to fulfil their responsibilities in management positions. Such an approach would be consistent with the policy however these types of comments appear to reveal doubts about the capabilities of professional women.

Within the council there has also been resistance to the citizens' participation policy. In the opinion of Isabel Asencio, a former member of the Consultative Commission for Gender Equity, the closed bureaucratic structure of the SSMC meant that it was not ready for citizens' participation. During the inauguration of the premises where the District 1 Women's Centre and other citizens' participation initiatives will operate, Hector Silva openly criticised his personnel. He commented that the restoration of the building was thanks to the local residents organising and their struggle against the municipal bureaucracy.

5.5 Human resources

Prior to the appointment in 2002 of Angelica Bآتres and the three staff responsible for the pilot women's centres, no new personnel had been hired to support the implementation of the policy. All other staff responsible for its implementation had been appointed from amongst existing staff, sometimes without due attention to their suitability. This is not intended as criticism of the work they have carried out. On the contrary, many of these people have fulfilled their new functions with diligence and creativity. Nevertheless, these staff have come to their posts with little relevant training and this has limited what they have been able to do.

It should also be recognised that the lower level of salaries in the SSMC compared to the NGO sector makes it difficult to hire women with appropriate training and experience. The council has mechanisms which permit the hiring of outside consultants but this requires external funding which has not been obtained in this case.

5.6 Funding and international aid

Prior to 2002 no resources had been assigned specifically for the implementation of the policy. All the work done was funded from the general budgets of the various directorates, by international aid agencies—chiefly NOVIB and UNICEF—and with funds obtained by women's organisations. According to Marta Rauda and Rosa Siliezar, budgetary issues were only considered later on in the process. This not only affected the gender policy; indeed none of the new policies were designed and approved with a budget

allocated to them. Only when people sought to actually implement the policies did it become obvious that “that which has no budget does not exist”.

Thanks to the hard work of the women councillors a budget was agreed for the policy beginning in 2002. The amount is small, US \$70,000 compared to the US \$150,000 which was requested. However, it is greater than the budgets assigned to the other policy commissions and has allowed the Women’s Department and the Women’s Centres to start their work.

As of 2003, the budgets of each unit of the SSMC have to include specific amounts to permit implementation of the gender equity policy and of the other policies of the council. This means that the Women’s Department and the Consultative Commission have to negotiate with all the units when drawing up their respective budgets. According to Saenz Varela the units are opposed to the commissions “interference in their budgets”, which demonstrates the need for more work to be directed at ensuring that all SSMC staff take ownership of the different policies.

6 Impact and sustainability

6.1 Impacts within the council

In general those interviewed felt that the most important impacts within the council included the legitimisation of gender equity as a theme for council action and attitudinal change. Through the approval of the policy, two principles for the SMCC's work and approach were formally established:

- ◆ the council's responsibility for the promotion of gender equity; and
- ◆ the necessity that women be considered in actual practice as subjects of citizens' participation, not merely at the level of rhetoric.

Beyond this formal level, Ana Silvia Gonzalez felt that a small but significant percentage of women and men have identified with the policy. For his part, Hector Dada considered that the policy has led to less *machista* behaviour within the council. Although it has not been easy, there is now greater acceptance of women as managers. In relation to attitudes, Councillor Martinez suggested that the way to begin working for change is not through awareness raising. Rather, awareness is created through the implementation of the policy.

Women members of the gender roundtable of District 5 said that the policy provides support for their positions and for making demands on the council. Although they might have developed an organisation without the policy, they would not have had official recognition. District authorities used to be strongly opposed to the community associations working on women's issues, and there are still lively

debates with men in the District Roundtable on Citizens' Participation and in the community committees. However, the men are being obliged to change their attitudes.

6.2 External impacts

Mobilisation, organisation and awareness raising. There is evidence that the policy has contributed to mobilisation, organisation and awareness raising of women. Isabel Lopez of the Salvadorian Women's Movement and councillor in the neighbouring municipality of San Marcos, considered that discussions in the gender roundtables and the training held during the development of the policy helped to mobilise many women. This process became weaker subsequently but women's leaders and community promoters demonstrate considerable knowledge on the issues which creates possibilities for future action.

The gender policy has helped to strengthen relations between women at community level. New local women's groups have been established in several districts. These groups have successfully integrated activities in diverse areas (training, health and other services) into the projects that were prioritised at district level during the participatory budgeting process. Women interviewed in District 5 felt that the policy as such had not led to women participating in community and area committees, rather that that was a result of work by women's organisations. Nevertheless, the creation of citizens' participation roundtables had provided an opportunity for work to be started on women's issues and organisation,

and this process had been strengthened by the creation of the gender roundtables.

Councillors Duarte and Martinez suggested that an important achievement of the policy is its contribution to the breakdown of traditional paradigms or taboos. The fact that women have been employed in the CAM and in the solid waste collection service (a pilot scheme for the latter was due to begin in late 2002) demonstrates that women are capable of doing what are traditionally regarded as masculine jobs. One policy initiative mentioned by Hector Dada which could have similar results is the introduction of the “responsible fatherhood bonus”. According to Dada, the introduction of this bonus caused some outrage but he saw it as an important precedent in terms of equal treatment. Another change in council procedure mentioned by Aracely Zamora which may contribute to changing paradigms is allowing women to decide to retain their surnames on marriage.

It should be stressed that most women’s concerns tend to be very practical. Members of the recently formed Historical Centre Gender Roundtable used a meeting during this study to request priority support through employment creation and vocational training. A specific complaint of this group had to do with management of the central market. Although the gender equity policy should influence the ways in which the renewal of the Historical Centre is carried out and although this district has high levels of unemployment and poverty, women working as informal vendors continue to feel that they are discriminated against in comparison with formal traders who generally reside in other areas. Ways should be sought to implement the gender equity policy and other council policies so that these situations are better addressed. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the profound nature and complexity of

problems such as unemployment and the growth of the informal sector. These issues are closely related to macroeconomic policy which is outside the council’s competence.

Impacts on other councils. Councillor Saenz Varela and Dilcia Marroquin of Las Dignas independently expressed the opinion that other councils observe and are influenced by the example of San Salvador. It is not clear how strong that influence is—the evidence from talking with several mayors and councillors of other municipalities suggested that the policy is relatively unknown even in those municipalities where positive action is being taken to promote gender equity (for example Mejicanos, Soyapango, San Rafael Cedros and Ataco).

Nevertheless, it is clear that the experience of San Salvador can provide lessons and examples for other councils. Las Dignas and Las Mélicas have already begun to incorporate these lessons in their work. For example, Las Mélicas are working with the municipality of Santa Tecla to design and establish a gender policy on the basis of their experience in San Salvador. Similarly, the SSMC policy has provided inspiration and important ideas and inputs for their work with women’s groups and councils in other municipalities.

6.3 Perspectives for the future and sustainability

Internal factors

There are a number of very important factors which will influence the sustainability of the policy. These include: the dedication and creativity of the consultative commission; the appointment of qualified staff to work in projects and bodies concerned with gender equity; and the availability of funding. Up until

2002 the lack of funding was an obstacle to implementing the policy. In this respect, the allocation of a budget for the policy opens up new possibilities, not so much because of the amount of funding but because the principle has been established that there should be a specific budget for this area of work. The recent creation of the first three women's centres is also important as it provides an opportunity to consolidate policy implementation.

At the operational level, both Las Méridas and Gerson Martinez considered that work with the district gender roundtables should be strengthened as a priority, so that the problems and needs of the women in the municipality are visibilised and their inclusion in the council's priorities for action facilitated. Las Méridas also believe that it is necessary to prioritise areas of work and target groups. As priority themes, they suggested violence, participation and economic resources. They also felt that priority groups should include the poorest women, market workers and young women.

One aspect of the institutionalisation of the policy which could cause some concern, is that all the council's official decisions regarding the policy have the status of agreements which are in themselves weak legal instruments. However, Napoleon Duarte considered that the continuity of the policy will not be guaranteed by legal means.. In any case, if it so wished, a new council could annul more important instruments such as by-laws or regulations. In his opinion what was important was the response of the public. Hector Dada agreed, saying that the survival of the policy depends on the wider reality. In this respect, the women of District 5 suggested that the best guarantee of continuity is the support of the public. They were confident that the space they have gained "will not be lost, whichever party comes to power".

National context

There are processes at the national level which could create a more favourable environment for the promotion of gender equity by local governments. For example, work is in progress to introduce changes in the Municipal Code. ANDRYSAS has presented comprehensive proposals for not only promoting women's participation but also for making council procedures more inclusive and transparent. The association of mayors, the Municipal Corporation of the Republic of El Salvador, COMURES has presented a more limited proposal which, at present, only proposes the establishment of a minimum quota of women councillors. Nevertheless, the fact that COMURES has begun to work in this area, establishing a gender commission and preparing this proposal during 2002, is an important step forward as it marks the incorporation of this issue in a body dominated by men and by ARENA.

Council members

Regardless of the factors already noted, the policy's sustainability will be very dependent on the level of commitment of the councillors. For this reason, although the opinion polls in September 2002 suggested that the coalition would be re-elected on March 16th 2003, it was important to ask what would happen if the election results were different. In Hector Dada's opinion, while the person with the most possibilities of defeating Silva was a woman,¹⁴ the fact that the council would be formed by ARENA made it doubtful that the process could be taken forward. There are women in ARENA who sympathise with aspects of the policy, for example the mayor of El Carmen who presides the COMURES gender commission, but the majority of the party's members tend to be very conservative¹⁵.

Since September 2002, the situation has changed considerably. Hector Silva

renounced his candidacy and the coalition failed to negotiate a new electoral agreement. The FMLN presented a slate including a current councillor, Carlos Rivas Zamora as candidate for mayor and five women candidates. Of the other coalition members, AP (Acción Popular) established a centrist coalition with the PDC (Partido Demócrata Cristiano), whilst the CDU (Centro Democrático Unido) and Iniciativa Ciudadana (Citizens' Initiative) did not participate in the election. In late January, the ARENA candidate was leading in the opinion polls and, if elected, would have been accompanied in the new council by six other women. However, in the event the FMLN was successful and will form a new council in May 2003.

Despite the FMLN victory, the continued implementation of the gender policy is not totally assured since only three of the present councillors were re-elected, only one of those is a woman and the FMLN's election platform did not include any specific reference to the policy. However, prospects for progress in at least some areas of the policy seem good, since the new council's platform did include commitments to strengthen the Municipal Women's Department and to open more Women's Centres. Under these circumstances, the functioning and relationship with the councillors of the Consultative Commission and the District Gender Equity Roundtables will be critical for the sustainability and future perspectives of the policy.

7 Conclusions

If progress in implementation of the policy is measured in terms of its original objectives and guidelines it is clear that, although much remains to be done, there has also been significant progress. In only three years it has not been possible to achieve the overall objective and it should be recognised that work in various areas is still incipient. Little progress has been possible in areas such as employment, health or citizens' security. Nevertheless, the district gender roundtables are making women's practical needs visible and some of these have been touched on in activities such as the psycho-social workshops and events on violence against women. The recent creation of the Women's Centres provides new possibilities for progress.

If, on the other hand, the strategies for action are considered, then it is clear that there has been intensive and successful work to lay the foundations for integrated implementation of the policy. For example:

- ◆ Many of the barriers to women's appointment to council management positions have been identified. At the same time, more women have been appointed to such positions and in other important sectors of the SSMC, such as the CAM.
- ◆ There has been significant progress in raising awareness and training personnel, not only directly but also through the integration of a gender perspective into all types of training.
- ◆ A network of individuals who monitor and promote the policy has been established in the key parts of the institutional structure, from the council chamber to work in the community.

- ◆ Effective coordination with national and international NGOs has provided institutional, human and material resources. In addition, it has been established that the SSMC is itself responsible for ensuring that these resources are available.

More work is required to consolidate the various bodies with responsibility for the policy and their functions require greater clarification. At the time that this study was conducted there was a particular need for greater clarity regarding the relationship between the Women's Department and the Gender Unit and their respective roles. It is also important that mechanisms aimed at increasing the influence of these two bodies in other areas of the council and facilitating the work of the gender focal points continue to be sought. Despite these needs, the creation of the Women's Department and the provision of funds for its work demonstrate that the policy is becoming embedded in the SSMC's structures. Similarly, the recognition that the district gender focal points should be freed of other responsibilities shows that there is growing appreciation of the importance of this area.

At the time of publishing this study, the fundamental challenge facing this process is to continue the institutionalisation of the gender policy following the change in the municipal government.

8 *Principal lessons learned*

The members of the women's movement who were interviewed were very clear that the development of policies such as this is an important way of promoting gender equity, since they can induce the various institutions of the State to exercise their specific functions, responsibilities and possibilities in ways which support the construction of equitable relations between women and men. The development of the policy required, and continues to require considerable effort but important results have been achieved. In addition to this principal lesson, others identified include:

- ◆ The importance of the role played by women's organisations can not be overstated. The strengthening and action of local women's organisations and the support they receive from NGOs and other national organisations will be key factors in making progress in the area of gender and local governance in other municipalities.
- ◆ The nature of local governments is of great importance. Independent feminist Isabel Asencio suggested that the need for left wing governments is clear, in the sense that they must be committed to social transformation. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that all participants think in exactly the same ways. On the contrary, as members of Las Méridas expressed, this experience has clearly shown that it is possible for diverse actors to work together successfully. A key factor for such success is the building of consensus between social and political forces.
- ◆ The presence of feminists amongst the councillors was one of the major factors facilitating progress in the implementation of the policy. It wouldn't be true to say that

their presence was indispensable given that when the policy was approved none of the women in the council identified themselves as feminists. Nevertheless, councillors and others, including one of the founders of the coalition, Hector Dada emphasised the role that the feminist councillors had played over the last three years.

- ◆ The central role played by the Consultative Commission from very early on in the process gives rise to the recommendation that formal spaces should be generated for interaction between local governments and the women's movement. Given this, the commitment of the council to the promotion of citizens' participation in the municipality was a strategic opportunity.
- ◆ Gender equity policies should be framed in the reality of local government, adjusting themselves to and taking advantage of their real possibilities and their other objectives and strategies. By designing the San Salvador policy in this way it was possible to get its approval and to avoid it becoming a "dead letter". This does not imply that the aspirations of the women's movement need to be diluted, so long as the council really does prioritise social justice and citizens' participation.

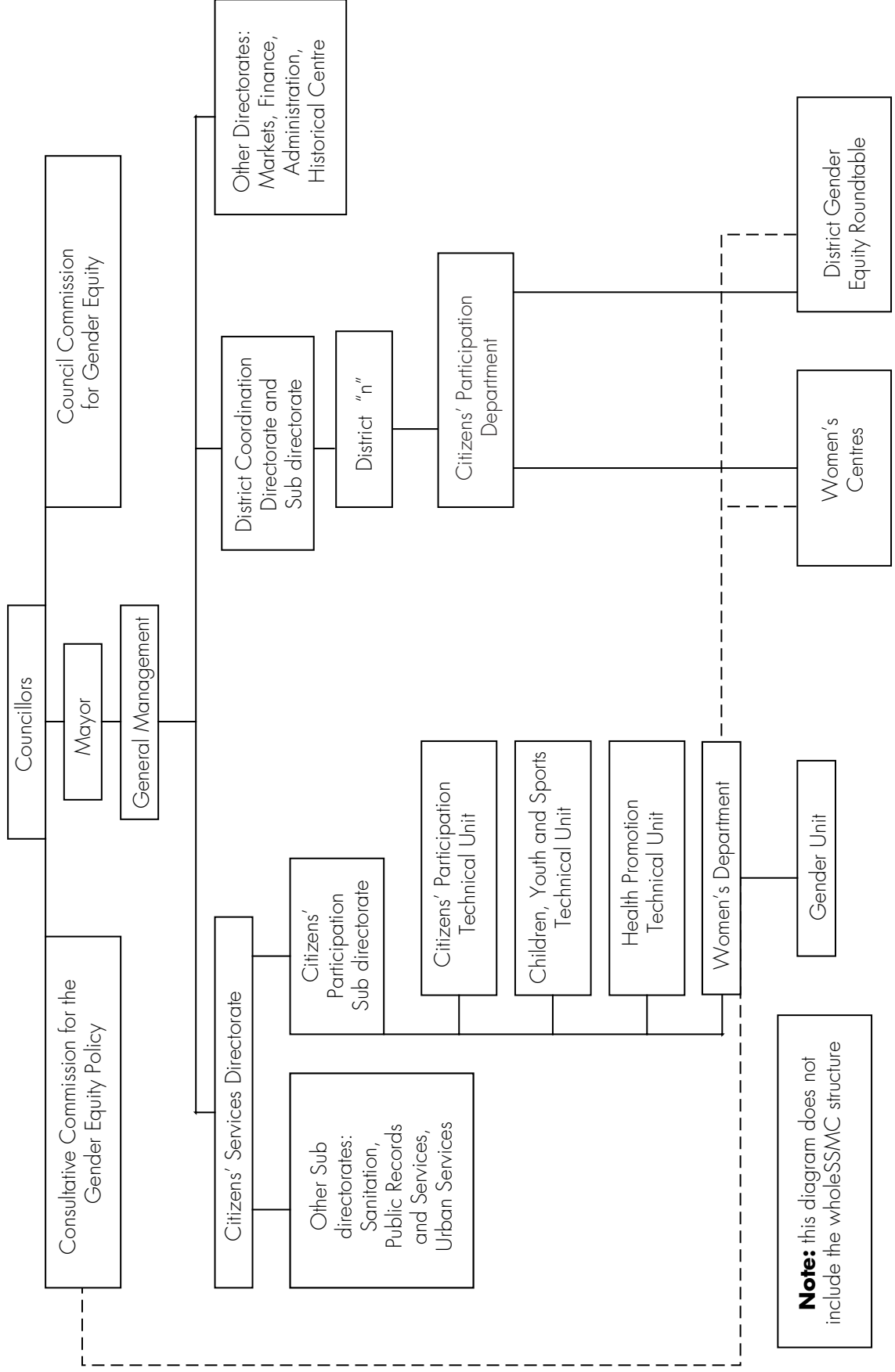
This experience has been an important learning experience for the women's movement on the possibilities and responsibilities of local government. In a context where many of the movement's demands are more related to national government and the legislature, this experience demonstrates the importance of limiting and adjusting those demands to reality. This is particularly pertinent in a

country such as El Salvador, where local councils have limited resources and where there is no decentralisation process.

Likewise, it is important that policies be based on wide consultations with the women in the municipality so that they reflect their aspirations and priorities. If this had not been the case in San Salvador, it would have been very difficult to involve women from community organisations.

- ◆ The bodies responsible for the implementation of gender policies should be provided with their own resources – financial, human and physical – and be given a degree of institutional authority which reflects a commitment to integrate the policy throughout the institution. The appointment of gender focal points is important, but it is difficult for them to integrate a gender perspective into their areas unless they are supported by a strong body with specific responsibility for gender.
- ◆ Similarly, the position and status of the bodies overseeing the process is important. The high positions in the council structure of the Consultative Commission for the Gender Equity Policy and the Council Commission for Gender Equity contributed to their ability to be effective in this role.
- ◆ The establishment of the principle of equal opportunities in employment and the setting of goals are insufficient by themselves. If fundamental changes are to be achieved in staff appointment and promotion policies, then human resources norms and procedures must be revised and monitoring mechanisms established.

Annex 1: Position in the SSMC structure of bodies specifically responsible for gender equity



Note: this diagram does not include the whole SSMC structure

Annex 2: Information sources

Interviewees/participants in discussion meetings.

Ana Murcia, Director of Las Dignas.

Ana Silvia Gonzalez, SSMC Gender Unit Coordinator.

Angelica Bآتres, Executive Director of the SSMC Women's Department.

Aracely Zamora, consultant during the preparation of the SSMC Gender Equity Policy (1999) and board member of the SSMC Labour Training Centre.

Azucena Quinteros, member of Las Melidas.

Beatrix Quintanilla de Revelo, Sub director of the SSMC Human Resources Sub directorate.

Cecilia Merino, San Salvador Historical Centre Health Promoter.

Clelia Lopez, member of Las Melidas and former member of the SSMC Consultative Commission for Gender Equity.

Dilcia Marroquin, member of Las Dignas Political Participation and Local Development Team with responsibility for support to ANDRYSAS and the SSMC Consultative Commission for Gender Equity.

Dina Rivas, Social Promoter, San Salvador Historical Centre.

Eduardo Alfonso Linares, Director of the SSMC Municipal Agents Corps.

Gerson Martinez, SSMC Councillor for the FMLN since 2000.

Isabel Asencio, independent feminist, former member of the SSMC Consultative Commission for Gender Equity and of the women's organisation "Flor de Piedra".

Isabel Fabian, Coordinator of Las Melidas Local Development, Political Participation and Citizens' Advocacy Team.

Isabel Lopez, member of the Salvadorian Women's Movement (MSM) and Councillor for the FMLN in San Marcos since 2000.

Joaquin Molina, Mayor of San Rafael Cedros for the FMLN since 2000, plus other councillors.

Jose Napoleon Duarte, SSMC Councillor for Accion Popular since 1997.

Leticia de Jesus Hernandez Sanchez, Mayor of El Carmen for ARENA for 14 years, Director and President of COMURES Gender Commission.

Maria Flores de Del Cid, Mayor of Mejicanos for the FMLN since 1997.

Marta Elena Rauda, Coordinator of the SSMC Consultative Commission on Citizens' Participation.

Marta Elena de Rodriguez, Mayor of Soyapango for the FMLN since 2000.

Members of the **San Rafael Cedros** local women's organisation.

Members of the **San Salvador Historic Centre Gender Equity Roundtable**.

Miguel Angel Saenz Varela, SSMC Councillor for the FMLN since 2000.

Morena Herrera, Coordinator of Las Dignas Political Participation and Local Development Team; SSMC Councillor for Iniciativa Ciudadana since 2000; and consultant during the preparation of the SSMC Gender Equity Policy (1999).

Ninfa Osiris Hernandez, SSMC District 5 Social Promoter and Gender Focal Point.

Patricia Soriano, Executive Director of SSMC District Delegation No.3.

Rosa Aida Siliezar, Practica (consulting company which manages SSMC Consultative Commission on Citizens' Participation funds) and member of Las Dignas.

Rosa Lidia Ceron, member of Las Mélidas and participant in the SSMC Consultative Commission on Gender Equity.

Rosibel Flores, Director of Las Mélidas.

Ruth de Garcia, Sub director of the SSMC Citizens' Participation Sub directorate

Women associated with the **SSMC District 5 Women's Centre**, including several members of the Gender Roundtable and of various district level associations and groups.

Documents

Public documents

Política Municipal para la Equidad de Género, San Salvador Municipal Council, December 1999.

SSMC agreements between November 1999 and July 2002 regarding: approval of the Gender Equity Policy; regulations of the Consultative Commission for Gender Equity; a UNICEF supported project and related funding management; creation of the Women's Department; cooperation agreements with women's NGOs to allow the operation of the Women's Centres; and the establishment of the Council Commission which should oversee policy implementation.

Construyendo Ciudadanía desde las mujeres es mejor, information leaflet, SSMC Women's Department, 2002.

Ordenanza Contravencional del municipio de San Salvador, information leaflet, no date.

Internal SSMC documents

Política para la Equidad Genérica en el Municipio de San Salvador, proposal, February 1998.

Primer Avance Informativo, Gender Equity Office, August/September 1999.

Reports by the Gender Programme Coordinator, November 1999.

Orígenes o antecedentes de Comisión Consultiva, January 2000.

Informe de la Comisión Consultiva: Acciones, logros y limitaciones, June 2000.

Planificación Estratégica Política Municipal de Género, 2000–2003. October 2000.

Summary report on activities of the gender programme, 2000.

Avances de la política año 2000.

Cooperation agreement between the SSMC and the Heinrich Böll Foundation for the project "Construcción de Política de Recursos Humanos con Enfoque de Género", September 2001.

First report on the consultancy "Política de Recursos Humanos con Enfoque de Género en la Alcaldía Municipal de San Salvador", Heinrich Böll Foundation/Enrique Gomaríza Moraga, October 2001.

Plans and reports on activities in relation to the International Day of Action against Violence against Women, November 2001.

Procesos de Consolidación de Mesas Temáticas de Género, January 2002.

Terms of reference for the second mission of the consultant funded by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2002.

Progress report on the development of the technical assistance operating plan, Heinrich Böll Foundation/Enrique Gomaríza Moraga, 2002.

2002 annual gender equity operating plan, February 2002.

Thesis for the Superior Diploma on the Incorporation of Gender in National Statistics, Citizens' Participation Sub directorate, May 2002.

Informe de Gestión 2000 a 2003, Gender Equity Unit.

Principales Actividades Realizadas, Período 2000–2003.

Documents concerning the creation of the Women's Department, 2002.

Women's Centres work plan for 2002/2003.

Organigrama de la Alcaldía Municipal de San Salvador, 2002.

Other documents

Presentation by Morena Herrera to the Regional Encounter on Governance and Gender, CEM-H, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, February 2000.

Presentation by the SSMC to the Positive Actions Competition sponsored by the United Nations Latin American Urban Management Programme (PGU-AL) and UNIFEM in 2000.

Systematisation of results from a workshop to develop proposals for reform of the Municipal Code, ANDRYSAS and Las Dignas, 2002.

Notes

- 1 All references in this document to “the policy” without further qualification refer to the San Salvador gender equity policy.
- 2 A complete list of interviewees and documents can be found in Annex 2 “Information sources”.
- 3 Members of Las Dignas and Las Mélicas signal a number of factors as being involved in this weakening. These include: the committee was created in the context of elections and continues to be affected by electoral dynamics and by divergences in the political approaches of its members; failure to fulfil its objectives in relation to the strengthening of women’s participation in political office; some member organisations have become weaker due to internal problems and/or changes in the policies of international aid agencies; and there has been a generalised fragmentation of the women’s movement associated with the strengthening of some NGOs and shifts towards more locally based organisation and action.
- 4 New elections were held in March 2003 in which the coalition did not stand for re-election. A new council will take office in May 2003. See “Council members” in Section 6.3.
- 5 Left wing party created by the revolutionary movements of the 1980s and which has become established as the major opposition party since the 1994 general elections.
- 6 This is the population of the municipality, the total population of the San Salvador metropolitan area is much greater.
- 7 Notwithstanding the pragmatism of this position, it can be argued that by taking on responsibilities and establishing measures to overcome gender discrimination, local governments must assume responsibility for areas normally outside their competence. Similarly, the promotion of citizens’ participation at municipal level means that they must address a greater diversity of demands than previously.
- 8 Annex 1 presents a diagram of the structural relationship of the council bodies specifically responsible for policy implementation and monitoring with each other and with other SSMC bodies.
- 9 While it is true that the policy has contributed to progress in this area, it should be noted that another important factor has been the pressure exercised by the women councillors, with support from some of their male colleagues, for more women to be appointed to these posts.
- 10 The billboards were similar in size to advertising hoardings commonly used in bus shelters.
- 11 Las Dignas, Las Mélicas and COM (“The Women’s Organisation Coordinator”).
- 12 It is important to note that the city’s districts were created by the present council as part of a project to decentralise municipal services. Consequently the idea of the district and the relationship between the residents and municipal bodies at that level are quite new phenomena and have led to changes in the distribution of personnel.

- 13** ARENA is a conservative/neoliberal party which has governed El Salvador continuously since 1989.
- 14** The ex Minister of Education, Evelyn Jacir de Lovo.
- 15** Members of Las Dignas commented that awareness raising campaigns and work with municipal officials from the different political parties, such as that conducted through ANDRYASAS, are important precisely for this reason.

Building Women's Citizenship and Governance, Central America

This document forms part of a series of 10 presenting the experience and opinions of five Central American feminist organisations. These organisations are working together in a regional project which seeks to promote the exercise of women's citizenship. Documents in the series will cover the following themes: the involvement of the women's movement in the development of public policy; feminist perspectives on globalization; the promotion of gender equity and women's participation through local government; women's access to justice; and the role of public policy in relation to sexual and reproductive rights.

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