

 Open Forum for **CSO**  
**Development Effectiveness**

**From Latin American Civil Society Organizations**



© ALOP and auteurs

Mexico, september 2010

Benjamín Franklin # 186, Colonia Escandón.  
Delegación Miguel Hidalgo, C. P. 11800. México, D.F., México.  
Teléfono: (52 55) 5273 3400  
Fax: (52 55) 5273 3449

[info@alop.org.mx](mailto:info@alop.org.mx)

[www.alop.org.mx](http://www.alop.org.mx)

ISBN in proceeding

Publishing design:  
Martha Delia Gómez Dueñas

Form in Mexico by Impretei



- 5 ● Presentation**
  
- 7 ● Message to the General Assembly of the Open Forum**
  
- 9 ● Summary of Conclusions and Debates of National Consultations with Civil Society Organizations-Latin America and the Caribbean**
  
- 19 ● Eight working theses developed by the Latin American feminist and women's movement for the debate on development effectiveness**





## PRESENTATION

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN FORUM ON CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Since the very beginning of the Open Forum process, the Latin American and Caribbean (LA/C) region has been participating in the dynamics of this work, at the global as well as regional and national levels. This publication presents part of the results from this participation, and in this way the LA/C region presents its contribution to the Forum's First General Assembly (Istanbul, Turkey, September 28-30, 2010).

Numerous Latin American social organizations and networks responded to the call to participate in the meeting held in Paris in June 2008, when this initiative was launched. From that time on, the region moved forward in defining its participation in the Forum's Global Facilitation Group (GFG) by designating three networks or platforms to represent the region in this steering group. The designated organizations are the *Coordinadora Civil de Nicaragua* (Civil Coordinating Group of Nicaragua), *Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social* (National Union of Institutions for Social Action Work)—UNITAS (Bolivia) and the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción al Desarrollo* (ALOP, Latin American Association of Organizations Promoting Development), in representation of the *MESA de Articulación de Asociaciones Nacionales y Redes de ONG de América Latina y El Caribe* (Coordinating Group of National Associations and NGO Networks in Latin America and the Caribbean). ALOP is also one of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participating in the Consortium that manages Forum activities.

In addition to this nucleus of organizations, an important group of networks and platforms from 16 countries in the region also joined the efforts to carry out national consultations as instruments for reflection, analysis and formulation of proposals to assist the Forum in achieving its objectives. All of these entities participated in the workshop for launching the Forum at the regional level, held in Lima, Peru, in December 2009, and since then, have assumed the responsibility for convoking and organizing

the 12 national consultations carried out, as of the date of this publication.<sup>1</sup>

In the month of July, through a regional workshop for bringing together the results from the consultations carried out up to that time —representing the efforts of nearly a thousand women and men from different types of social organization and mobilization in 12 countries— the text presented here was produced as a contribution from the Latin American and Caribbean region to the Forum's General Assembly. The text is based on the conclusions and debates by the social organizations participating in the national consultations. This summary is accompanied by two additional texts: a message that Latin American organizations wish to share with colleagues in other regions around the world, containing a set of key ideas, concerns and proposals regarding the role of our organizations and development effectiveness, from the perspective of our reality and our experience; and a second text regarding the specific issue of women's perspective and rights, and gender issues that emerged during the debates.

The complete versions of the reports from the national consultations used to prepare the regional summary text can be consulted on the Open Forum's website: <http://www.cso-efectiveness.org> and on ALOP's website: <http://www.alop.org.mx>. For all inquiries regarding the upcoming steps to be taken by the Open Forum in the Latin American and Caribbean region, please contact the regional coordinator for the consultations, Rubén Fernández, at [rfernandez@region.org.co](mailto:rfernandez@region.org.co)

At this time, as the CSOs of Latin America and the Caribbean, we express our sincere wishes for the greatest success at the Open Forum's General Assembly, and we reaffirm our commitment to work toward sustainable, equitable development. We also commit to improving our capacities and increasing our effectiveness as we confront the internal challenges we have identified in the fra-

<sup>1</sup> Between April and July 2010 national consultations were carried out in: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, Uruguay, Guatemala, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Honduras, Bolivia, Mexico and Peru. The consultation in Paraguay is scheduled for September, and after the General Assembly, national consultations will be carried out in Brazil, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In a number of cases, the consultations held thus far involved organizing workshops or activities prior to the final session of this first phase of the national process.



mework of the process instigated by the Forum to reflect upon our work. We also especially commit ourselves to take on the strategic tasks of transforming the current reality of inequality, injustice and exclusion that continues to persist on the planet, confronting the challenges of global warming and environmental crisis, constructing a new architecture for planetary government, and educating free and autonomous human beings capable of confronting current and future challenges. ●



## MESSAGE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE OPEN FORUM FROM LATIN AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

**A**s part of the process of National Consultations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), that convened close to 1,000 men and women who participate in different types of organizations and social action in 12 different countries in Latin America, we would like to share the following ideas, concerns and proposals with our colleagues from other regions of the world:

1. Although there are particular situations in each country, we affirm that we are acting in a **context of deep changes** in our economic, social, political and cultural surroundings, especially in the framework of global crises (financial, climate, food, etc.). Within this setting, relations between CSOs and the State, between CSOs and the private sector, and among CSOs have changed, making it a good moment to rethink these relations and to raise debates about the role of CSOs, their principles and surrounding environment, from which the necessary adaptations to new contexts will emerge. This reflection from the Open Forum also has global characteristics, giving it innovative and enriching added value.
2. In the current context in which the concept of development and the ways in which it can actually materialize are highly questioned, we have confirmed that CSOs play an important role as critics of prevailing models, particularly those inspired by neoliberal thinking, and at the same time, as agents who forge new ways of understanding development. For some time now, new paradigms have emerged in the region that are grounded in human rights, sustainability, fairness and the ancestral knowledge of our native peoples; for example, in our region, people speak of *Sumak kawsay* –the fullness of life– which is not the same as “well-being” as it is understood in the West. These proposals are still in an embryonic state and need to be endowed with content and action. The role of **CSOs as agents of new development** is a demanding challenge along our future path.
3. One of the challenges that emerged from the National Consultations in Latin America is to recoup the political identity and character at the core of CSOs as **political non-partisan actors**. We must remember that our primary duty is to help build democratic societies that respect the rights of all people, based on dialogue and intercultural understanding: this is a political task. It is evident that CSOs always play this role consciously, or even unconsciously, when they implement projects or actions designed by others. To this end, we launch a fraternal, emphatic call to **re-politicize and rebuild a common agenda**. We especially invite our peers from the North to work together to rebuild joint advocacy and cooperation agendas.
4. On the other hand, we also extend a warm and fraternal invitation to all CSOs to assume responsibility as **creators of egalitarian and fair gender relations**, within their own organizations and when working to transform society. Taking on the challenge of overcoming relations grounded in subordination can no longer only be the goal of women’s movements and organizations. It is urgent that we understand that true development and democracy cannot exist if women’s rights are not incorporated in all aspects of daily life and social relations.
5. One of the concerns of CSOs in the region is the widespread threat to their existence and work. In several countries, government hostility has led to real confrontations and public disqualification. Government authorities and other public officials should be reminded of their responsibility and that their role is that of protector and promoter, rather than executioner. In order to confront this threat, the social sector must give greater visibility to the added value of CSOs; their special role in society must be recognized, together with their knowledge and cumulative experience. Equally important is the **necessary recognition of their autonomy and independence**, which is strongly tied to the civic right to free association and their freedom of thought and speech. It is impossible to even think of democratic societies without autonomous, independent and critical CSOs.
6. **Building and implementing pro-active practices of accountability and transparency** is an ethical imperative for CSOs, since they work to produce public goods. In the current context, these practices are not



only a duty but serve as a good example for other sectors of society and are a source of legitimacy and tools to create trust. Important progress has been made in this field recently in our region and there are CSO networks in the region in which hundreds of organizations voluntarily present public reports.

7. CSOs are very critical of the world of **International Cooperation** that is withdrawing from the region based on the argument that, today, the majority of these countries are by definition “middle-income countries,” when it is no secret that the realities of the most unequal region on the planet lie underneath the official statistics. It is time that we all assume criteria of co-responsibility for resolving structural and global problems such as inequality and poverty that afflict immense portions of the population in the region and throughout the world. A generalized claim for the accountability of cooperating governments exists in the South as well as with their own societies. In the case of private cooperation, this relationship needs to be rebuilt as an exchange of solidarity, a synergy of different kinds of strengths and resources, and a political alliance that reaches far beyond a simplistic relationship between the contracting party and the contracted party.
8. It is time to initiate an open debate, at both international and national levels, regarding the need for **public policy for strengthening social organizations**. This debate should include discussing the necessity of public and state financing of CSO activities that are clearly for the common good and dedicated to producing public goods. In accordance with this, democratic States should adopt financing part of these activities as one of their responsibilities. We also invite International Cooperation in its diverse expressions to adopt strengthening the social fabric in the territories where they carry out programs as one of their criteria of effectiveness.
9. The debate regarding the **effectiveness of CSOs** is not new. In fact, we could say that organizations are permanently seeking ways to improve their work in order to reach their aims. In this round of debates, there was consensus that goals and results are equally important to CSOs as is the path to reaching them. In regards to results, CSO effectiveness is related to building the necessary capacities and conditions so that the human groups they work with can defend and exercise their rights. And in regards to method, effectiveness should be evaluated with parameters such as respect for human integrity and dignity, the creativity and innovation of each tool, responsible stewardship of resources, the retrieval and enhancement of socially built knowledge, and the sustainability of development proposals.

As CSOs in Latin America, we want to improve our capacity and to become more effective in addressing the internal challenges described here, especially for taking on strategic tasks to transform the prevailing realities of inequality, injustice and exclusion on the planet, for facing the challenges of global warming and the climate crisis, for building a new architecture for planetary governance and for building free and autonomous human beings. ●







## SUMMARY

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND DEBATES OF NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Lima  
July 2010

“Y su conciencia dijo al fin,  
cántale al hombre en su dolor  
en su miseria y su sudor,  
y en su motivo de existir.

Cuando del fondo de su ser,  
entendimiento así le habló  
un vino nuevo le endulzó,  
las amarguras de su hiel.

Hoy es su canto un azadón,  
que le abre surcos al vivir  
a la injusticia en su raíz,  
y a los raudales de su voz.

En su divina comprensión,  
luces brotaban del cantor”.

***Cantores que Reflexionan***  
*Violeta Parra (Chile)*



**W**hen the Summary Workshop was held, **12 NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS** had been conducted in Latin America. In three countries, the con-

sultation was preceded by workshops in different regions of the country and in other countries, different mechanisms had been used, as indicated in the following table.

Country	Organizers	Participants	Sub-national consultations
1. Venezuela	Asociación Nacional de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil-Sinergia, Caracas, 15 de abril 2010	60	0
2. Uruguay	Asociación Nacional de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales Orientadas al Desarrollo-ANONG, Piriápolis, 8-9 de junio 2010	26	0
3. Colombia	Confederación Colombiana de ONG-CCONG, La Alianza, Red de ONG por la Transparencia-ONGxT, Bogotá, 8-9 de junio 2010	160	7
4. Nicaragua	Coordinadora Civil, Federación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Nicaragua-FONG, Managua, 26-27 de mayo 2010	110	6
5. Ecuador	Observatorio de la Cooperación en Ecuador-CIUDAD, Plataforma de Responsabilidad Social, Grupo Faro, Quito, 21-22 de junio 2010	179	5
6. Chile	Asociación Chilena de Organismos No Gubernamentales, AG, Acción, Santiago de Chile, 17-18 de junio 2010	61	Internet consultation
7. Argentina	Encuentro de Entidades No Gubernamentales para el Desarrollo-Red Encuentro, Buenos Aires, 28-29 de junio 2010	30	0
8. Guatemala	Coordinadora de ONG y Cooperativas-CONGCOOP, Ciudad de Guatemala, 16-17 de junio 2010	NA*	NA*
9. Bolivia	Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social-UNITAS, La Paz, 7-8 de julio 2010	200	Survey
10. Perú	Asociación Nacional de Centros-ANC y Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, Lima, 15-16 de julio 2010	35	0 <sup>2</sup>
11. México	Convergencia de Organismos Civiles A.C. y Alianza de Organizaciones Ciudadanas-ADOC, Ciudad de México, 9-10 de julio 2010	32	3 <sup>3</sup>
12. Honduras	Comisión de Acción Social Menonita-CASM, Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras-FOSDEH, Coalición Hondureña de Acción Ciudadana-CHAAC, ActAlianza, Asociación de ONG-ASONOG, La Ceiba, Atlántida, 30 de junio-2 de julio 2010	31	0
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>		<b>924</b>	

\*NA: Not available.

This summary does not contain the richness of contents and debates that took place in this process. We urge those interested in the topics presented below to consult the reports from all of the national consultations conducted, in the Open Forum's web site at (<http://www.csoeffectiveness.org/>).

## INTRODUCTION

### About National Consultations:

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) consulted unanimously view the space created by the Forum in a positive way, as a place for debate on their own organizations. The topics proposed were new in some cases, but most typically these organizations discussed concerns and processes already established in their organizations and in their networks and associations.

<sup>2</sup> A second consultation is planned for the next months.

<sup>3</sup> To date, one of the three has been conducted.

The invitation to participate managed to reach a broad, heterogeneous range of sectors and regions (with some differences among countries, of course), and this is enormously important. It is especially significant taking into consideration the increasing difficulty for CSOs to participate in this type of event. There are many different events being held, and there is increasingly less staff and limited capacity for attending these events.

It continues to be difficult to coordinate trade unions with other social movements. Although trade unions were invited and a previous global agreement for their participation had been reached, not a single one participated.

Participation by representatives from international agencies providing development assistance varied considerably. In some cases there was broad-based, representative participation and these agencies contributed to the consultations, and in other cases they simply ignored the process and did not participate.

Participation by government representatives also varied. In cases such as Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay and Colombia, high-level government representatives participated, offering real possibilities for deliberation and exchange. In other countries, governments avoided face-to-face discussions with CSOs, sending individuals without any knowledge of the topics covered. And in still other cases, the government's presence was hostile, or consultations were simply ignored and dialogue was impossible.

In all the consultations there were more women participating than men. However, in a number of the events held, the topics of women's rights and the struggle for gender equality did not appear as important points.

#### Some notes on the Latin American regional context:

The objective here is not to take an extensive look at the context of the Latin American region, in part because each country has its own particularities—which are the especially important aspects to consider. Nevertheless, some general, persistent characteristics that directly affect the existence and actions of CSOs are presented in the following paragraphs.

- i.1) The first aspect to mention is the current **crisis** at hand. A group of CSOs from the region emphasized the following in the Madrid Declaration: *“This is a deep, systemic crisis, with economic, food, energy, environment and social dimensions. According to the ILO, 200 million workers in developed countries could be pushed into poverty and, according to the OECD, 39 million people in Latin America may fall again below the poverty threshold. This crisis has also revealed the weakness of the States in both our European and Latin American nations, and the power of transnational corporations.”*<sup>4</sup>
- i.2) An interesting process of **political changes** has been experienced in the Latin American region over the

last decade. *“In general post-dictatorship regimes were consolidated, although only a few are strictly democratic. Nevertheless, the different political crises—in some countries the result of vigorous social mobilizations—were resolved through institutional means, some positively (Bolivia and Ecuador) and others not (Honduras). Still, as correctly indicated in the United Nations report, what has been consolidated is no more than electoral democracy (periodic and free elections, political freedoms, freedom of expression, and a relative expansion of democratic systems), giving shape to a terrible triangle in which electoral democracy, high levels of poverty and the worst inequality on the planet have been expanded (translation).”*<sup>5</sup>

- i.3) Thirdly, the context is characterized by **new international alignments**. Latin America is no longer the United States' backyard. To the contrary, a tendency that is autonomous and distanced from Washington has become consolidated. *“Despite the clear differences among the countries, there are unquestionably regional efforts to move forward with some responses directed at insertion into the globalization process underway. Although these efforts are only partially shared, their potential is significant. Some encouraging steps in Mercosur, the attempt to lend form and strength to Unasur, ALBA, Banco del Sur and cooperation in the area of energy (Petrocaribe and Petrosur) are some examples that involve governments of different tendencies.”*<sup>6</sup>
- i.4) There are significant differences in the various countries, but the **tensions between governments and civil society** are generalized, and overall, it is clear that CSOs in Latin America are in an extremely vulnerable situation. There are cases of overt, permanent hostility expressed by those speaking on behalf of the State. When CSOs make critical statements, they are discredited and attacked. Their contributions and their potential are ignored. CSOs are only tolerated and supported by governments when they do not issue any opinions or express any criticism of those in power at any given time. The progressive tendencies represented in some governments are not reflected in smoother relations with CSOs.
- i.5) And a fifth aspect that characterizes the region—in this case varying greatly by country—consists of the **different ways of understanding “living well”** or development. In countries like Bolivia or Ecuador, this alternative is now at the Constitutional level, and to a significant extent, this is a step to which social movements and CSOs have contributed. This means that in countries like Ecuador, “...representatives of indigenous organizations demanded that a differentiation be made between the concepts of *sumak kawsay* as utopia (fullness of life) and *allin kawsay* (living well).” (Consultation in Ecuador). In any case, it is very clear for us as CSOs that to speak of only effectiveness without entering into a

<sup>4</sup> Madrid Declaration, V Euro-Latin American-Caribbean Civil Society Forum, Mesa de Articulación-CONCORD, March 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Eduardo Ballón, “Las ONG de América Latina y las ONG europeas: La urgencia de una agenda común en un escenario desfavorable,” text presented at the “Tercer Diálogo Político sobre la Cooperación AL y Europa: Situación y perspectivas de la cooperación no-gubernamental europea con América Latina - Revisando juntos nuestra agenda común”, ALOP-Mesa de Articulación, Madrid, March 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Eduardo Ballón, op. cit.



debate on the concept of “development” is not only partial and problematic, but empty as well. The correct order of questions to be asked is consequently, first of all, “what is the concept of living well?” or the concept of development from the society’s perspective, and then, “of what does effectiveness in achieving such consist?”

## Topic 1

### THE ROLE OF CSOs IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

The first element confirmed in the consultations with CSOs is that the process of reflecting upon their role and their function within society is ongoing, and has been undertaken on numerous occasions throughout our history, at both individual and collective levels. This is not only normal but also healthy, because it reveals an attitude in which one is constantly questioning the pertinence of what one is, what one is doing and what one is proposing. Change is the natural path in societies. The most congruent response by any stakeholder attempting to have an impact on social transformations is precisely to change and to adapt to the context, while preserving its principles and its most profound and strategic aims.

Part of the process of discussing the identity of CSOs involves the changes in the context and in other stakeholders with which they have been historically involved. Social movements, political parties, the private sector and even the State also experience profound transformations.

Regarding the identity and role of CSOs in Latin America, the following ideas are especially important to mention:

- 1.1) **Diversity.** CSOs in all the countries are characterized by their diversity and heterogeneity. This is expressed in their size and scope, their methodological and programmatic focus, the sector in which they operate, and the groups they prioritize. This, in and of itself, is enormously significant, and should be encouraged and preserved.<sup>7</sup> What is valid within the sector is also reflected in the mission of contributing to the construction of societies that are based on dialogue and inter-cultural recognition, and that are diverse and respectful of plurality.
- 1.2) **CSOs as stakeholders and partners in new development.** There is general agreement that the idea of CSOs taking the place of the State is no longer supported. It is no longer thought that CSOs exist where the State is absent—as was the case during the 1980s and 1990s. In different ways and with different focuses, the State has recently recuperated its presence and its investment in social areas. There has been a change from the neoliberal posture that distanced the State from its social responsibilities, to a political practice in which the State is recuperating its central role in the social arena.

This makes it necessary to re-think the role of CSOs: it is not the same to operate in a context in which the State is absent and withdrawing its participation, as operating in a context in which the State is at the very center of social programs. Now what is involved is to fulfill a broad, diverse set of roles that assist, complement, oversee and demand that the State meets its obligations. CSOs need to serve as a trigger for society to organize around demanding rights, demanding adequate quality and coverage of services, participating in formulating public policies that properly direct the use of public resources, designing and testing innovations for problem resolution, etc. A particular challenge in recent years has been to contribute, with their accumulated knowledge, to lend content to proposals for new development currently emerging in the region.

In this sense it is clear that CSOs are demanding a role as stakeholders and partners in development. It is believed that the capacities and talents of CSOs are diminished when they are considered as merely the operators of policies and projects developed by others.

#### 1.3) **CSOs do not take the place of social movements.**

While there is a long-standing, natural and close relation between movements and CSOs, and mutual solidarity developed between them many years ago, there are cases in which tensions and conflict arise particularly when some NGOs become those speaking in the name of grassroots or social movements, without a process in which this role is delegated. It is currently clear for CSOs overall that grassroots organizations and social movements are different stakeholders that deserve solidarity, recognition and respect.

#### 1.4) **Non-partisan political actors.**

CSOs also demand a political role as promoters and advocates of public goods and matters of common interest. This constitutes a role to be fulfilled in areas such as criticism of government excesses when they occur, the construction of public policies, the defense of the checks and balances system within the rule of law, oversight of state powers, follow-up to electoral processes, strengthening of local democracy, and many, many other areas. CSOs are not parties aspiring to obtain State power, and this is a major difference with political organizations and movements. Nevertheless, it is not acceptable in today’s world that the political agenda belongs exclusively to the State and political parties. As CSOs, we also have and demand a place in this context. For this very reason, CSOs often act as interest groups that project themselves in the political arena, representing their own points of view, with capacities for criticizing and making proposals. In this way the members of CSOs are exercising their roles as citizens. These actions do not only take place at the national level. There is a long chain of intervention, from the

<sup>7</sup> It is important to remember that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are only one sector within this universe and do not represent all civil society organizations.



most local context to national and international contexts, in which highly diverse actions are taken.

- 1.5) **Educational role.** CSOs are teachers. They play an important role in creating democratic citizenship and in promoting citizen participation. This educational role is normally accompanied by activities involving the production of knowledge on actions, and frequently, research on social reality.
- 1.6) **Autonomy.** In order to fulfill the set of roles described above, it is absolutely necessary that organizations are autonomous, specifically that the major decisions regarding who they are and what they do are made internally. Along these lines, exercising criticism is valued as both a right and an obligation of CSOs. From this point of view, CSOs cannot be co-opted by another other stakeholder, whether State or government, movement or political party. The absence of autonomy typically leads to the weakening and disappearance of CSOs.

## Topic 2 VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF CSO WORK AND EFFECTIVENESS

The values identified by CSOs as those orienting their work are many. Those highlighted here are some of those that can be categorized in two major areas: principles addressing CSO missions and those addressing CSO actions, including those referring to their effectiveness.

### In the area of CSO missions

- 2.1) **Human rights.** Social organizations in Latin America are unified in their focus on human rights, and conceive of their work as demanding respect for, defending and advocating human rights. The starting point for this vision is the notion that every human being has inalienable rights.
- 2.2) **Right to development.** At the same time human rights are concepts in constant transformation. For some time now, organizations have been incorporating collective rights into their action platforms. For the discussion here, the “right to development” is especially relevant, and has the following general characteristics: a) its nature as a collective, public good to which humanity as a whole aspires, b) its focus on the rights of all individuals, c) economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability, and most recently, d) respect for the different ways of understanding development.

### In the area of CSO actions

- 2.3) **Coherence.** An initial value demanded for CSOs is coherence, or in other words, correspondence between speech and actions.

- 2.4) **Transparency.** Recognition of the need to improve our levels of transparency is unanimous. This is basically a problem of congruence between what we preach and what we demand of other stakeholders in society.
- 2.5) **Pluralism,** understood as recognizing, valuing and advocating diversity. This is both a value to be advocated in society as well as a principle guiding the work within each organization.
- 2.6) **Innovation.** An added value that CSOs frequently contribute to the solution of social problems is innovation and creativity. This involves the search for and experimentation with new formulas for confronting old problems, especially taking advantage of the energy and knowledge possessed by those involved in this work.
- 2.7) **Solidarity.** To follow the principles of solidarity, cooperation and coordination is another ethical imperative. Although it is common to find dynamics involving competition and individualism among CSOs, the need to overcome this tendency and take action in the framework of these values is recognized.
- 2.8) Taking **ethical and social responsibility** for what one does is a criterion guiding the behaviors and actions of individuals and organizations at all times. This involves taking responsibility for the consequences of the actions promoted.
- 2.9) **Environmental responsibility.** A principle for guiding the work of CSOs for which there is still a great deal of work to be done is incorporating environmental responsibility and the rights of nature into our everyday lives. Special attention must be given to the enormous challenges currently facing our planet in terms of global warming and a number of different types of environmental problems experienced around the world.
- 2.10) **Effectiveness.** There is agreement that the principle of effectiveness is important for CSOs and that this is not something new. Organizations have always asked themselves how their actions can make a greater impact as they work toward goals and results. There is also a collective recognition that discussion on effectiveness that does not integrate discussion focused on development is sterile and problematic.
- 2.11) **Gender equality.** Although this is a separate topic on its own,<sup>8</sup> it is also important to mention the struggle for gender equality and women’s rights as one of the principles guiding the work of CSOs. It is vitally important that CSOs share a deep conviction that without this dimension any social organization will be severely limited.

<sup>8</sup> See Topic 5 below.





It is important to acknowledge that these values and principles must be viewed from two sides. On the one hand they guide the daily actions of CSOs and are a reality for many of them, but at the same time they constitute a challenge to be met by these same CSOs and many others. Great progress has been made, although not at the same rate in all organizations, and for everyone there is much to be accomplished in order to transform these principles into reality.

### Topic 3 RELATIONS AMONG CSOs (South-South and South-North)

On the topic of relations among CSOs, concerns are focused on the following areas:

- 3.1) **This field is not homogenous.** The first point to be emphasized is to encourage everyone to avoid looking at these relations in a homogenous manner. In today's world there is a great deal of the North in the South, and a great deal of the South in the North. For example, it is clear that the migration phenomenon has completely changed the panorama and the geography of relations among CSOs.
- 3.2) **The need to re-politicize our relations.** A second point emphasized to all those involved in this network of relations is the need to "re-politicize discourse" and to highlight the political nature of the relations established among CSOs. After decades of work, we cannot limit ourselves to simply carrying out projects or being "contracted" by the State or by international development agencies. The political nature of our relations may be explicit or implicit, but it is unavoidable. It is vital that we demand the building of relations based on political solidarity in relation to shared purposes and shared goals. The idea is to build relations as allies with the objective of achieving redistributive policies for reducing inequalities around the world, in each region, in each country, and between men and women, between adults and young people, and between human beings and nature.
- 3.3) **South-South cooperation.** It is also necessary to work together to intervene in the processes of South-South development work currently being monopolized by States. We have a collective task of recognizing the importance of opening up this modality of development work to CSOs.
- 3.4) **Emerging countries.** Currently, there are a number of emerging States that are aspiring to become global players, and what we perceive is that their practices in development work and in the area of commerce are no different from and in fact often reproduce the same practices that we thought had been overcome. In the case of Latin America, Brazil is one of these emerging States. The concern here is the need to include this topic in our agendas.
- 3.5) **Multi-lateral and international organizations.** In the international arena, not only National States are

setting the pace. Multi-lateral and international institutions also have a role in defining the panorama and architecture of international relations, and there is very little if any control being exerted over them. There is a need for work focused on dialogue, oversight and control, and it is vitally important for associations, organizations and international networks of CSOs to include these areas within their established tasks.

#### 3.6) **Questions for CSOs in the North.** CSOs in the South are questioning CSOs in the North:

- The asymmetry in relations between NGOs providing development cooperation and CSOs in the South is a reality, and recognizing this situation is a necessary starting point. What is happening is that when the political agenda is neglected, relations end up being reduced to simple establishing contracts to carry out projects.
- Relations based exclusively on operating projects are inadequate for establishing strategic, long-term perspectives. There is a phenomenon that CSOs refer to as "impatient cooperation" in which the focus in the International Development Cooperation world is on the short term, and at the same time impacts are demanded, requiring excessive use of administrative resources. This is something that does not make any sense when the duration of these projects may only be a matter of a few months.
- There is a tendency for those in the North to view the South as being the same throughout, failing to see the differences and heterogeneity that characterizes the region. This translates into treating everyone the same, independently of their capacities and their needs. This often leads to awkward mistakes and offensive actions.
- There is also a problem related to the individuals involved. CSOs in the South dedicate great efforts to helping individuals become experienced professionals—who are then almost impossible to keep within their organizations, since international organizations and development assistance agencies promote what is known as "brain drain" in which these professionals join their ranks, given their capacity to pay much higher salaries. Minimally, it is only fair that these efforts in bringing training and experience to these professionals be acknowledged economically.
- To date, the flow of information and accountability moves mostly South to North, and this must be modified. It is agreed that accountability must be reciprocal, and information must flow in both directions.
- In a number of countries there is a rejection of the role of international CSOs as intermediaries between community organizations and local CSOs, on the one hand, and their respective National States and governments, on the other hand. International organizations must not assume as a



fact that they have the right to speak on behalf of local stakeholders.

- In a number of countries in the region, it is felt that there is unfair competition on the part of organizations from the North for resources in countries in the South. Not only must CSOs in the South face the very limited financing available to them, but in addition international organizations apply for national resources in their countries, and they have definite advantages over national CSOs in administrative and financial terms. The focus here should be solidarity, not competition.

#### Topic 4 LEGITIMACY, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF CSOS

The following shared ideas on this topic were expressed in the National Consultations:

4.1) **A pertinent topic in our reality.** There is consensus in the region regarding the importance of this topic in today's reality, while at the same time, concrete experiences in this regard vary greatly. In some sectors there is still the perception that transparency and accountability are imposed from the outside. The generalized agreement is that although the pressure from the outside is very real, it is also true that the main reasons for emphasizing these aspects originate in the social sector itself. The demand for transparency and accountability from other stakeholders in society is an important aspect of CSO missions and demands, and they cannot exempt themselves from their responsibility to do the same. The justification used can be identified as a problem of congruence and coherence with our type of organization that seeks to and takes actions to produce public goods.

The same is true for legality and legitimacy, and they are often confused. The first originates from a legal decision. The second is a result of the relations developed and actions undertaken by each CSO. This does not depend on the "propaganda" produced by each organization on itself. Nor is it true that legitimacy depends only on being coordinated with a social movement, or we can at least say that simply coordinating efforts with a social movement is not enough.

4.2) **Accountability.** Legitimacy is closely associated with accountability and transparency. In most Latin American countries, CSOs are accountable to the State. In all cases this is regulated by laws and decrees, and represents a minimum standard that must be met. CSOs are also accountable to donors,

member assemblies and other stakeholders. But this is only the beginning. The real challenge lies in the construction of policies at the individual (for each organization) and collective (for associations, federations and confederations) levels. These policies establish internal control, and should include practices for transparency and accountability to all interested publics. Emphasis is placed, however, on the importance of accountability within organizations. This is not only a matter of maintaining a solid accounting system, but also includes the responsible management of non-financial resources.

4.3) **Information.** For CSOs, transparency involves the quality and timeliness of information they provide about themselves to interested publics. In order to function effectively, CSOs must be profoundly rooted in institutional culture. Transparency is also a mechanism for trust-building.

4.4) **Institutional capacities.** It has been determined that many CSO activities currently underway in Latin America are limited by a lack of institutional capacities and not by a lack of will. Therefore, when addressing policies or programs for institutional strengthening, it is important to include capacity-building for being accountable and transparent.

4.5) **Good practices.** Important progress has been made in this area in a number of Latin American countries. We can point to a set of good practices that include: a) the Regional Initiative for Strengthening Transparency and Accountability Practices in Latin American CSOs (*Iniciativa Regional para el Fortalecimiento de Prácticas de Transparencia y Rendición de Cuentas de las OSC en AL, or Rendir Cuentas*),<sup>9</sup> b) the Network of NGOs for Transparency in Colombia (*La Red de ONG por la Transparencia – Colombia*),<sup>10</sup> and c) ethics codes in national platforms such as Anong, Unitas, and Acción.<sup>11</sup> What is evident in all of these cases is that these are collective processes taking place in the sector, and the role played by second (associations) and third-level (federations, confederations) organizations and networks in promoting these types of practices is very important, since it would be practically impossible for an isolated CSO to carry out this work.

4.6) **Communication.** It is generally recommended that transparency and accountability practices be accompanied by a communication policy that increases the sector's visibility and that places the information produced in the hands of interested publics. Also, when CSOs communicate what they are doing, this serves as an incentive for other CSOs to also be accountable and for the principle of transparency to spread throughout all sectors of society.

<sup>9</sup>Rendir Cuentas: <http://rendircuentas.org/>

<sup>10</sup>Red ONGxT: <http://www.ongporlatransparencia.org.co/>

<sup>11</sup>Anong (Uruguay): <http://www.anong.org.uy/> . Unitas (Bolivia): <http://www.redunitas.org/> . Acción (Chile): <http://www.accionag.cl/>



## Topic 5 WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER

This topic deserves to be addressed specifically. The main points of agreement can be summarized as follows:

- 5.1) Women's and feminist movements are heterogeneous and diverse. This is also a value as itself.
- 5.2) The objective of gender equality must be placed above the objective of development.
- 5.3) Women and their organizations and movements are actors in development.
- 5.4) Feminism is an avant-garde cultural proposal. In this area CSOs have established themselves as cultural actors in the transformation of attitudes and the struggle against patriarchy.
- 5.5) The women's movement has been a key actor in democratization processes, against dictatorships and in the daily life relationships (women as political actors).
- 5.6) CSOs are not free from their own patriarchy. It is the task of CSOs to bring visibility to this problem and identify it as a challenge to be faced.
- 5.7) Strengthening women's organizations: this should be assumed as an effectiveness indicator by the various stakeholders in development. International development agencies should include strengthening women's actions as citizens and women's organizations and movements among their effectiveness indicators.
- 5.8) Public policies on gender equality are necessary. Feminists have posed the question "What State for what equality?" It is not necessary to discuss whether women's rights should be addressed through transversal policies or through gender-sensitive budgets—both are necessary.
- 5.9) Women's and feminist movements constitute an important national and international actor. Coordination among these movements and between these movements and other sectors and movements is a current and ongoing challenge.
- 5.10) Communication should be included as a strategy for bringing visibility to the unbalanced power between genders and for fighting against the subordination of one gender to the other.

## Topic 6 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

What CSOs confirmed in the National Consultations in Latin America and the Caribbean is that the environment in the region, although marked by enormous changes and differences, is characterized by mutual distrust bet-

ween the State, the private business sector and CSOs. While this is the case, it is also true that there is significant evidence of sectors beginning to come together, and these tendencies must be strengthened.

A friendly environment that strengthens CSOs is expressed at a number of different levels. Some of the characteristics that should be established in each case are the following:

### At the socio-cultural level

- 6.1) **Cultural value placed on organizations.** In the creation of an environment that is favorable to CSOs existing and operating, an initial element to be obtained is to construct and reinforce the following within the common sense and culture of citizens in general: the value of organizations; the advantages of collective, cooperative actions expressed in solidarity and aimed at resolving problems; and the importance of each group of human beings having the opportunity to express their opinions through the channel provided by their organizations.

But there are some serious problems. A number of presidents and high-level government officials in the region have made public declarations with generalizations discrediting NGOs and other social organizations. Something similar has happened in the case of authorities from the business world, the academic community and even from social movements. Attitudes like these contribute exactly the opposite of what we are proposing here. They create an environment that is hostile to social organizing, and are often a legitimization of aggressions against social organizations.

Tasks that can be very useful in creating an enabling environment include systematic communication through the mass media and supporting communication-oriented actions by CSOs in the mass media and other communication media. This is a challenge at all levels: international, national, regional and local.

### At the political level

CSOs conclude that the political environment in general is not facilitating their work. What can be found in the region ranges from governments that do not tolerate CSOs that criticize their policies and actions and that criminalize those in opposition, to governments that ignore their existence. What is necessary to improve this environment is, for example:

- 6.2) **A State with guarantees.** In a number of the region's countries, it is still necessary to create an environment in which government authorities respect human rights and the rights of association and expression. These rights and liberties tend to be limited, justified particularly by national security arguments. As long as the executive branch in a given country fails to express the clear and explicit will to respect these rights, an enabling environment is impossible. What is absolutely necessary is to guarantee that the rule of law truly exists, but un-





fortunately, in a number of the region's countries we find that even the government is working against this.

**6.3) Public recognition of CSOs and their autonomy.**

In order to speak of an enabling political environment, we cannot limit ourselves to addressing only legal recognition. It is necessary for the importance of social organizations to be publicly valued, and this is an obligation of public authorities and individuals with responsibility in society. And this is closely associated with the obligation to respect the autonomy of CSOs. When governments attempt to co-opt, silence or eliminate civil society organizations that do not agree with their actions, the damage to the organizations involved and to the countries in general is severe.

**6.4) Equality of organizations before the law.**

Recognition of CSOs and of the rights to citizen participation and the public expression of their opinions must be supported by the principle of equality for all CSOs before the law. Whether an organization is politically close to or distanced from the government cannot be a legitimate basis or criterion for its recognition. We have found a recent tendency in a number of Latin American countries, and from very different ideological perspectives, in which the term "governmental civil society" is used. This term refers to an extensive layer of organizations created by the State and totally at the service of the State and its defense.

**6.5) Decentralization.** It was established that the decentralization of government action generally favors the existence and actions of CSOs (especially smaller ones). This element is not the only one necessary for an enabling environment, and in fact there are occasions in which CSO activities are complicated in decentralized environments. But overall, a decentralized environment is closer to and facilitates the work of CSOs.

**At the legal, regulatory level**

What is obtained at the cultural and political levels should be reflected at the regulatory level. The necessary legal framework should consist of a set of legal certainties that reduce any arbitrary and personalized tendencies in decision-making. It should also contemplate mechanisms for dealing with government officials who fail to comply with regulations designed to protect CSOs.

**6.6) Public policies for strengthening CSOs.** It is important to establish an adequate regulatory framework, although CSOs are aware that such a framework alone is insufficient. The State needs to implement explicit public policies for strengthening CSOs. These policies should define the rules of the game; create mechanisms to serve as an incentive for creating CSOs and placing them into action; provide opportunities for training those involved; and specify the real possibilities for meeting together with and debating with different sectors and stakeholders. This legal framework should be debated extensively and agreed upon,

in part in order to understand the differences among the various organizations and their particular characteristics.

Regulations for recognizing the right to transparency and access to public information are enormously useful for society overall and for CSO activities in particular.

**6.7) Pro-active fiscal policy.** A particular area worth mentioning in relation to public regulations is the area of taxation. Given the nature of non-profit organizations, something that happens in all the region's countries is the promotion of CSOs and their activities through fiscal incentives (exemption from income tax, etc.), taking into consideration their social value and their status as producers of public goods. This is a good starting point, but fiscal policy can and should go farther, and should serve to promote social organizations. Other types of incentives for good practices can be explored, such as those for organizations working with especially vulnerable populations, for those using innovative methodologies and for CSOs that demonstrate their accountability. Also, efforts to develop economic activities focused on becoming self-sustainable can be facilitated.

**6.8) Funding.** One of the agreements reached is to work toward establishing public debate in the region and in each country regarding the need for public and government financing for CSO activities, taking into consideration that CSOs are organizations that work to produce public goods. This debate will open up exactly at a time in which many organizations see their very existence threatened, as international development assistance is withdrawn and practices that represent steps backward are increasing. These practices end up weakening CSOs and showing a lack of respect for them. They include, for example, the excessive, indiscriminate demand made of CSOs to provide counterpart funds, the tendency toward short-term contracts, and a lack of recognition of the knowledge and experience built over time and the administrative costs of projects.

There are some initial attempts, such as public funds available through an open bidding process. This is a good alternative, but it is clear that when this type of mechanism is implemented, it is immediately necessary to also establish clear instruments for controlling these funds and for establishing commitments to transparency and accountability, in order to avoid the illegitimate use of such funds and to guarantee that these funds be used for the purpose of strengthening organizations.

In particular the following needs for financing have been identified: for training individuals, for strengthening capacities in transparency and accountability, for the operation of communication media within organizations, for promoting second and third-level organizations (associations, federations) and networks for carrying out joint activities, and also funds that acknowledge the operating costs of CSOs.



Once again, this debate is necessary at the national level, and also at the international level. In the latter case, it is important to strengthen the role and the amounts of UN-linked global funds to which CSOs have access.

Efforts are underway in various countries to experiment with “inclusive enterprises” operated by civil society. These practices are in their earliest stages and require financial and technical assistance to get started.

#### **At the level of International Development Cooperation:**

6.9) **Strengthening CSOs as an effectiveness indicator.** In this area the first and most important message is the need to incorporate the strengthening of CSOs as an effectiveness criterion for development cooperation programs and projects. Currently, the mechanisms for managing international development assistance are weakening organizations, instead of strengthening them, as already mentioned here.

In line with a vision that strengthening CSOs is one aspect of development objectives, areas of financing should be established for consulting and jointly building an agenda with CSOs. The focuses of development cooperation should be established on the basis of acknowledging and dialoguing on development needs and priorities in a genuine participative manner at the national level. In addition there is a demand for efforts to simplify, standardize and increase the utility of registering and accountability systems.

Once again, there is a call to understand the relation between CSOs in the South and international organizations in the North and international agencies that work in Development Cooperation as political allies for global causes, such as the construction of a “new international financial architecture” for financing the right to development, and as allies in addressing topics that national governments in power are not in agreement with. And it is absolutely urgent to move beyond relations based merely on the simple relationship contracted-contractor.

#### **At the level of CSOs**

Finally, at the level of CSOs, there are also responsibilities in building an enabling environment for their activities.

6.10) **Articulation.** An initial and very important responsibility is coordination. This refers to the need to build second, third and fourth-level organizations and networks for collective actions such as: defending the existence and autonomy of the sector and its organizations; the visibility and public presence of CSOs; building practices and policies for self-control, based on joint discussions and particularly including the coordination and promotion of transparency public accountability; creating instruments for strengthening and assisting the weakest orga-

nizations; and implementing a policy of identifying allies and alliances for defending the sector’s interests. And all of this needs to occur at the national, regional and international levels.

The urgent task of re-politicizing CSOs and their relations requires the joint efforts of groups of organizations. This cannot be nor should it be the isolated task of a single organization. Platforms—which can take different organizational forms (networks, associations, federations or confederations)—are the best instruments for this task. We have important building blocks for this new architecture. The organizations that have been involved in this consultation provide good examples. However, what we have before us is the challenge and invitation to ARTICULATE our efforts in a deeper, more political and more strategic way. The time is right to move ahead with this task... and the current context makes it absolutely necessary. ●



## EIGHT WORKING THESES DEVELOPED BY THE LATIN AMERICAN FEMINIST AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENT FOR THE DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Claudia Mejía  
Lilian Celiberti  
Rosa Inés Ospina  
Rubén Fernández

**A**s a result of the debate on the contributions by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to development, advanced in the framework of the National Consultations with Civil Society Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, it was agreed that a specific text would be prepared on the particular challenges confronting women as central actors in CSOs, for their inclusion in the benefits from such development. In general there is a very well-developed discourse on the deficiencies, from a feminist and gender perspective, of public policies and of cooperation for development. However, there is little debate set forth on the difficulties and deficiencies confronted within CSOs when efforts are made to include women and to empower them to demand their rights and realize their potential.

The following eight working theses are proposed, taken from the synthesis of the national consultations, to promote debate on women's place and the conditions in which they function in the search for development effectiveness. This is not a finished text, nor does it pretend to be exhaustive. Rather, it is a contribution to the discussion to be re-addressed in the spaces offered by the Open Forum:

1. Women's rights and gender equality: a higher objective of development
2. Women: key actors in democratization and development processes
3. Feminism: an avant-garde cultural proposal
4. Feminist and women's movement: important national and international actor, however not always present at the local level
5. Reproduction of patriarchal practices: a challenge within CSOs

6. Strengthening women's organizations: a criterion for development effectiveness
7. Public policies for women's equality and empowerment: a pending task
8. An effectiveness and efficiency criterion for International Cooperation for Development (ICD): the inclusion of indicators for strengthening the role of women as citizens and the work of women's movements and organizations within a citizen framework

### 1. Women's rights and gender equality: a superior objective of development

The women's and feminist movement has been able to establish women's equality and respect for their human rights as a central component in democracy and development. A number of international instruments establish these rights and urge governments and societies to guarantee respect for them. The development effectiveness agenda cannot be distanced from these commitments.

Colombia<sup>12</sup> clearly expresses this concern in its conclusions: *"the starting point for consensus is the need to recognize that the focus of the work of any social organization must consider the challenges of equality between men and women, if the objective is truly to advance toward more sustainable development and more democratic societies. Development, democracy and overcoming poverty are not possible without achieving equality between men and women. Working 'with' women is not enough, if women's 'empowerment' is not guaranteed."*

<sup>12</sup> When a country is mentioned in this text as responsible for a textual quotation, reference is being made to the contents of the respective report from the National Consultation on the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations in Promoting Development.



In order to assure that women's rights are respected, so that women can experience and demand their rights, it is fundamental to create the conditions for women's genuine economic, physical and political autonomy. As defined in the Observatorio de la Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe: *"Women's autonomy in private and public life is fundamental for guaranteeing the exercise of their human rights. The ability to generate their own income and to control assets and resources (economic autonomy), to have control over their bodies (physical autonomy), and their full participation in the decision affecting their lives and women overall (autonomy in decision-making) are three pillars of gender equality and joint citizenship."*

Only to the extent that there is recognition, as expressed by Argentina, that *"no project is neutral in terms of gender—it is mentioned or it is not mentioned as an objective,"* will it be possible to analyze and measure the impacts on women's rights and gender equality. In fact, Chile expressed the following: *"women continue to be the most disadvantaged in terms of development; gender inequality has not been eradicated, not even in the most developed countries."*

Colombia calls attention to the fact that *"using the discourse of 'effectiveness' in an environment in which the topic of gender equality has not been established can lead to intensifying discrimination instead of eradicating it."*

## 2. Women: key actors in democratization and development processes

Women have played an outstanding role in the struggles against dictatorships and in the subsequent democratization processes, participating in both women's and human rights organizations, and in promoting a culture of rights. In the case of Chile, for example, *"it is recognized that the women's agenda influenced the political cycle of 20 years of governments of Concertación."* In this regard Silvia Camurca stated in the Diálogos Consonantes 2008 meeting that the women's movement *"contributes to the renovation of our political culture with new forms of organization, new expressions of struggle, new forms of producing critical knowledge regarding society."*

According to the Declaration from the Forum of Feminist Organizations in relation to ECLAC's 11th Regional Conference on Women in 2010, women's organizations still need to confront and overcome enormous challenges in the region, in order to reduce the social, economic, political and cultural gaps faced by women. Taking into consideration the regional panorama, it is impossible to accept the militarization of citizen security and the increment in military budgets to the detriment of public spending dedicated to the well-being of persons—sounding an alarm in relation to the increasing criminalization of the struggles waged by social movements as they defend rights and exercise political opposition. The women's movement identifies violations of the separation between the State and religion—which

impede women's autonomy over their bodies and lead to women's limited political participation and limited access to positions of power.

At the same time, in each country, in grassroots and community organizations and in social movements, women have served as a pillar of development processes. They do so through numerous roles: as those directly carrying out these processes, as participants in formulating public policies, as those channeling resources in favor of the poorest, and through many other roles. Numerous studies agree that the resources administered by women tend to be more effective and efficient in achieving results.

The current hegemonic development model, particularly in relation to the environment, reveals a predatory, patriarchal, racist logic based on commercialism. This model promotes agro-businesses and monocultures, thus violating the rights of indigenous peoples and communities, African descendants, rural and campesino populations to their lands and territories. And within these populations, women are the most vulnerable. Natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Haiti, reveal the profound social and gender inequalities in this hegemonic patriarchal model (Declaration from the Forum of Feminist Organizations, ECLAC).

Even in the especially adverse situations in which CSOs are involved, the central role played by women is acknowledged. Honduras states: *"women's organizations that continue to fight for the decriminalization of abortion are also among those most severely questioned and threatened. Nevertheless, it is notorious that the main voices and leaderships in autonomous civil society are women."*

Uruguay states that the current context places women's CSOs as primarily organizations that are carrying out programs and policies formulated exclusively by the government, without participation and reflection by the rest of the actors involved. This role of carrying out policies has limited and weakened the current role of women's CSOs, and has significantly limited their innovative capacities and their autonomy in actively promoting the inclusion of new issues that would make it possible to expand the perspective on development as a matter of rights. At the same time, this limits the role of CSOs in monitoring public policies.

## 3. Feminism: an avant-garde cultural proposal

The Feminist Movement has been a central cultural actor in the struggles against authoritarianism and a patriarchal culture, and in the struggle for equal, constructive relationships among people. This is a value that is generally acknowledged as one of the major contributions to the advancement of humanity in the 20th century. In the conclusions from the Open Forum in Venezuela, it is pointed out that *"the gender perspective also helps to organize thought and action on the consequences that a*





*policy has on diversity and the needs expressed in this diversity.”*

In the framework of the Diálogos Consonantes meeting, Lilian Celiberti states: *“feminism contributes a perspective that does not separate repercussions for people in relation to economic and cultural elements and freedom.”* Along the same lines, the following is expressed in the Declaration from the Forum of Feminist Organizations in relation to ECLAC’s 11th Conference on Women in 2010: *“The actions of women’s and feminist movements have been crucial for bringing to public debate the oppression and discrimination resulting from societies that are anti-democratic, sexist, racist, classist, lesbophobic and homophobic.”*

Women’s agenda, Chile states, has permeated men’s agenda, and has opened up a debate on the contents of the agenda based on equality and recognition of rights, conciliation between family and work, co-responsibility, children’s rights, the use of time, due recognition of time dedicated to tasks of caretaking, and other areas.

As Argentina recalls: *“Patriarchy is present in our culture, and as both men and women, we must fight it. We have to change the overall system. In this sense ‘gender equality’ and ‘development effectiveness’ are part of the same phenomenon and are interdependent, and provide mutual feedback. This is why we talk about a feminist agenda, not a women’s agenda, because feminism is a political project.”*

#### **4. Women’s and feminist movement: important national and international actor, however not always present at the local level**

In our current world, if we want to orient ourselves toward peace, fairness, sustainability, and democracy—at the level of each individual country and also globally—the presence of women as social, cultural and political actors is urgent. It is necessary that the women’s movement in general and feminist movements in particular fulfill roles as significant actors, not only at the global level, but also at national and sub-national levels. And in order for this to take place, it is necessary to develop conditions and environments that are much more favorable than those currently present.

The conclusions from Argentina state: *“The women’s movement is among those that have achieved greater crosscutting among social movements at the international level and in general. However, their proclamations and demands are not reflected in concrete practice and in concrete exercise of women’s rights at the local level.”* The international legal framework is very strong, and is “brought down” to national legislation in each country, but this legislation is not really “owned” or even known by women, and even less so, by overall society, and is not frequently implemented.

One of the most notable characteristics in women’s movements and in feminist movements is the enormous wealth of cultural diversity. It is important that this diversity be preserved and promoted. According to the report from Columbia: *“it is also important to recognize that women are also diverse and have enormous diversity as a group of human beings. The differentiated perspectives for working with women are also an ethical and methodological necessity.”*

It is necessary that both those providing International Cooperation and governments promote the innovative and creative capacities of organizations. It is necessary to have economic continuity in strengthening processes, and not only isolated products, in order for organizations to advance. To this end it is also necessary to review CSO practices, in order to revitalize pure activism.

#### **5. Reproduction of patriarchal practices: a challenge within CSOs**

One of the most important challenges to confront is the reproduction of relations of discrimination and subordination between men and women—inside civil society organizations. Currently, the “strengthening of CSOs” must necessarily pass through an analysis and visualization of this situation. Argentina states emphatically that it is important to avoid reproducing within CSOs the discrimination, subordination and exclusion of women present in patriarchal society.

While in their discourse, CSOs state their commitment to “the consolidation of equality in terms of gender, sexual option, age, ethnic groups, indigenous peoples and religions,” in practice these principles are particularly directed at actions toward the outside, and are demanded in relation to other social actors and particularly the State, but they are not necessarily used as a criterion for evaluating the coherence of the actions within these organizations and in their own projects. A number of countries, during their deliberations in the framework of the Open Forum, affirm the need to establish in the CSO agenda a discussion on their daily responsibility in the reproduction of patriarchal relations, and preventing this responsibility from falling exclusively on women’s organizations, but rather respecting and strengthening women’s organizations as strategic allies for understanding and promoting this responsibility.

In order for cooperation for development to be effective, Ecuador proposes re-thinking the issue of gender at the level of grassroots organizations and not only in public policies and international cooperation. Venezuela delves more deeply into this matter and concludes: *“the gender perspective, as a daily action of CSOs, is a challenge for actions and a guarantee of equality in development, making intervention more effective, with diversity as a key reference point for development.”*

Venezuela proposes: *“in order to have certainty that a*



policy or project includes the gender perspective, the following guidelines should be considered:

- That it promotes, in an ongoing manner, equality of opportunities, taking into consideration an express definition of diversity. This must be obligatory in CSO agendas.
- That budgets be designed with a gender perspective, in order to provide resources to diverse actions that guarantee equality of opportunities.
- That information and discrimination due to sex be recorded.
- That CSOs recognize those organizations that specifically address women's rights.
- That the various CSOs coordinate efforts with those organizations. That action networks are created to guarantee that this perspective is present in all organizations."

## 6. Strengthening women's organizations: a criterion for development effectiveness

Women's and feminist organizations have played a crucial role in strengthening the voice and representation of groups with lesser levels of organization in the public arena, with the objective of achieving respect for women's rights and gender equality. Thus, one of the criteria for the effectiveness of a development process advanced by any actor must be: "to what degree have women's organizations in the territory where such a process is being implemented been strengthened."

As Chile explains, there are critical issues in the public agenda and in public policies for effective development, such as advances in the area of sexual and reproductive health, the increase in gender violence, the effective political participation of women, and the levels of focalization of poverty in relation to gender. All of these issues must be monitored by women's organizations, from their perspective and using their methodologies, in order to guarantee that the achievements made thus far are not reversed, and in order to identify and demonstrate what still must be achieved.

"Women's participation per se does not guarantee that women's interests and needs are proposed or defended," Argentina states in its conclusions. For this reason opportunities for women and women's organizations are absolutely indispensable in continuing to construct this area and move it forward. This is even clearer when one takes into account that while considerably more than half of the persons participating in the national consultations convoked by the Open Forum were women leaders working within the CSO sector, any serious discussion on the importance and characteristics of working with women and focusing on gender equality as part of

development led to only precarious conclusions, and in some countries, there were essentially no conclusions at all.

The priority given to strengthening women's organizations does not mean it is not also necessary to develop a crosscutting focus on gender equality in all policies, programs and projects. Chile states: "the specific work addressing women achieves greater knowledge, seriousness and effectiveness in interventions that seek to modify the inequality gap and recognize the difference in the conditions experienced by women, as well as in interventions that link these conditions to the diversity in socioeconomic (related to class) and racial (related to ethnic group) situations."

In addition, as explained by Venezuela: "the two perspectives, the specific projects addressing women and the crosscutting of the gender perspective, do not exclude each other, and both are important at this time. Working on the crosscutting application of the gender perspective in projects is also important, because it makes it possible to enrich research and expand fields of action. In this way the inequalities and discrimination of both are evident. The crosscutting focus allows for a richer analysis and a search for differentiated solutions. In terms of public policies, crosscutting is important, because it prevents excluding a significant part of the population (women) and increases effectiveness in incorporating women as subjects of development." It is evident that when it comes to public policies overall, the gender perspective should be a part of all of them, and it is the obligation of CSOs and women's organizations to provide adequate follow-up on this matter, as emphasized by Chile.

At any rate, it is important to note that the specific funds for women are important sources of assistance, in both financial and general terms, permitting organizations dedicated to working for women's rights and gender equality to maintain their presence, become stronger and have an impact on development. These women's organizations are characterized by being very proactive and creative in assuming a strategic role together with women's movements in general. They have been implementing innovative strategies, both for raising more funds and for supporting the organizational development of their beneficiary groups. Along these lines Uruguay insists on the need for the State to more consistently assume its responsibilities with established policies and to substantially increase the public budgetary resources available for working with and in favor of women.

## 7. Public policies for women's equality and empowerment: a pending task

International Cooperation for Development (ICD) is an important instrument for overcoming poverty and inequalities, but it cannot nor should it be used to substitute the primary tool possessed by contemporary societies—



which consists of State resources. The use of these resources is stipulated in public policies that must promote equality between genders.

Even after so many years, it is evident that there is resistance in the public policies established by individual countries and those supported by ICD, to acknowledging and seriously confronting the inequalities in relations between genders based on subordination and its consequences. Consequently, these public policies are not contributing to overcoming gender inequality as they could and should, and in some cases they are actually causing an intensification of this inequality.

The challenge is clear, and we will present two critical examples here to demonstrate it:

- a. The recent ECLAC report entitled “What kind of State? What kind of equality?” acknowledges that in order to achieve gender equality (in this case, with emphasis on access to employment), it is necessary to attain women’s economic, physical and political autonomy, and this implies policies, practices and services that lift the burden of taking care of others that weighs upon women, thereby allowing women to enter the labor market. According to ECLAC, women’s access to labor markets continues to be “*a blind spot of public policy in Latin America and the Caribbean,*” despite some advances in areas that contribute to gender equality. Therefore, to correct this situation, ECLAC proposes that the State fulfills the role “*as a guarantor of effective entitlement to rights, equality between the public and private sectors, and a complete redistribution of work between men and women with the aim of promoting gender equality.*”
- b. From the viewpoint of citizen security policies, so much in vogue in Latin America, the lack of recognition for the specificity of violence against women makes these policies nothing more than palliatives that fail to address the cultural transformations needed for effective development.

It is urgently necessary to prioritize the head-on battle against all forms of violence against women within the overall agenda. This includes the violence experienced on a daily basis within families, as well as the horrible particularity of violence against women occurring in Latin America known as femicide (defined as the violent death of women—through murder, homicide or parricide—due to the simple fact that they are women), constituting the most severe violation of women’s rights, beyond the violation of the right to life, as stated by the Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos,<sup>13</sup> and also including the more subtle but not less serious violence of which women are victims in social and political life and in their workplaces, whether more or less formal.<sup>14</sup>

Public policies that seek to make one or various fundamental rights a reality must guarantee, from the very construction and definition of these policies, a prior reading of the way in which women are being ignored or displaced from these rights, and consequently, must propose explicit ways to remedy and thereby overcome the situation. Argentina proposes this in its conclusions: in order to verify that women are effectively being involved and are actors in development, it is necessary to verify that all policies, programs and projects are effectively aimed at guaranteeing women: (i) control over their own bodies and fertility; (ii) economic autonomy and administration of resources; and (iii) political participation (at macro, medium and micro levels) from the perspective of their own interests and options.

## 8. An effectiveness and efficiency criterion for International Cooperation for Development (ICD): the inclusion of indicators for strengthening the role of women as citizens and the work of women’s movements and organizations within a citizen framework

Despite women’s contributions to development and democracy, and despite the visibility that women have given to gender violence against women and the disproportionate effects of fundamentalism, militarization and war in their lives, it is notorious that the interest on the part of International Cooperation and donor governments in supporting women’s rights and gender equality has diminished in recent years.

Venezuela proposes that entities providing international cooperation consider within their top priority objectives sufficient investment aimed at:

- Promoting knowledge of the legal framework that defends the rights of women in each country.
- Strengthening the structures for applying the laws that promote an end to violence against women.
- Creating entities for observing the implementation of these laws and associated institutional entities.
- Financing and providing technical assistance to the CSOs dedicated to helping people take ownership in these laws, making people aware of these laws and demanding their fulfillment.

<sup>13</sup> Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos. Femicidio: más allá de la violación del derecho a la vida. Análisis de los derechos violados y las responsabilidades estatales en los casos de femicidio de Ciudad Juárez/Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH), San José, Costa Rica, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, Jill Radford and Diana Russell (2007), cited in IIDH 2008, propose that femicide is at the most extreme point of the continuum of terror against women, which includes a wide variety of verbal and physical abuses, such as rape, torture, sexual slavery (particularly prostitution), incest and sexual abuse of children outside the family, psychological aggression, sexual harassment (on the phone, in the streets, at the office and in the classroom), genital mutilation (clitoridectomy, excision and infibulation), unnecessary gynecological operations (unnecessary hysterectomies), forced heterosexuality, forced sterilization, forced maternity (by criminalizing birth control and abortion), psycho-surgery, denying food to women in some cultures, cosmetic surgery and other mutilations in the name of beauty. When these forms of terrorism result in death, these authors consider them to also constitute femicide.



- Demanding that donors require the CSOs with whom they are working to explicitly stipulate how they will assume their commitment to gender equality and that they explicitly define their interaction with these already established entities in the specific work of defending women's rights, in order to have a significant impact in this area.

Along these lines Chile suggests that in order to guarantee the effectiveness of actions, ICD entities must demand and finance interdisciplinary teams in intervention and research projects that incorporate a gender perspective and variables such as class and ethnic group. As well, Chile suggests that projects incorporate compliance with the social clauses in agreements signed by States as well as demands for ratification of CE-DAW.

From Colombia's point of view, it is especially noteworthy that national governments, International Cooperation and donor governments are all failing to assure that inequalities against women are being overcome—as a central element for guaranteeing development effectiveness. For example, according to the Observatorio de la Cooperación de La Alianza, only 1.42% of official cooperation for development in Colombia is specifically concerned with women's empowerment. *“It is therefore urgently necessary to assure that International Cooperation for Development operates in a manner that is in line with a gender equality focus, investing the necessary resources to this end and effectively guaranteeing that every peso invested in development also contributes to overcoming inequality and empowering women. This situation has revealed the importance of assuring an increase in CSO effectiveness in achieving these aims.”*

It is important that women's and feminist organizations become familiar with the complexity of the new instruments and new modalities of assistance, and that they gain experiences in adapting to the new international context. To this end, it becomes necessary to establish training for the new procedures to be followed. In addition, women's and feminist organizations have established that the majority of funding to which they have access is for projects and not for institutional financing. This means that it is often difficult to strengthen their organizations, develop new proposals and test them, and especially to react to the demands arising in the current situation, and in fact they frequently cannot establish their own priorities. It is necessary that donors further develop practices of institutional financing and improve the conditions and requirements for assisting women's organizations, and at the same time that they recognize the important role played by these organizations in advancements in development and the deepening of democratization. ●

