THE NORTH-SOUTH AGENDA

NGO ADVOCACY NETWORKS IN LATIN AMERICA: LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Bonnie L. Shepard

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• What tensions arise when NGO networks strive to become political actors in the national and regional arenas, and how does their internal governance affect their ability to handle such tensions constructively?

• What factors enable or pose obstacles to the political advocacy of these networks?

• Given the above factors, what strategies are the NGO advocacy networks best suited to pursue, and what other strategies are best left to other configurations of social actors?

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"Networks entangle us, but they have opened many doors" (Beatriz Quintero, the National Women's Network, Colombia).[1]

Introduction

This study analyzes the experiences during the 1990s of 13 Latin American regional and national networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that advocate for the often contentious issues of sexual and reproductive rights and women's rights. (See Appendix A for a list and description of the networks included in this study.)[2] Although the study includes some observations on regional NGO advocacy networks, its primary focus is on national networks.

Research for this study addressed three inter-locking questions:

1. What tensions arise when NGO networks strive to become political actors in the national and regional arenas, and how does their internal governance affect their ability to handle such tensions constructively?

2. What factors enable or pose obstacles to the political advocacy of these networks?

3. Given the above factors, what strategies are the NGO advocacy networks best suited to pursue, and what other strategies are best left to other configurations of social actors?

Analysis of the problems faced by these NGO networks leads to some suggestions for emerging advocacy networks. The learning curve for the newer national networks has been steep, with many common elements, yet there has been little communication among networks about what they have learned. In this age of globalization and global policy processes, new networks form all the time and could benefit from the experience of the existing Latin American networks. This study aims to present what the set of NGO networks chosen for inclusion here has learned about how to face common challenges during the decade of the 1990s.

This study and the networks in it define *advocacy* in its broadest sense, that is, to "include all strategies and actions designed to promote the implementation or reform of legal frameworks and policies, and to stimulate civil society's participation in these political processes. Therefore, these advocacy strategies address not only the political system, but also the cultural, social, and economic structures affecting a certain group. In this broad approach, participants and audiences include governments, other social actors, and the general public" (Oré Aguilar 1999, 2). The implication of this approach to advocacy is that the strategies employed by advocacy NGOs and their networks are multifaceted and vary enormously.

My interest in studying NGO advocacy networks stems from the participant-observer role I

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ACRONYMS

CDD/LA	Catholics for the Right to Decide in Latin America (Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Latinoamérica) Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEJIL	Center for Justice and International Law
CESIP	Center for Social Studies and Publications
CFFC	Catholics for a Free Choice (A U.S.-based organization that works with its sister organizations in the CDD/LA network on various global activities and exchanges)
CLADEM	Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (Comité Latinomericano de Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer)
CWNSRR	Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (Red Colombiana de Mujeres por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos)
DEMUS	Office for the Defense of Women's Rights (Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer)
EZLN	Zapatista Army for National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional)
FWCW	United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women
GBM	Green Belt Movement, Kenya
GES	Social Studies Group (Grupo de Estudios Sociales) (Chile)
GIRE	Information Group for Reproductive Choice in Mexico (Grupo de Información sobre Reproducción Elegida)
ICASO	International Council of AIDS Service Organizations
ICMER	Chilean Institute for Reproductive Medicine (Instituto Chileno de Medicina Reproductiva)
ICPD	United Nations Conference on Population and Development
LACWHN	Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network
MAM	Mass Women's Movement (Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres)
MOH	Ministry of Health, Peru
NGO	Non-governmental organization (ONG in Spanish)
OAS	Organization of American States (Inter-American Human Rights Commission)
PAISM	Program of Integral Assistance for Women's Health
PRD	Democratic Revolutionary Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) Mexico
PT	Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) Brazil
RSMLAC	Red de Salud de Mujeres Latinoamericanos y del Caribe (same as LACWHN)
SMO	social movement organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization

had as a representative of international agencies that supported these networks, first in the Women's Programs Division of The Pathfinder Fund[3] in the 1980s, and then as program officer in charge of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Program for the Ford Foundation's Andean and Southern Cone office in Santiago, Chile, in 1992-1998. At the Ford Foundation, support for NGO networks was the linchpin of our program strategy to strengthen advocacy efforts for sexual and reproductive rights and women's rights in the region. Therefore, I was intimately involved during the 1990s in the initial stages of country networks in Chile, Peru, and Colombia and throughout the 1980s and 1990s in the formative moments of some regional networks. In addition to these personal experiences, this study draws on data from project evaluations, internal documents, and in-depth individual and group interviews conducted in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico from October 1998 through February 2000.[4]

The support of NGO advocacy networks by the Ford Foundation and other donors is based on the belief that networks strengthen advocacy efforts in several ways:

1. NGO members of networks can complement each other's efforts through diversity in areas of expertise and in access to key audiences such as public officials, religious leaders, and the mass media. Their diversity can allow a division of labor and synergy of efforts, with all members working toward the same broad goals but with different tactics and/or in different arenas.

2. Having a large number of organizations speak with a united voice in policy debates can increase the legitimacy of pro-rights stances and, thus, the chances that the advocates' views will carry more weight.

3. NGO networks hold the promise of breaking down inequalities and isolation between groups in national capitals and in provinces,[5] thus addressing the needs and concerns of the relatively underprivileged and isolated provincial groups.

4. Sharing information and learning from experience can prevent smaller and newer groups from repeating mistakes and having to reinvent the wheel.

5. National networks can function as an efficient link between national groups and international networks and policy processes.

Many funding agencies share other administrative, programmatic, and pragmatic reasons for supporting NGO networks. First, most agencies strive to keep their administrative costs under control by limiting the number of grant actions, and program officers are under pressure to limit the number of small grants.[6] A grant to a network can benefit a large number of smaller groups, directly or indirectly, at the same administrative cost as one small grant to one of those groups. With a network grant, a program officer who does not have the time to travel to provinces or the ability to make small grants can still benefit the relatively underprivileged groups in the provinces. In addition, program officers view grants to networks as a way of providing an incentive for collaboration, instead of competition, among NGOs. Also, program officers (especially those based in countries outside that of the grant in question) may feel that they have neither enough information nor the time to acquire enough information to make sound choices among NGOs competing for funds. Given all these programmatic and donor-driven reasons for investments in networks, it is paradoxical that NGO networks often face such difficulties in raising funds. This study will examine some of the reasons for these difficulties.

The beliefs and factors favoring the formation of NGO networks were reinforced by the tremendous policy successes of transnational civil society networks during the 1990s at the UN conferences on human rights, the environment, population, and women's rights (see Keck and Sikkink 1998 for details). The following brief summary of this recent history surrounding the international successes of NGO networks in Latin America and elsewhere helps explain the origins of the national NGO networks on women's rights and reproductive rights in this study and the high hopes surrounding them.

Latin American NGO Advocacy Networks for Women's Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Rights: History and Context

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink have analyzed the civil society advocacy networks that emerged in tandem with social movements for human rights, women's rights, and the environment in the 1980s and 1990s. They described the close relationship of the transnational women's advocacy networks to the UN conferences as follows:

The emergence of international women's networks was more intertwined with the UN system than the other networks [human rights, environmental] discussed in this book. Chronologies of the international women's movement are largely a litany of UN meetings. . . . International conferences did not create women's networks, but they legitimized the issues and brought together unprecedented numbers of women from around the world. Such face-to-face encounters generate the trust, information sharing, and discovery of common concerns that [give] impetus to network formation (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 168-169).

In Latin America, the first networks on women's rights were informal efforts of individual feminists, arising from preparations for the First World Conference on Women in 1975 and then from continued networking after that conference during the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). The first Latin American Feminist Meeting (Encuentro Feminista) was in 1981, and the meetings continue to this day, operating more within a "logic of mutual solidarity and identity" than within a "logic of transnational advocacy" (Alvarez 1999a).[7] In 1984, at a meeting in Tensa, Colombia, supported by several U.S. and European agencies, the participants founded the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN).

In 1985, the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi witnessed an enormous increase in representation of women around the world in the NGO Forum,[8] and it provided the occasion for the formation of three regional networks focused on women and rights, of which one was the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer — CLADEM).

The decade of the 1990s witnessed the foundation of a diverse range of new national and regional networks, spurred by unprecedented NGO involvement and donor funding for that involvement in national, regional, and global consultation processes for four major issue-oriented United Nations conferences: Environment in Rio de Janeiro (1992); Human Rights in Vienna (1993); Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994); and Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing (1995). At the same time, advocacy networks of HIV/AIDS activists organized from global to local levels in response to the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, linking health to human rights issues in a series of UN-sponsored global meetings.

In Latin America, as in other regions, new national advocacy networks were formed as part of national consultation processes leading up to the UN conferences. For the Beijing Women's Conference, for example, many embryonic women's networks had gained legitimacy by organizing and summarizing the results of countrywide consultations with women's and other civil society organizations. Many networks then became part of the official negotiations and, in some cases, members of country delegations.

The impressive policy achievements of the women's rights advocacy networks during the 1990s included gaining official recognition of women's rights as human rights and incorporating those rights into the central agenda of population programs. The 1994 ICPD Programme of Action democratized the population field by ratifying three basic goals: comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, women's empowerment, and respect for individuals' and couples' reproductive rights. The 1995 FWCW Plan of Action included a fuller range of issues central to women's empowerment and rights and in its language even advanced slightly in the area of sexual rights. Beginning in Vienna, these international agreements legitimized as human rights the sensitive and heretofore "private" rights advocated by feminist organizations — women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights. Following this paradigmatic revolution in the human rights field, the challenge for NGO networks has been to translate these important policy gains in international UN consensus documents into national policies and programs.[9]

Within the framework of global policy processes stimulated by the UN summits, the Latin American women's rights movement secured significant national policy successes in the 1980s and 1990s. Fourteen Latin American countries ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and 25 Latin American and Caribbean countries ratified the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém Convention). Following the Belém Convention, national movements were instrumental in securing the passage of legislation against violence against women in most Latin American countries, although the quality and enforcement of the legislation is uneven.[10] All Latin American countries joined in the consensus for the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action and the 1995 FWCW Plan of Action. Most took a variety of measures to bring their population policies and health systems into

line with the recommendations of ICPD and established women's bureaus or ministries as recommended by FWCW. In addition, several national movements have succeeded in passing new legislation on sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.[11]

The Reproductive and Sexual Rights Advocacy Agenda in Latin America

Post-ICPD, most Latin American states officially accepted their obligation to provide reproductive health services for those segments of the population unable to access services through other means. In general, reproductive health statistics have improved in the region, due in part to increased access to and acceptance of contraceptive services for adult women plus renewed investment in noncontroversial measures to reduce maternal mortality. However, access to these services is in jeopardy. Fertility rates fell markedly in the 1980s and 1990s, so external donors whose main interest is population control have mostly withdrawn from the region. With regard to sexual health, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is "well established and in danger of spreading both more quickly and more widely in the absence of effective responses" (UNAIDS 2002, 35).[12] Mediated by processes of health-sector reform and the rise of religious fundamentalism, governments' abilities and political will to provide sufficient funding for sexual and reproductive health services are limited.[13]

In the early 2000s, the major issues remaining on the agenda of the sexual/reproductive rights movement are more contentious. Several regional advocates and donors[14] have noted the relative lack of progress toward expanding the legal causes for abortions.[15] Beginning in 2001, the reinstatement of the "Global Gag Rule"[16] by the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush has had a chilling effect on public advocacy for liberalizing abortion laws on the part of any organizations receiving U.S. government funds. Progress varies widely from country to country on other issues, such as access to contraception and sex education for adolescents, access to emergency contraception, access to abortions in situations where they are legal, widespread public access to prevention education on HIV/AIDS and to condoms, access to medicines for those living with HIV/AIDS, and elimination of discrimination on the basis of HIV status and sexual orientation.[17] The Catholic Church and the religious right pose serious political roadblocks to all these issues except access to

medicines for those living with HIV/AIDS.

Taking the regional view, on the issue of abortion in particular, the widespread perception among advocates is that the women's and reproductive rights movement is losing the communications battle with anti-reproductive rights social forces.[18] The following interrelated factors help to explain the relative lack of progress:

1. The decline in support by donors in the United States and Europe for Latin American NGOs and their networks working on women's issues and reproductive rights;

2. The inability of these NGOs to secure alternative sources of support from within their countries, resulting in the weakening and/or disappearance of many NGOs and networks;

3. Increased activism and communications campaigns opposed to reproductive rights issues, in particular by the Catholic Church and other conservative religious groups and organizations;

4. The dearth of proactive strategies for reproductive rights that could take back the initiative from the religious right; and

5. Failure to expand the constituencies that actively support sexual and reproductive rights.

In the face of decreasing financial support, feminist NGO networks have perceived the need to have proactive public policy strategies, increase their exposure in the communications media, and expand their constituencies. In 2002, several national and regional network initiatives are responding to these strategic challenges. Some notable examples are the Campaign for a Convention for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, with 16 regional networks and national NGOs;[19] the recently formed Latin American Consortium on Emergency Contraception, with more than 30 NGO or agency members in the United States and Latin America; a pro-choice consortium in Mexico, with two international and three national NGOs spearheading an ambitious effort to expand pro-choice constituencies;[20] and campaigns in several countries — Brazil is the best-known example — to expand the availability of those abortions that already are legal.[21]

Professional Organizations in Social Movements: Advocacy NGOs and Networks in Latin America

On the national level, the structure, financial situation, and constituencies of Latin American NGOs in the 1990s and early 2000s pose barriers to effective advocacy. In brief, the professional-technical character of the organizations complicates their insertion in a social movement.[22]

The main women's and reproductive rights NGOs are staffed professional feminist groups — some of which specialize in health issues — that depend on foreign funding and state contracts for their work to benefit the most vulnerable sectors of the population, in most cases popular-sector women. The NGOs shrink and expand to the extent that they are able to secure projects or contracts.

In a context of rapidly declining international cooperation in Colombia and Chile during the 1990s and 2000s, many of the NGOs in this study were in crisis. Chile enjoyed the generous "solidarity funding" of a large and diverse NGO sector during the military dictatorship (1973-1990); then external aid to NGOs decreased precipitously during the 1990s, leading to the extinction of many NGOs and to severe financial stress for others. The women's NGOs with more international connections and programs in public policy research fared better than NGOs working at the community level (Barrig 1997a). While Colombian NGOs also suffered sharp decreases in external aid in the 1990s and early 2000s and found themselves in financially precarious straits, they were never as dependent on international aid[23] as the Chileans, and the concept of voluntary activism *(militancia)* was much more firmly entrenched in the culture of women's NGOs (Barrig 1997b).

Unfortunately, for Latin American NGOs that engage in political advocacy on controversial issues such as human rights, land reform, or sexual and reproductive health, national philanthropy cannot easily take the place of lost sources of international support. The philanthropic sector in most Latin American countries is expanding, but only occasionally moves beyond either a traditional charitable or, more recently, an antipoverty or community development focus. Women's advocacy NGOs that also provide services, such as counseling for victims of rape or domestic violence or sex education programs for the local schools, have better chances of finding local sources of support. Direct support for social change, whether at the policy or grassroots level, is scarce. According to Cynthia Sanborn, "Few elite or corporate donors support NGOs working in social and economic development, and virtually no national philanthropy goes to those civil society organizations most directly involved in the effort to promote democracy, defend human rights and hold government accountable for its actions" (Sanborn 2000, 6).[24] Consequently, except in rare cases, the NGOs' ability to engage in advocacy depends on the willingness of already overburdened staff to engage in nonfunded activities.[25]

While NGO staff members can use networks to activate their many informal links to other like-minded NGOs and individuals for campaigns on specific issues, these links do not support their NGOs financially, and the other NGOs in the network compete for the same scarce funding sources. This competition can complicate efforts to form solid advocacy networks or coalitions and, indeed, poses an obstacle to fund-raising for coalitions. Since NGO advocacy staff members are mainly middle-class professionals, some may have social and familial connections to political and financial elites. However, NGO programs rarely have close connections to these elites. Social movements by definition fall outside the framework of institutional political systems (Wisely 1990, 57). The movements for women's rights and for sexual and reproductive rights are relatively marginalized from political parties or other centers of power.[26] As such, they rely almost entirely on what political network theorist David Knoke (1990, 5-6) calls "persuasive" power,[27] as opposed to "coercive" or "authoritative" power. The networks' persuasive power relies on their ability to use their arguments to influence the media (another source of persuasive power) and key national and international actors (for example, sympathetic legislators or judiciary) who have authoritative power.

When NGO staff members fail to activate whatever personal networks they may have among elites, they limit their potential for political and financial support. Gerald Marwell, Pamela Oliver, and Ralph Prahl (1988) reviewed a number of studies of collective action suggesting that "heterogeneous groups with more centralized networks are better able to mobilize resources from potential participants through . . . the number of people an individual could directly organize. . . . Sheer size of personal networks, not the strength or weakness of ties, dwarfed all other factors' contributions to successful or failed mobilizations" (cited in Wisely 1990, 65).

Analysis of donor and government patterns of support may be another factor in the NGOs' relative marginalization from local elites or centers of power. Due to donor and government priorities, the projects and contracts that fund the NGO members of the networks in this study focus on and benefit low-income women *outside* the NGO staffs' personal networks. Thus, any mobilization of personal networks — which have more political clout because they tend to include middle- and upper-income individuals — assumes a lower priority because it is an unfunded activity. Consequently, most Latin American women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights NGOs have failed to build a substantial constituency of middle- and high-income individuals who provide both financial and political support. One hypothesis that emerges from this study of NGO networks is that this failure is a key obstacle to successful advocacy for the organizations and their networks, heightening their vulnerability as they address highly controversial issues.

As noted above, despite their relative marginalization at the national level, NGO networks have gained some access to international, regional, and national policy-making spheres, often linked to UN summit processes. NGO networks seemed a logical choice for inclusion in country delegations because of their leadership role in national consultations leading to the summits. In other instances when governments decide to involve "civil society" in some policy forum, NGO networks also seem to be a logical choice because their membership includes many organizations. NGO networks can legitimately claim to represent a broader range of voices and experiences than any one organization, and this claim often provides them a seat at the table in national or international policy-making processes. However, this logic of representing sectors of civil society is quite problematic because NGO networks are not broad membership organizations.[28] Roberto P. Korzeniewicz and William C. Smith say that international labor leaders often refer to NGO activists as NGIs or "non-governmental individuals" (2001b, 16). In short, a mismatch exists between the professional character of the organizations and their insertion in social movements. The NGO network leaders in this study are aware that they cannot claim to represent "civil society" or even the women's movement:

Representation is a complex and difficult problem, because who do NGOs represent? Only themselves. . . . And what about the individuals who participate in networks [that mainly include NGOs]? . . . So representation is a new problem, because most of our experiences are with confederations that more clearly represent the voice of large groups of citizens, such as political parties and trade unions (M. Zuleta, Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights — Chile).

Who decides which member of a network sits at the table, especially when the network encompasses diverse trends and sectors? The processes for such choices are not always transparent. Often, provincial and popular-sector organizations are excluded from these few instances of NGO networks' access to spheres of influence.

Representation problems also arise when international networks are formed from NGOs that received funding to attend international conferences. Individual NGO leaders and/or their organizations accumulate disproportionate power within their movements on this basis, creating competitive tensions within the movement.

The following section will describe the main advocacy strategies carried out by these Latin American NGO networks during the 1990s and early 2000s, as described by the participants in this study.

Main Advocacy Strategies of the Latin American NGO Networks

Latin American NGO networks have adopted varied advocacy strategies, working with diverse audiences, such as community groups, schools, health services, governmental commissions, the courts, legislatures, and the mass media. A full description of the political strategies employed by these networks and an analysis of their effectiveness would require another paper in itself.[29] In general, the strategies have fallen into one or more of the following categories: 1) direct communications with decisionmakers, public educators, and members of the media; 2) public/private partnerships; and 3) constituency-building, including alliances and coalitions with other networks or organizations. The following list will only briefly note significant aspects of the strategies identified in the study.[30]

Participation in the Days of Action Established in the Calendars of the Women's Movement.[31] One hundred percent of the groups interviewed at the provincial, national, and regional levels have adopted this most popular strategy. The networks universally observe three of the days of action: March 8, International Women's Day; May 28, International Day of Action for Women's Health; and November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women. Many, but not all, NGO networks in the study also plan events around September 28, the Latin American and Caribbean Day for Decriminalization of Abortion, and World AIDS Day on December 1. For these days of action, the networks' members engage in media events, public meetings, educational events, and fairs, often in multisectoral coalitions with both public and private partners. The days of action have proved to be a useful way to structure educational activities, lobbying, and outreach to the public, using the diverse and complementary resources available to a network to good effect. A few of those interviewed, however, criticized over-reliance on the days of action as indicating a lack of long-term strategic planning and clear advocacy objectives.

Monitoring of International Agreements such as the ICPD Programme of Action and the FWCW Plan of Action. This is the second most popular political strategy among the networks. These agreements signed by their governments provide a tool for monitoring and demanding accountability for the rights and actions in the agreements. Some networks or NGO members are involved in partnerships with governments to help them translate the agreements into the design of programs on the ground. For example, in Peru, the monitoring of ICPD takes place within the framework of a "Tripartite Commission" that includes NGOs, universities, government officials, and donor agencies; this mechanism gives feminist advocates ample opportunity to engage in dialogue with government officials regarding policy proposals.

Training of Health-Sector and Other Professionals. This is the main strategy used by feminist and reproductive health NGOs to assist governments and other programs to translate the principles of ICPD and FWCW into concrete improvements in programs. The expertise of these NGOs is in demand in issues such as gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women, quality of care, and adolescent programs. Other categories of professionals trained include judges, lawyers, police, secondary school teachers, and journalists. These NGOs usually employ Freirian[32]

participatory training methods, a mode of engagement with the health sector that has proved to be mutually beneficial.[33]

Establishing a Meta-Network. Colombian groups established a "network of networks" in order to coordinate actions among diverse networks that share general goals, such as social justice, human rights, peace, and women's empowerment. This strategy potentially increases the constituency — in this case, the base of support among other activists — for the controversial issues espoused by reproductive rights networks.

Provision of Expertise and Research. In Colombia and Peru, NGO network members testified in several instances before congressional committees; court appearances were less frequent. Some networks carried out public opinion polls, documentation of rights abuses, analyses of legal frameworks, evaluations of quality of care in health services, or epidemiological studies to document the extent of a sexual or reproductive health problem. Such strategies are suitable for the project-based funding generally available from international donors, although the projects often include insufficient time or funds for the ample dissemination that would take full advantage of the investment in research. Networks used the research both for media campaigns and for direct communications with decisionmakers.

Legislative Campaigns. The recent examples cited in this study were reactive campaigns, mostly by ad hoc networks, to thwart initiatives by socially conservative sectors to impose more limitations on sexual and reproductive rights. In all countries that drafted a new constitution in the 1990s, for example, conservatives attempted to include a clause protecting the life of the embryo from the time of conception. In Chile, ad hoc networks blocked attempts to increase criminal penalties for abortion.[34] Examples of more proactive campaigns include those of the Inter-American Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, a new NGO network in Chile championing the passage of a Sexual and Reproductive Rights bill in the Congress, and a multisectoral coalition in Colombia backing a bill to decriminalize abortion.[35]

Involvement in Multisectoral Committees. These committees are public/private partnerships in which the full range of organizations active in a given municipality or region pool their resources toward implementing jointly planned strategies, often with an annual work plan. Multisectoral committees convened by the health sector proliferate in

Peru,[36] while Colombia's decentralization reform has created municipal, provincial, and national planning commissions. Such committees give evidence of a new, more collaborative relationship between the state and civil society organizations, and they function best when state decisionmaking is decentralized to the local and regional levels. In the absence of such committees, NGO networks commonly engage in multisectoral meetings and events to publicize issues, campaigns, and results of advocacy research.

Publicity and Legal Campaigns Defending a Victim of Rights Abuse. The Internet has been widely used for this purpose in the past decade, with excellent results among those sectors with access to computers. When cases are particularly compelling, as in the cases of Alba Lucía in Colombia and Paulina in Mexico, this can be an extremely powerful strategy to expand the social base of a network, as long as the network has the ability to manage growth (see discussions and box in the section below, Managing Growth and Diversity).

Media Outreach. In this region, radio proves to be the media most accessible to the input of NGOs, much more so than television and newspapers. The Cali chapter of the Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (Red Colombiana de Mujeres por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos — CWNSRR) found that its constituency and legitimacy increased noticeably while weekly radio programs aired over the course of two years. However, all types of media in provincial cities are more open to the inclusion of content provided by NGOs than are the media in national capitals.

Ad Hoc Coalitions. Broad-based coalitions convoke adherents to a campaign on an ad hoc basis when rapid action is necessary to achieve clearly defined political objectives. This strategy can serve the need for rapid political response better than an institutionalized NGO advocacy network and can reach out to a broader network of possible supporters. A fuller discussion of the advantages of this strategy is found below (see discussion of the achievements of Peru's MAM network).

Public Pronouncements in Response to Rights Abuses or Critical Political Junctures in Reproductive Rights Advocacy. Many advocates view this strategy as the bottom-line, indispensable criterion for what an advocacy network should do. Both outside observers and network members believe that if a network does not make a timely public

statement, it has failed in its central mission. *In fact, this was the most difficult strategy for the NGO networks to carry out.* The following sections on internal governance and managing of growth and diversity will explore the reasons for this difficulty.

Benefits of the Networks

"Networks entangle us, but they have opened many doors." With this statement, Beatriz Quintero of the National Women's Network in Colombia succinctly summed up the costs and benefits of NGO networks. In effect, the women's rights and reproductive rights movements in Latin America have made an investment in networking to increase their political impact. This study examines how the networks are "tangled" in their strategic decision-making; however, it is important to put the analysis into perspective. Obviously, those who have elected to stay in the networks have weighed the costs and benefits and found that the latter preponderate. NGOs join forces to achieve increased strength in numbers, to pool resources and share division of labor, and to gain a myriad of tangible and intangible benefits listed below. An examination of the benefits sheds some light on why the current members persist in spite of the problems and why NGO networks continue to proliferate.

In the author's experience, NGOs abandon advocacy networks for three main reasons: 1) internal crises in the NGO, generally when institutional survival was threatened; 2) lack of funding and lack of a paid coordinator, which lower the activity level of the network; and 3) frustration with dysfunctional internal dynamics that lead to lack of political action, lack of internal solidarity among the members, and acute conflicts with no clear resolution. In some cases, internal conflicts have led to the dissolution of a network. The experiences of the networks examined in this study suggest that when networks are functioning well, that is, when leaders continue to organize activities viewed as important even though the time commitment may involve considerable sacrifices for the individual and/or NGO, members remain committed even without funding.

A diverse and shared list of benefits perceived by members of these NGO networks shows how the networks strengthen members as institutions, and, in the long term, benefit advocacy for recognition of women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights. The report of a Ford Foundation meeting of advocacy groups summed up these benefits

quite well:

> The participants agreed that networks provide enormous advantages to advocacy work both on the national and regional level. In effect, they increase the impact of the actions of their members. They have an important demonstration effect, that is, they allow members to compare and validate local experiences with regional frameworks. They are useful instruments to exercise political pressure. Networks and coalitions offer greater credibility, sustainability, impact, and access to holistic, comprehensive strategies. The networks maximize the full potential of the available resources, and increase the capacity to carry out public campaigns and apply political pressure (Barrig 1999a, 12).

The chief benefits of networks cited by the networks in this study include the following:

- *Increased visibility and success of political initiatives and campaigns* were signaled in many accounts that related how the complementary efforts of diverse groups within a network came together to increase the political impact of a campaign.

- *Increased legitimacy* results when policymakers and other important social actors perceive NGO members as part of a larger representative group. Funding agencies tend to view network membership as a plus — an indicator that an NGO cooperates with its peers. In Colombia, planning commissions invite NGO networks to participate as representatives of the women's movement. However, this can lead to the representation problems discussed above when a network has little national reach.

- *Active cooperation with regional, national, and international advocacy campaigns* provides important sources of solidarity and legitimacy for national-level efforts and lessens the isolation experienced by many organizations and activists when working on controversial topics related to gender, sexuality, and reproduction.

- *Access to information and educational materials on topics pertinent to the network is* traditionally provided by most networks, and its importance should not be underestimated. The communications revolution in electronic mail and the Internet has facilitated access enormously, at least among urban NGOs.

- *Interchange with organizations working on similar issues* enriches NGO programs. "Institutions become stale, losing their ability to be surprised. When they enter the Network, they can be surprised by what others are doing, and energized by comparing and sharing…. It is like breathing fresh air. They share solutions to problems, and can see beyond their noses" (interview with Medellín chapter, Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights — CWNSRR).

- *Connections between provincial NGOs and those based in the capital* have several positive effects. Provincial NGOs are strengthened through the network's access to information and resources, and the NGOs can represent their concerns through the network in national forums.

- *Access to training* is provided by all of the networks. Training is essential when network members confront a new or difficult issue and when an introduction to the political issues and principles of the network is needed for new members.

- *Access to financial assistance for individual study and for NGO programs and campaigns* can be increased, either through sharing of information on funding opportunities or through channeling funds received by the network to members for projects or campaigns. This increased access is especially significant for the grassroots and/ or provincial NGO members.

- *Access to financial assistance for attendance at national, regional, and international conferences* can provide a linkage to regional and international movements for formerly isolated NGOs and cities, assuring important connections and information that previously were unavailable.

However, network members provided numerous anecdotes of competitive tensions unleashed in the distribution of these benefits, causing disruption in the network. A network's leaders can monopolize any of these benefits, thus exacerbating a climate of competition among members and creating a less-privileged class within the network. Although promotion of equity between provincial and popular-sector groups, on the one hand, and capital-based groups, on the other, is especially important in distribution of benefits, obstacles exist (see discussion in the section below, Incorporating

Provincial Organizations). Organizing the flow of important information equitably among members takes someone's time, and that time is not always available. A paid network coordinator helps to ensure equity in access to information and other benefits.

Increased access to financial assistance, training, and conferences can cause severe competitive tensions when the process and criteria for choosing the recipients of the benefits are not transparent. Decisions that appoint particular groups or individuals to represent the network in important political arenas are fraught with competition because of the increased legitimacy enjoyed by the appointee. While NGOs value their connections with international and regional campaigns, all recognize that these often drain scarce human and financial resources from NGO members and from work with national constituencies. Finally, the achievements of a network can mask the contributions of each NGO member, making it difficult for an NGO to report successes to its donors; this "dilution" provides incentives for network members to make their participation stand out in ways that exclude other network members.

Challenges Facing NGO Networks: Outline of Study

This study analyzes challenges to the smooth and effective functioning of NGO advocacy networks, with a focus on national networks. In the discussion of factors favoring or hindering effective political decisionmaking and actions by organizational networks, it is helpful to distinguish factors related to internal governance structure from external factors in the policy arena. In this paper, the phrase "strategic tensions" refers to obstacles and contradictions in the sociopolitical context that may cause divisions within the women's movement and among advocates for sexual and reproductive rights. Characteristics of the internal governance of these networks may determine whether such strategic tensions stimulate creative problem solving or cripple the networks' decision-making ability. The following section will analyze the internal governance structures and dilemmas of the networks in this study and discuss how these structures might influence the networks' decision-making abilities.

The paper will then focus on the challenges of growth and diversity and the interrelationship of financial stresses and political risks. Finally, an overview of the achievements and limitations of the

networks may provide some guidance on best uses of, and realistic expectations for, similar civil society advocacy networks.

Challenges in the Internal Governance of NGO Networks

In Latin America, the NGO advocacy network is a relatively new phenomenon, and scant literature addresses the networks' internal governance at the national level.[37] As late as 1995, Joe Foweraker remarked, "Enduring coalitions[38] between [professionalized] social movement organizations (SMOs) remain rare" partly due to the presence of "counter-movements and competing SMOs" (1995, 70). However, the U.S. literature on interest group and legislative coalitions (Hula 1999; Kingslow Associates 1998; Rose 2000) mentions many of the same issues that emerged in the present study, as follow:

1. The challenge of building trust and unified stands among diverse organizations;

2. The need to manage different levels of involvement of the organizations within the coalition;

3. The need to build intermediary decision-making structures as the coalition expands and matures; and

4. The trade-off between expansion and diversity and the ability to take united stands on controversial issues.

The main challenge in the internal governance of advocacy networks relates to the task of stimulating united action among diverse organizations through productive management of conflicts and tensions, which are inevitable in organizational networks or coalitions. The tensions intensify when the coalitions involve any of the following: different socioeconomic classes, majority and minority ethnic groups, very diverse organizations, or public and private organizations, and when the political environment is complex and polarized. Each new advocacy network must learn how to manage these tensions productively in order to meet its political goals. Most networks find that in order to manage this diversity and make decisions, they need to institutionalize along several dimensions discussed in this section.

Aspects of Institutionalization

When organizing decisionmaking, the most basic questions in an NGO network, or in any organization, boil down to the following: "Who belongs

to the network?" (membership); "Who among those members have the right to make which decisions?" (authority); and "How do we develop standard rules for decisionmaking?" (bylaws).

Ways of organizing NGO networks vary widely. Yet all of these networks face certain common issues and decisions as they move from a loose movement structure toward institutionalization or "bureaucratization"(Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001, 6) to become more efficient and effective. They must decide on the founding mission and principles, legal structure and bylaws, lines of authority and democratic procedures, membership structure, coordination structure, and financial sustainability strategies.

Figure 1 shows the principal dimensions along which advocacy networks may or may not become more institutionalized. The networks in this study varied along all these dimensions. The relationship between any one dimension of institutionalization and a network's effectiveness in political advocacy is far from straightforward. For example, the National Forum of Women and Population Policy in Mexico, established to monitor the government's compliance with the ICPD Programme of Action,

Table 1. Network Ratings[39]

Name of Network	National or Regional	Legal	Financial	Decisions and Leadership	Membership
Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN)	R	H	H	M-H	H
Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM)	R	H	H	H	H
Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence	R	L	L	M	M
Catholics for the Right to Decide in Latin America	R	M	M	M	H
Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (Chile)	N	M	M	M	M
National Women's Network (Colombia)	N	L	L	L	L
Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights – CWNSRR	N	L	L-M	M	L-M
National Forum of Women and Population Policy (Mexico)	N	L	H	H	H
Initiative Group (Post-Beijing, Chile)	N	L	L-M	L	M (limited)
National Initiative Group of Women for Equality, Peru (Post-Beijing, Grupo Impulsor)	N	L	M	L	M (limited)

L = low   M = medium   H = high

Figure 1. Degree of Institutionalization
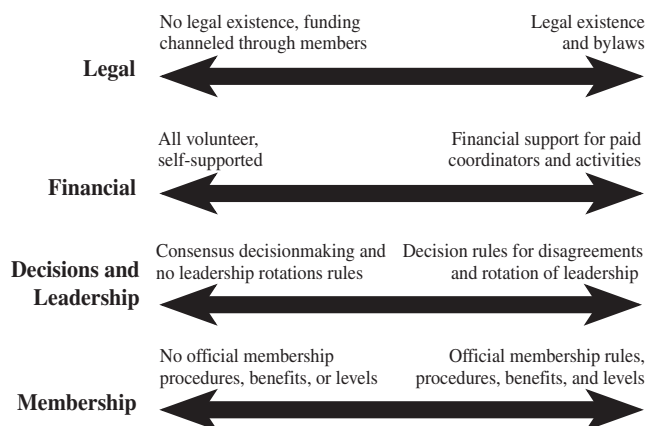
decided not to incorporate legally, with little adverse effect on their ability to act in the policy arena or receive financial support. In Peru, in one case discussed later in this study, an informal ad hoc network has been more agile and timely than institutionalized networks in responding to political controversies over reproductive rights. However, one aspect of institutionalization — the development of decision-making rules that move away from operation by consensus — seems to be a key factor in a network's ability to respond adequately to political crises and opportunities.

Membership. The question of membership is complex in NGO networks and, to some extent, the situations are different for regional and national networks. Four networks in this study consciously

limit growth; new NGO members either have to apply or be invited to join. [40] Only two regional networks, which have been in existence since the mid-1980s, have different levels of membership depending on level of participation. The larger national networks lack formal membership procedures, and only one network collects dues from the members. National networks tend to suffer from ambiguity about membership; organizations drop in and out of regular attendance at meetings without explicitly saying that they are withdrawing or officially joining. More experienced networks view attendance at local chapter/provincial meetings as the gold standard among criteria for membership.

Several NGO networks in this study add a further level of confusion about membership by also welcoming the participation of unaffiliated individuals. NGO networks are chronically short of people to do their work, and they benefit greatly by inviting individuals who are committed activists in the rights field and who participate fully in the month-to-month activities of a network or a network chapter. Two major unresolved issues are related to the participation of individuals. First, most networks that take formal votes have not decided on the relative weight of individuals' votes as against NGO representatives' votes. In at least one case, individuals have no voting rights; in other cases, individuals can be chosen as delegates from a provincial chapter to a national assembly. In addition, some individuals in the group interviews expressed frustration because plans for network activities and meetings tend not to take into account their needs and constraints. NGO staff can take time during the day for network activities because (ideally) NGOs view participation in a network as a legitimate use of staff time. Individuals, on the other hand, may work full time and have to fit their activism into their nonworking hours. They also pay their own expenses related to network participation. These relative disadvantages can lead to demoralization of individual volunteers in a network unless the network recognizes their level of sacrifice and facilitates their participation.

Some network leaders point out that the whole concept of "membership" does not fit well with the character of present-day social movements. The reality of most social movement organizations includes *militantes* (militants)*,* a small number of committed activists who always come to the meetings, and then several levels of supporters:

Although it is true that there are few women in the [National Women's] Network, we understand this as a problem characterizing modern social movements, where there are few militants, but around them there are more women who do not participate all of the time, but who can be counted on [to participate in the Network initiatives] (Beatriz Quintero, National Women's Network, Colombia, personal communication, July 2000).

Two of the regional networks — CLADEM and LACWHN — have institutionalized different levels of membership in order to recognize different levels of commitment to the network's activities, but as of 2000, none of the national networks in this study had done so. While some national network leaders referred to tensions related to the "free riders" in the network, those official members who did not do their share of the work, the major conflicts noted in this study did not revolve around this issue, which is so prominent in the early academic literature on collective action. [41]

Institutionalization of criteria and procedures for membership can be an important step forward for an NGO network, facilitating decisionmaking, transparency in the distribution of benefits, and adjustment of benefits to levels of commitment and participation, and helping to legitimize a network's claims to represent the views of member organizations and individuals.

Authority and Rotation of Leadership. A trade-off occurs between expanding the number of members with decision-making authority and increasing the efficiency of decisionmaking. All the networks in this study have struggled to decide where to land on the continuum between sharing decisionmaking as broadly as possible among all the members and restricting decisionmaking to staff and/or elected representatives. The first tendency is more inclusive and empowering of the membership, but, when taken to the extreme, often results in slow and conflictive decision-making processes and/or in lack of transparency since the actual authority structures are hidden and unofficial. The second tendency results in more efficient and transparent decisionmaking, but, when taken to the extreme, can result in entrenched power elites and in the exclusion of significant membership groups from decisionmaking. Amparo Claro of the LACWHN expressed this tension succinctly: "To what extent should we democratize, without becoming so democratic that we cannot take action?"

These networks with their base in the women's movement all have tended in their early stages to

favor the inclusive, power-sharing model, which seems to hamper their ability to take political action on risky and controversial issues. Several networks have the annual assembly of members as the maximum decision-making body, which makes important policy decisions and exercises financial oversight. However, the latter function suffers under this system. Lacking an external board of directors, these networks (and many NGOs) displace the financial oversight function onto their paid staff and donors, and the members have no financial committee.[42]

Another disadvantage of the membership assembly as the maximum decision-making body is that its representativity depends on funding for travel and meeting expenses. Some national networks have an easier time securing funding for membership plenary meetings than do the regional networks, both because national meetings cost less and because certain countries, such as Peru, still enjoy more sources of international support than do others, including Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. In smaller networks, such as the post-Beijing groups, whose core members are all from the national capital, the membership could meet as often as every two weeks. Larger national networks that actively involve provincial members may meet only once a year, or simply when funding permits; in these cases, having the membership as the decision-making body is unwieldy, and most of these networks eventually elect a steering or executive committee. However, when the steering committee represents groups from different provinces, managing logistics for their coordination is a challenge as well.

Several networks evidenced confusion about the degree of authority invested in the representative to the network by each NGO. Serious obstacles to effective decisionmaking result when representatives who attend the meetings cannot make decisions on behalf of their organizations. Smaller networks, such as Peru's post-Beijing network, solve this problem by demanding that the director of each NGO attend the meetings, or if not the director, then someone to whom she has delegated decision-making power.

The regional networks, on the other hand, have been in existence longer and have received donations to help organize UN summit-related advocacy, and thus tend to be more institutionalized. They have an official advisory board or executive committee, legal status as nonprofit institutions, and bylaws governing rotation of coordinators and the board/committee. The difficulty and expense of organizing regional meetings means that these networks rarely have membership meetings, which are costly, and a steering committee and staff make most decisions. The two that have regular regional meetings are those that limit their membership — CLADEM, meeting every three years, and Catholics for the Right to Decide, every year. For a regional organization, having the advisory board or executive committee meet regularly is a large expense in itself.[43]

One important way to organize decisionmaking in a network is to adopt bylaws with procedures for rotation of board members and coordinators, so that no one person or organization "owns" the network. The networks in this study covered the entire range of possibilities. Only one network has had the same coordinator and coordinating NGO practically since its inception;[44] others have regularly rotated coordinators. When CLADEM rotated coordinators, this meant that the coordinator was based in Argentina while the central office of the organization remained in Peru. Such arrangements have become workable only recently, with the advent of electronic communications.

In summary, any network that cannot have regular membership meetings must reduce the size of the decision-making group. In the absence of institutionalized procedures, in several cases in this study, authority has devolved informally to self-appointed leaders or founders, usually from the capital city or the regional office.

Moving from Consensus to Decision Rules. On one end of the spectrum, the majority of the national networks interviewed reported that they make their decisions by consensus. Many networks either do not question this rule for decisions or are only beginning to contemplate change. Several clarified that while consensus is the preferred modus operandi, the majority prevails when the majority view is strong and only a few dissent. Reflecting on the early stages in a network's trajectory, several experienced network activists commented that they constructed decision-making rules after the first instances of conflict signaled the need to move beyond consensus rules. Teresa Valdés described the problems in the early stages of the Post-Beijing Initiative Group in Chile: "We are very different organizations, so that making a collective declaration was very difficult. We didn't do anything in which we had not reached agreement, we did everything by consensus."

At the other end of the spectrum, CLADEM ad-

heres to parliamentary procedures; possibly, its members' training as lawyers makes them more comfortable with this mode of decisionmaking than most feminist organizations.

> *In voting we use the system of absolute majority, 50 percent plus one. We believe that seeking absolute consensus is not only undemocratic, but [also] authoritarian since with a consensus system a single person [or institution] can block or hinder the decisions of the immense majority of members (S. Chiarotti, CLADEM).*

This observation is verified by the experience of one Peruvian network. Facing a strong difference of opinion about whether or not to invite a prominent minister to an event, only one organization disagreed with the invitation, and the minister was not invited.

One activist explained her theory of the primacy of the consensus rule: "Networks arose 30 years ago with the feminist movement collectives of individuals, but now the networks are made up of NGOs. The problem is that the networks haven't adapted to their new composition" (ISIS International group interview). Another common explanation is that female socialization causes women to place high value on cooperative interpersonal links and relationships, so that networks dominated by women will give high priority to the quality of relationships within the group and the cohesiveness of the group, in some cases sacrificing the political principle at stake in any given disagreement.[45] While some cases support the latter theory, in other cases, members left a network rather than sacrifice their political principles, or stayed within to engage in ongoing conflicts.

Several network members pointed out that operating by consensus is an important obstacle to producing public statements from the network. "Organizations sign [letters to the authorities] as organizations, and when there are disagreements, sometimes we haven't known how to handle them. For a regional network, having only some members of the network sign is difficult" (ISIS Internacional group interview).

When unexpected events demand a political and public response, an NGO network can prove to be a cumbersome instrument at best. Typically, the most public ways that networks engage in policy debates are through paid declarations in the written press, letters to public officials, or press releases and conferences on breaking issues. Increas-

ingly, network representatives have gained more exposure in radio and television programs. As the quotes above point out, NGO networks often find it logistically and politically difficult to produce public declarations. Either too many parties are involved in the editing, or they cannot reach agreement on some key aspect of the declaration or letter.

> *Some institutions need to study [public declarations] more before acting. This makes the collective process very slow, and just when one believes that everything is set, someone decides that the tone of the communication needs to be adjusted (T. Valdés, Post-Beijing Initiative Group, Chile).*

In one instance in Colombia, the NGO in charge of communications within the network unilaterally eliminated all mention of abortion from a communiqué on safe motherhood. This so angered other network members that some key organizations quit, and the incident almost caused the dissolution of the network. This case illustrates the role of the degree of controversy surrounding the issue at hand — a key contributor to the difficulty in reaching agreement. "With some obvious issues, there are no problems in reaching consensus" (ISIS group interview). For issues such as violence against women, networks commonly authorize the coordinator or a representative to draft and sign public communications in the name of the network members. In general, however, public communications are difficult to produce in these NGO networks when the issue involves abortion or an initiative that might incur political risks for network members by bringing them into confrontation with government entities. This study analyzes the relationship between decisionmaking and political costs in detail in the section below on financial stresses and political risks.

While rules for decisions are necessary, they are not sufficient. Constructing agreement in any coalition or network is an interpersonal process, and the application of the decision-making rules is the final moment in the process. NGO networks need to hold complex, multifaceted conversations to address political differences, to agree on common principles and goals, to construct sound political strategies, and to build trust among the members so that the network can better weather the tensions that inevitably arise in organizational networks. The highly controversial nature of certain issues in sexual and reproductive rights increases the tensions in discussions on political strategy. Such discussions best take place face-to-face.

Now [after the last National Assembly] the
relationships between us have changed and
we are friends. No one wants to miss the
Assembly. Face-to-face meetings are
important. The last assembly helped us to
grow, to be more committed; it is a vital space
for interchange (Lucrecia Mesa, Cali Chapter,
CWNSRR).

The literature on political coalitions (Brown
and Fox 1998, 18-20) and many network members
point out that there is no substitute for meeting
face-to-face. Regular membership meetings serve
the important function of building interpersonal
trust. Such exchanges can begin or continue via e-
mail, but face-to-face conversations produce reso-
lutions and decisions more efficiently when deal-
ing with complex issues and diverse opinions.

Global networks and the Latin American re-
gional networks have been able to take advantage
of the revolution in electronic communications to
foster dialogue among members, but with impor-
tant limitations. Groups from small cities and
grassroots networks or organizations are
underrepresented because they have less access to
computers and the Internet. In addition, the nature
of the medium does not allow for efficient inter-
changes on complex issues and decisions.

The experiences of the Latin American and
Caribbean Feminist Network against Domestic and
Sexual Violence illustrate the need for face-to-face
meetings. Since the late 1990s, the network has
been unable to secure funds to hold its regional
meeting, although funds have been available for
time-limited activities such as the "16 days of activ-
ism against gender violence."[46]

[I]f [this network] has no money, it loses
momentum without being able to have
conversations about structure, and about
political action.… UNIFEM[47] has supported us
for electronic interchange about strategies,
but one cannot resolve some things through e-
mail. We take advantage of other [regional or
global] meetings to have a quick network
meeting, but not everyone who should be
there can come. [Under these conditions] it is
hard to construct network relationships that
are stable and based on concrete initiatives
(Isabel Duque, network coordinator).

The next section will continue to explore the
complexities of NGO network decisionmaking,
with a focus on how expansion and diversity —
both of which are viewed as intermediate indica-
tors of success for advocacy networks — create
challenges for the functioning of the networks.

Managing Growth and Diversity

While both donors and advocates view growth
and diversity as important objectives, success
in achieving these objectives can "entangle" the
network unless the accompanying pitfalls are
anticipated in planning. The issues of managing
growth and diversity are inextricably entwined.
When women's rights and reproductive rights
networks aim to expand their political influence,
many strategies to achieve this goal necessitate
expansion beyond their limited constituencies to
construct a larger and more diverse NGO network
and set of allies.

Since most social movements aim to increase
their influence, the finding that almost none of the
Latin American NGO advocacy networks in this
study plan explicitly for expansion in membership
and/or social base[48] seems counterintuitive. Two
major factors emerged from this study to explain
this finding: 1) the inherent challenge in managing
growth and 2) the trade-off between broad-based
diversity in the membership, on the one hand, and
ability to reach agreement efficiently on advocacy
strategies, on the other. Greater diversity can erode
hard-won consensus on advocacy goals and strate-
gies, especially when the network's issues are so-
cially and politically controversial. This section will
explore these two factors but concentrate on the
challenges of managing diversity.

Managing Growth

Growth management is a challenge for any or-
ganization or business, as evidenced by the vast lit-
erature on the topic and the proliferation of con-
sulting companies offering advice on growth strate-
gies to businesses. Network leaders are aware of
these challenges. In many cases, NGO members
and network staff members already feel so over-
loaded with their current projects and activities that
expending the additional effort required for expan-
sion is unthinkable to them.[49] If growth were to
happen, the leaders know that it could overtax
their resources. Growth entails increased demands
on the NGO's or network's human and financial re-
sources, which usually are fully committed to on-
going projects with restricted (and often insuffi-
cient) budgets. Thus, the lack of planning for ex-
pansion relates directly to the precarious financial
situation of most Latin American NGOs involved in
advocacy for women's rights and sexual and repro-
ductive rights, which was mentioned above. This
situation is a catch-22, self-defeating cycle in which

it is difficult to expand without more funding, and yet it can be equally difficult to attract new sources of support without evidence of "success," such as expansion of the membership or of the social and political base.

Many advocacy NGOs, then, view networks as a manageable way to expand their social base, level of activity, and achievements. The network functions as a political advocacy coalition in which the NGOs pool resources and work toward a common cause, and each can increase its legitimacy by taking some credit with its donors for the network's achievements. However, when the human and financial resources of a network's member NGOs are stretched too thin, the network encounters the same catch-22 cycle of limits to growth as its members. In the absence of a plan for growth, growth "happens" to the network when a particular initiative incites enthusiasm among a wider audience, bringing varying degrees of chaos and overload if the resources are not available to handle expansion.

The case of the Alba Lucía Campaign in Colombia (see box) illustrates why NGO networks in Latin America often are unable to take advantage of opportunities for growth. This experience illustrates both that growth in the social base of the reproductive rights movement is possible and that NGO networks must plan and aim for growth so that they can secure resources while taking steps to expand.

The present study identified several successful examples of a planned growth process in an NGO network, most often linked to the funding opportunities provided by the UN summits. The pre-summit national projects supported both increased public education and consultation with civil-society organizations at the provincial level and increased coordination between the network's central headquarters and new provincial chapters or contacts.

However, without donor commitment to ongoing support of the expanded network, any expansion in membership and social base deteriorates over time. The National Women's Network in Colombia and the post-Beijing Initiative Group in Chile, at certain points in the late 1990s, experienced unraveling of their networks when project funding ended.

> We are now without any funding at all. . . and it has affected us terribly. . . . In the [provincial] focal points, only the most autonomous are still functioning, while the others have ceased (T. Valdés, Initiative Group, Chile, December 1998).[50]

The Alba Lucía Campaign in Colombia

A campaign of the Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (CWNSRR), led by the Medellín chapter in 1997-2002, illustrates the challenges posed by unplanned growth resulting from successful advocacy campaigns. In the Alba Lucía Campaign, CWNSRR mobilized both legal and popular support to defend an uneducated, adolescent *campesina* woman who had been gang-raped and became pregnant. She gave birth hidden in her family's latrine, then went into shock, and the baby died. After suffering prejudicial treatment by hospital personnel and police, she was accused of infanticide and condemned to 42 years in prison.

At first, the Medellín CWNSRR chapter identified a feminist lawyer to defend Alba Lucía pro bono; CWNSRR then undertook a public education campaign of unprecedented dimensions for this network, with a snowball effect that mobilized nationwide audiences rarely involved in reproductive rights campaigns. For example, networks of schoolteachers became involved, with entire classrooms from rural and urban areas of Colombia composing letters to Alba Lucía in prison. The public discussions resulting from this campaign were rich, exposing issues related to adolescents' sexuality, sexual coercion, links between education and reproductive health, voluntary motherhood, and the legal status of abortion. The demand for speakers, the supply of potential volunteers, and the base of potential contributors grew so exponentially that the Medellín network members and their administrative systems were overwhelmed. All but one of the members (the national coordinator of the network) had other jobs and worked on a volunteer basis. The chapter was unable to take full advantage of this unforeseen opportunity for explosive growth both in membership and in social base.

However, the six-year campaign itself was successful in its main objective. In 2000, CWNSRR entered into partnership with the human rights organization Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) to file a complaint against the Colombian government with the Inter-American Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS). CWNSRR also pursued its complaint through the Colombian judicial system to the Supreme Court. In March 2002, the Court voided the original sentence and ordered Alba Lucía's release from prison after six years of incarceration.

Alba Lucía's release was announced on the web site, <http://www.cejil.org>.

In some cases, these NGO advocacy networks consider that expansion would hamper their efficiency in decisionmaking, and they have made a conscious decision not to expand, or to do so very slowly and deliberately.[51] Making a political coalition more broad based may entail either suppressing the more controversial aspects of members' political agendas (Mische and Pattison 2000, 169; Watts 1996) or broadening the focus to include the diversity of members' agendas (Rose 2000; Kingslow Associates 1998). Expanding membership is more problematic than expanding the social base because sudden increases in numbers or diversity of voting network members may revive internal debates that current members consider settled. For the same reasons, the entrance of new members creates an ongoing need for training, which takes time and resources:

> When too many new people come to the annual assembly, we have to spend so much time repeating former discussions, giving them information, and persuading them to accept former group decisions, that we cannot move ahead. The challenge is how to expand our social base, train and inform new members, without spending all of our [available] time on this. (CWNSRR, Cali Chapter. Group interview)

It takes time and effort to build a well-functioning leadership team in such a complex undertaking as an advocacy network. Those networks, such as the two post-Beijing networks in this study, with a limited membership and a core executive committee in only one city, are painfully conscious of how long it took them to come to agreement on strategies and to learn to work together. They consider the inclusion of any new organizations carefully. After FWCW in Beijing, the Chilean network issued invitations and accepted applications from three NGO members whose focus added important expertise and social bases to the network: two because they work closely with grassroots, low-income groups (*sectores populares*) and one because of its work with youth organizations.

Undoubtedly, the team-building challenge in managing expansion in membership and/or leadership teams is one factor in the "graying of the women's movement," a phenomenon noted by observers in both the United States and Latin America. (The other main factor, of course, is financial/professional self-interest.) Some new Latin American coalitions have NGO leaders who recognize that they are the usual suspects (*las de siempre*), but their shared history of resolving tensions and ideological differences gives them a level of trust that facilitates coalition formation and efficient decision-making processes.[52] This plus, however, must be weighed against the potential minus: the entrenchment of leaders within a movement that fails to renew its strategies and to reach out to new sectors of the population and to the next generation of leaders.

Managing Diversity

Some of the literature on political coalitions (Foweraker 1995; Hula 1999; Mische and Pattison 2000; Rose 2000; Watts 1996) emphasizes multisectorality and diversity as the reasons for coalitions' "complex, fractious, and fragile" nature (Mische and Pattison 2000, 164). Watts points out that "shared core coalitions" are difficult to generate because "each of the participating sectors of the coalition must relinquish key aspects of [its] own specific agendas in pursuit of a universally shared agenda" (Watts 1996, 43). As Fred Rose points out:

> Building trust and relationships and agreeing to disagree are the ingredients that combine to make diverse coalitions possible. But these are evolving processes — most severely tested at first but requiring wise and conscious development over time if the coalition is to deepen and strengthen (Rose 2000, 143).

The present study documented many types of diversity within NGO networks, all of them potential sources of creativity and increased representation on the one hand, and tensions/conflicts on the other. Some networks are multisectoral, including both civil society organizations (CSOs) and representatives from governmental entities. Networks might include CSOs with very distinct focuses and constituencies, including the more professionalized policy/advocacy NGOs, community development NGOs, research centers, university programs, religious groups, and grassroots organizations. Many of the NGO networks in this study include both organizations and individuals. Organizations from different provinces in national networks, and from different countries in regional networks, provide multiple levels of diversity.

However, even networks that are homogeneous on these counts, for example those that include only women's NGOs from one national capital, still struggle to address diverse political ideologies and styles, different levels of political or technical sophistication, and unequal access to financial and human resources among members. In

these rights advocacy networks, important sources of diversity include the degree to which the focus of the network coincides with the focus of member NGOs. In particular, financial inequalities and differences in focus on issues lead to differing levels of commitment to the network, creating internal tensions.

Incorporating Popular Sector Organizations. In these rights-focused NGO networks, mainly led by professional staff, a common goal for expansion and diversification of the social base is to include more popular-sector organizations and networks. While both the Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights — Chile (Open Forum) and the Colombian CWNSRR have included popular-sector women's organizations as full members of their networks, this is the exception rather than the rule. In general, popular-sector women's organizations do not share the full feminist agenda, especially in sexual and reproductive rights. Their inclusion, therefore, can lead to problems. For example, in 1999, the coordinator of the Bogotá chapter of the CWNSRR represented a popular-sector women's network. She personally shared the network's agenda, but she did not have the authority to speak in the name of her organization on controversial issues such as abortion. In Chile, the Open Forum has responded to the challenges of class diversity by investing heavily in training opportunities for provincial members, including several from popular-sector organizations. They report that such training allows the intensive give-and-take that is needed to address the strong emotions aroused by sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Sexual and reproductive rights networks in the United States, which are more focused on abortion rights than their Latin American counterparts, have experienced similar issues when attempting to incorporate more low-income women and women from ethnic minorities:

> The legal maintenance of abortion rights is generally not a top priority for women with pressing economic needs. Instead, questions of access to health care, including but by no means limited to abortion services, are much more important. . . . Consequently, it is not surprising that coalitions that have become centrally involved in welfare reform issues … have had much greater success in involving low-income women than those that have focused more narrowly. . . . Even this, however, is not a panacea. . . . [T]here are still substantial barriers to including low-income women in coalition work. In particular, the problems of obtaining transportation to meetings and arranging childcare for their duration loom much larger than for middle-class women. . . . In all three cases [of ethnic minority networks' working on reproductive health], the real and perceived tendency of white-dominated organizations to prioritize abortion rights over all other women's health issues was cited as a fundamental barrier to interracial and interethnic cooperation (Kingslow Associates 1998, 34-36).

Latin American sexual and reproductive rights and women's rights advocacy networks face similar challenges when incorporating popular-sector organizations as full partners; their priorities may be different. For example, in the National Forum of Women and Population Policy in Mexico, the regional chapter representing Chiapas — a province characterized by a high level of extreme poverty — successfully advocated within the network to give higher priority to demands related to economic justice in the network's monitoring of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Divisions of class and ethnicity are a challenge to any NGO network seeking to expand its representation of marginalized sectors of women. Increasing the class and ethnic diversity in membership and in leadership teams requires more dialogue to find common ground and language, more accommodation to differing priorities, and more investment in training, infrastructure, and travel for groups with fewer resources and less sophistication so that they can participate fully in meetings and in communications between meetings.

These requirements for expanding the scope and representation of a network beyond the NGO staff of professional women also are evident in the findings described below concerning the inclusion of women's organizations from the provinces in national networks.

Incorporating Provincial Organizations. A clear benefit of national networks is that they have the potential to break down centralism and overrepresentation of groups in the capital, which historically have plagued Latin American societies.[53] National networks can give voice to the diversity of needs and interests of the many socioeconomic and cultural groupings within a country. The national networks in this study are divided between those that include provincial representation in decisionmaking and those whose core NGOs in the capital make major decisions.[54]

Some significant obstacles to full provincial representation in national networks are linked to the concentration of power and resources in capital cities of most countries and to ensuing historic tensions between capital and provinces. Ensconced in international and national economic and political structures that privilege a capital city, NGOs in capitals tend to concentrate power and resources to the disadvantage of the provinces, although most often the networks in this study do not intend to do so. Often, more technically and politically sophisticated organizations in the capital have more access to participation in national policy debates. Through their greater access to international donors, they have more financial resources and access to information. They are more connected with international movements and networks. Coalition theory suggests that such imbalances make most coalitions inherently unstable. "[G]roups seldom bring equal amounts of political clout or resources to the coalition-building process. . . . There are few opportunities to equalize the weight of coalition members, thus creating the conditions for instability" (Rich 1996, 6-7).

Power and resource imbalances do indeed create tensions in relationships between the capital-based and provincial NGOs that participated in this study, which will explore below the issues of provincial autonomy, representation and funding, and the special disadvantages of rural women's groups.

With the explicit goal of sharing power, the national networks in the study have evolved informal and formal principles of autonomy for provincial chapters. Lucrecia Mesa, former coordinator of the Colombian CWNSRR network, commented: "We have to be pluralist. . . at the same time as we have a relationship rooted in basic agreements." Within the general initiatives and focuses decided by the network assembly (or by lead NGOs in the case of post-Beijing networks), the provincial groups shape their own campaigns and activities. While the central coordinating office may produce campaign materials for all chapters, many chapters also produce their own materials adapted to the local context.

This autonomy is especially important in countries with great cultural diversity, as is found in Peru. Another compelling argument for this autonomy is that public opinion about social issues in provincial cities often tends to be more conservative than in the great urban centers, so that the provincial chapters need to have the liberty to decide on appropriate strategies and messages suited to their sociopolitical context. The Open Forum in Chile has a network-wide agreement to promote the principle of "voluntary motherhood"[55] as part of its overall advocacy for reproductive rights and decriminalization of abortion. The metropolitan Santiago chapter appears with banners and flyers one Friday every month in the Plaza de Armas (the city's central plaza) to talk to passersby about legalizing abortion. After a conflictive period in the early stages of the network, the Open Forum coordinators now accept that not all provincial chapters feel prepared, or believe that it is appropriate, to adopt such a public strategy. One of the Open Forum's coordinators, Mireya Zuleta, elaborated on this point:

> Evidently we cannot impose the pace of change, because there are many ways to conduct advocacy. We are clear that we share the same objectives. We have improved by defining a much more respectful way of working together. For example, if the women from [x province] say to me, "We will not do outreach to the mass media on the issue of abortion because it could mean that instead of making progress, we lose ground," then I am capable of respecting the pace of their process, and I do not demand that they engage in this specific activity because they are part of the Forum.

This example from the Open Forum points out a potential problem with the principle of autonomy of chapters within a network. When a chapter consistently refuses to address publicly one of the core goals of a reproductive rights network, in this case, legalization of abortion, at some point is the chapter no longer a member of the network? The regional Catholics for the Right to Decide in Latin America network requires that all members adhere to its statement of principles, which includes support for the legalization of abortion. When one member subsequently failed to adhere to these principles, the result after intense dialogue was that this member left the network. The same tension arose with regard to one of the chapters of the Colombian CWNSRR. The Open Forum's policy of providing intensive training and dialogue on this issue for provincial members is a strategy to bring new members along steadily until they are comfortable with working publicly on the issue. The strategy has worked in some cases.

Another major issue, in addition to autonomy, for provincial chapters in NGO networks relates to funding and representation. The experience of the national networks in this study clearly shows that a

network is national in name only when funding is not specifically available for travel to and from provinces, payment of coordinators of provincial networks, communications throughout the national territory, computer access for provincial groups, and activities in the provinces.

For example, the Colombian National Women's Network had excellent provincial representation at its founding meeting. During a period (1998) when the network lost all financial support, its decision-making group was in effect reduced to a core volunteer group of seven women in Bogotá having e-mail contacts with point people (*puntos de enlace*) in certain provincial cities. Although these seven core people still had a broad network of contacts and supporters on whom they could draw for political initiatives, the decision-making group did not represent the true diversity within the network. Furthermore, the network still enjoyed the legitimacy conferred by supposedly representing the opinions of a national network of NGOs and individuals and was invited to policy debates on that basis. Fortunately, after receiving some minimal support for a national meeting in 1999 and additional funds after that, the network has recovered and expanded its national representation.[56]

Because of funding constraints, the post-Beijing groups in this study do not include provincial groups in their steering committees and do not pretend to represent groups throughout the country. Members from the provinces could never make a meeting every two to four weeks in the capital. When project funding allows, the core group consults "focal points" in the provinces, and the provincial groups participate in national initiatives. Provincial groups usually come to national meetings only during the planning stage of projects and at closure.

A third major issue, along with provincial autonomy and funding/representation, is the relative lack of access of provincial and rural women to advances in electronic communication, which hold great promise to reduce communication costs for far-flung groups within a country. Quintero again referred to the period when the National Women's Network had no funds: "If we had electronic mail, it would be much better, but many women don't have e-mail. The lack of funds makes communication impossible, which is the heart of a network. This is a serious problem." Isabel Duque, of ISIS, the Initiative Group in Chile, and the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence, provided an update in 2002:

> Even though use of electronic mail has increased greatly in our region, the grassroots organizations are still at a disadvantage as compared to the intermediary organizations [NGOs] that work with them. The "telecenters" created in some rural zones have helped to increase access, but women do no not necessarily have access to these. The problems for those far from the most important urban centers continue to exist in spite of the recent advances (personal communication, Isabel Duque).

As Duque pointed out, women in provincial capitals are more marginalized than their capital-based peers; within provinces, however, groups outside the provincial capital suffer even greater marginalization. Rural women simply do not participate in most of these NGO networks. In small cities and rural areas, communications difficulties are much more severe, transport may be expensive or inaccessible, and many groups or individuals have no telephone or fax, much less access to e-mail. Again, the overcoming of these barriers is linked to access to funds:

> We are supposedly the network from the fifth region, but actually, we are the network of the province of Valparaiso. We have to make special efforts so that the women from the city of x come, while the women from the city of y have stopped coming and we have to find out why. . . . For special events like the women's schools [special training events], women from the interior of the region have come, but there is no possibility of forming a network with them. We would need a lot more funds [for transport, etc.] (M. Zuleta, Open Forum, Chile).

Other barriers to rural women's participation relate to class and culture:

> Women from rural areas feel neither represented nor understood by those in urban areas. Urban organizations are present in the networks, but there are no *campesina* [peasant] women, because they don't feel understood, and because of problems like floods, dangers due to the conflicts, etc., which make access impossible for them (CWNSRR, Medellín group interview).

While advances in communications and computer technology carry the potential of enabling greater connections between urban and rural groups and among groups that are geographically separated, this potential will remain unrealized until both provincial and rural citizens have access to

this technology. For now, only relatively privileged urban organizations enjoy the benefits of connecting with each other and with global networks at low cost, thus increasingly the already considerable social and political distance between them and their rural counterparts. Even given access, other barriers impede this form of network communication. For example, many rural grassroots women have lower literacy levels, with less ability to express themselves in writing, and the telecenters charge for Internet time.

Growth and Diversity: Summary

NGO advocacy networks need to plan for growth in membership, both to expand the sectors they represent and to keep the networks vital. However, balancing the trade-offs of diversity and growth versus focused, efficient action on controversial issues, some NGO networks may decide to remain small advocacy working groups that limit growth in membership and focus on expanding their social base and network alliances. The larger national networks that aim to represent many sectors of civil society seek to expand membership and must orient new members to the basic principles and agreements of the network to avoid needless revisiting of old arguments. However, as membership expands and becomes more diverse, a network will necessarily revisit some previous agreements to accommodate the agendas of new sectors, but without sacrificing the basic founding principles.

This discussion has revealed how growth and diversity make decisionmaking more complex, which in turn makes face-to-face meetings more necessary. Cultural differences among provinces, differences in the agendas of middle-class professionals and popular-sector women, and the historic mistrust between provinces and capitals make it difficult to create trust and basic agreements without such meetings. When decisions are made at meetings of national networks, popular-sector and provincial members cannot be full decision-making partners without some funding for their travel and expenses.

Getting those members to annual network assemblies cannot in itself solve the problem. Network steering committees or coordinators must make crucial decisions between annual meetings, and most networks do not have sufficient funding to include popular-sector, provincial, and rural women meaningfully in those committees. Increased access to electronic mail has not yet solved

the problem of the relative marginalization of popular-sector and provincial women. Furthermore, even if the Internet and e-mail were completely available, virtual communication does not work well when complex discussions of political strategy heat up. The conversations taking place through electronic communication are too disjointed, the tone of the written word is too easy to misinterpret, and many women with low literacy levels face too many barriers to participate through these means.

In summary, both growth and diversity in the membership of a network have important consequences both for the network's political agenda and for its ability to reach agreement on strategies. Homogeneous groups and established leadership teams that have learned how to work together over time find it easier to arrive at a consensus on the main goals and focus of a network and on specific responses to political threats and opportunities. The networks need to weigh the benefits against the costs of such homogeneity: entrenched leadership, stagnant strategies, and failure to represent well the self-defined needs of diverse sectors of women. To expand and increase diversity, a network must invest in opportunities for dialogue, training, and measures that guarantee access to decision-making spaces.

The next section will analyze how financial stresses create tensions between the interests of NGO members and their NGO networks and how the political risks associated with controversial issues and/or confrontational strategies further complicate the functioning and strategic decisionmaking of the networks.

Financial Stresses and Political Risks

Both the financial sustainability and the political effectiveness of NGO advocacy networks relate closely to the financial health of their members. This study revealed the interplay between the financial stresses facing NGOs in Latin American countries and the ability of networks to be effective protagonists in policy debates: Lack of funds translates into lack of time for networks, and vulnerability creates caution. The marked increase in partnerships between the state and the NGO sector has been both a source of survival and renewed influence for struggling NGOs and a point of tension since such relationships obstruct the ability of NGOs to act as independent critical voices when the state abuses power or fails to fulfill its obligations.

Financial Stresses and Conflicts between NGO and Network Interests

One common category of network — for example, a professional association — exists solely for the exchange of information and professional support of its members, who include both organizations and individuals. This type of network minimizes the possibility of conflict between the interests of the network and its members; by virtue of its mission, the network responds to members' needs. However, one should not create a false dichotomy between the capacity-building function of professional networks and the political function of advocacy networks. Most advocacy networks also engage in capacity building for their members, who value this function highly. In the long term, capacity building strengthens advocacy.

Nevertheless, the political function of NGO advocacy networks entails increased demands on their members; the networks' raison d'être is to achieve long-term political goals shared by members. Conversations and decisions within networks focus on political goals and strategies and only secondarily on how the networks can benefit members.

In advocacy networks, therefore, each member must contribute resources to achieve the shared goals, and when resources for NGOs are scarce, the network suffers disproportionately because advocacy is very time consuming. It demands planning time, difficult political decisions on strategy, and joint activities. When NGO member groups are struggling financially, they are understaffed; they also contribute fewer human and financial resources to network meetings and activities and give lower priority to fund-raising for their network. The decreased commitment by financially pressed members sets into motion a vicious cycle of internal conflicts, declining effectiveness, and loss of sustainability of the network. Internal conflicts exacerbate the already declining participation, leading to diminished public presence. The decrease in public initiatives damages a network's public image, causing it to lose its attractiveness to potential supporters and its legitimacy as a political actor. Due to the sharp decline in external funding for the NGO sector mentioned earlier, especially in Colombia and Chile, this study found several reports of this vicious cycle, which unleashed competition for scarce resources between NGO networks and their members.

NGOs and their advocacy networks are affected not only by declining support, but also by restrictions on the support they receive. When NGOs receive only restricted support for time-bound projects, and not general support, they often must sacrifice long-term projects and goals related to advocacy. Mireya Zuleta, a coordinator of the Open Forum in Chile, spoke to this point:

> The Forum does not have the institutional reserves to allow us freedom of movement as an association. . . . All of the Forum's projects are tied to carrying out specific activities, and the national coordinators' time is consumed with the projects. One of our goals is to find some subsidy so that they could. . . carry out more political outreach and lobbying.

In general, those interviewed agreed that networks have more fund-raising difficulties than their members. NGOs do not want to have a network's fund-raising lessen their chances for support from the limited universe of agencies that give support in the field of women's rights or in that of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Latin America. As was stated in the ISIS group interview, "Without a paid coordinator, there is no one to raise funds for a network. Members' first loyalty is to their NGO. For this reason, it is fundamental that the NGO incorporate network goals and responsibilities as part of its central strategy."

As these leaders noted, an important factor in reducing the competition for fund-raising seems to be the level of correspondence between an NGO's central mission and that of the network. NGOs whose core activities involve activism in the network were more likely to continue to contribute their time and resources even when struggling financially. When the network's focus is not a major component of a NGO member's program, the NGO is more likely to drop out of the network altogether or sharply reduce its commitment. Members of Chile's Post-Beijing Initiative Group incorporate their network-related expenses (staff time and direct expenses) into their core funding proposals to donors and recommend this as a strategy to reduce financial conflicts of interest between NGO members and their networks.

This study identified another area of conflicts of interest related to fund-raising. An Open Forum comment about "dilution" of the NGO in a network echoes comments from other networks:

> During this period [when funding for Chilean NGOs was drastically reduced], many NGOs were living through dramatic situations, and this change meant that they turned inward. . . . Because in a network your contributions become diluted, and also because of funding. . .

these NGOs are not as interested in participating in the network as they used to be because they are totally focused on their survival as institutions" (Open Forum, Chile).

Part of the "capital" of an NGO is its record of achievements, which is essential for publicity and fund-raising pitches. Even when an NGO has devoted considerable organizational resources to an achievement by a network of organizations, it cannot claim individual credit for it. Some problems that plagued the Community Network to Prevent HIV/AIDS in Chile may have been related to the desperate struggle for survival of some member NGOs that organized a major public meeting on their own without including the whole network. This exclusion set off severe internal tensions, with two major founding members leaving the network. The excluded groups felt that the others had violated the spirit in which they formed the network by excluding some members in order to better their own position with potential sources of support.[57]

Managing Financial and Political Risks

Women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights NGO networks suffer tensions related to the relationship between civil society organizations and the state. Many of these tensions arise from the adverse political and financial consequences associated with confrontational strategies and advocacy on controversial issues. Given that espousal of controversial reproductive rights initiatives can incur political costs that affect the financial health of NGO members of a network, many NGO advocacy networks have great difficulty in reaching agreement on appropriate political strategies.

Strategic disagreements in these NGO advocacy networks center on a classic social movement tension between "insiders" and "outsiders"; that is, those in favor of negotiating from within mainstream and/or governmental institutions through established procedures versus those favoring "more contestatory strategies" (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001, 4-6). The networks in this study include both types of groups and individuals. This section will examine two key factors in this insider-outsider tension: the NGO members' relationship with the government and the extent to which they focus on the most controversial issues in women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights.

Relationships with Governments. The feminist movement in Latin America suffered severe controversies during the past decade over the role of the

newly professionalized NGOs in the movement and their relationships with governments. The tension built up during regional and national lobbying efforts surrounding the three major United Nations conferences in Vienna, Cairo, and Beijing, where negotiated agreements inevitably led to compromises on some important feminist goals and gave international prominence to certain English-speaking feminist activists. After Beijing, the tension exploded with venom in the Latin American Feminist Meeting in Cartagena in 1996,[58] where "autonomous" feminists bitterly accused feminists working in NGOs and with the state of having sold out. Women from NGOs, still exhausted from the intensity of their work on the UN summits and justifiably proud of the significant achievements of the women's movement in the conference agreements, were dismayed and discouraged by the attacks. However divisive the attacks on NGOs may have been, the conference had the salutary effect of causing many feminist NGOs to take a critical look at the impact on the movement of their relationships with the state.

Mirroring tensions within the Latin American women's movement as a whole, a central strategic tension in many networks revolved around their relationship with the state. The state, of course, is multifaceted, with many internal contradictions. It interfaces at all levels with diverse civil society organizations. In many countries, one arm of the state may commit severe human rights abuses while other state agencies cooperate with civil society organizations to implement programs promoting well-being and human rights (only sometimes including women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights). Colombia's government is a prime example of such contradictions. The military commit civil and human rights abuses as they fight the guerrilla forces, whereas entities such as the National Planning Commissions actively seek citizen involvement — with explicit invitations to women's organizations — in decisionmaking.

Tensions within the women's movement take on different forms in each country and, at times, in each province within a more decentralized country, in response to marked political and institutional variations. Women's organizations may take for granted a high level of cooperation with the state in one part of a country, while organizations in another part may view such cooperation as ethically repugnant. For example, Mexico's National Forum of Women and Population Policy suffered tensions when NGOs based in Mexico City collaborated actively with a municipal administration

led by the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), while NGOs based in Chiapas, where the national army and the state government actively repress the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional — EZLN)[59] and indigenous movements, could not conceive of cooperating with the state. In order to shelter these divergent attitudes toward collaboration with the state under one umbrella, NGO networks in the 1990s had to shed views dating from the era of dictatorships, when the state was seen as a monolithic enemy.

While notable cases of overly centralized and/or semiauthoritarian corrupt governments still exist in Latin America, such tendencies coexist with recent reforms that have led to greater decentralization and new public/private partnerships in which the state contracts NGOs to provide services and run programs, generally for low-income sectors. These reforms have coincided with the withdrawal of many international donors from the region, at a time when national philanthropy fails to support political advocacy for social change. As a result, some NGOs have become financially dependent on public contracts as other sources of support dry up, and those NGOs incur much greater costs when they take independent, critical stances toward the state. The greater dependence on the state of some NGOs in the women's rights and reproductive rights movement has exacerbated political tensions within advocacy NGO networks, especially when deliberating between outsider-versus-insider strategies.

Many essays and studies have described the tensions that permeate Latin American women's rights activist groups, which have witnessed the gradual erosion of their institutional autonomy and their critical stance at the same time as they have gained greater public recognition. The groups now engage in dialogue with public entities and co-execute governmental programs. The present challenge is to avoid conceding nonnegotiable principles; however, the limits of such principles often are hazy and ill defined (Barrig 1999a, 6).[60]

The sterilization campaigns carried out by the government of Peru in 1996-1997 provide one example of how NGOs' increased dependence on the state, combined with the political complexities of addressing reproductive rights issues, can paralyze the decisionmaking of NGO networks. Due to President Alberto Fujimori's strong focus on population control, the Ministry of Health (MOH) implemented an intense target-driven campaign with the

goal of sterilizing two million Peruvian women. The MOH gave individual health providers and clinic directors unofficial, but inflexible, monthly quotas for the number of sterilizations — along with both threats and incentives to meet the quotas. Countering the influence of the internal MOH campaigns, large governmental projects supported by multilateral and bilateral donors[61] contracted women's NGOs to carry out programs that were designed to improve quality of care in health services.[62] As a result, some feminist NGOs had a direct financial and political stake in maintaining a positive working relationship with the MOH, leading to severe disagreements in feminist NGO networks on how to address the ministry's human rights abuses in the sterilization campaigns. The NGOs cooperating with the government could argue legitimately that by promoting quality of care, they were defending reproductive rights and users' rights within the MOH system, thus mitigating the negative effects of governmental pressures on providers to maximize the number of sterilizations at any cost.

Besides the problem of conflict of interest, disagreements on strategy within the women's movement also stemmed from well-founded fears that denouncing government abuses would play into the hands of ultraconservative forces that were pressuring the MOH to withdraw all access to sterilization.[63] Both these factors led to paralysis in the Peruvian NGO advocacy networks. Even the Peru chapter of CLADEM — the major national women's rights network that eventually documented the human rights abuses in the sterilization campaigns — waited a year after learning about the campaigns to launch its investigation. Peru's National Initiative Group of Women for Equality (Grupo Impulsor) never took a public stand against the campaigns *as a network* although its national assembly, precisely because of concerns about the campaigns, had chosen sexual and reproductive rights as one of two main focuses for monitoring government compliance with the Beijing Platform (Grupo Impulsor Nacional 1998).[64] In summary, many of the major Peruvian feminist organizations did not take an immediate or firm stand against the sterilization campaigns because some members had a direct financial stake in maintaining good relationships with the government and because they feared that the right wing would take too much advantage of the issue.

CLADEM and one of its members, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, took most of the public heat when the media publicized their study of

human rights abuses in January 1998. Conservative forces took advantage of the situation, as was feared. U.S. Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) conducted a fact-finding visit soon after the story broke in the media in January 1998, then introduced a resolution in the U.S. Congress to cut off all U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) support to Peru. The Fujimori government blamed the network messengers for the scandal's fallout, and both the author of the study and the Flora Tristán NGO suffered harassment and exclusion from government-controlled contracts.[65] Finally, only through an ad hoc, noninstitutional coalition[66] did broad, diverse sectors of the women's and human rights movements issue a public declaration denouncing both the human rights abuses of the sterilization campaigns and the rights-restricting initiatives of the religious conservatives.

How can NGO advocacy networks address insider-outsider tensions productively? Is the Peruvian response — to create an ad hoc coalition — the best solution? Several voices within the Latin American women's movement view insider-outsider strategies as a false dichotomy. They call for joint strategies that would end stalemates between confrontation/independence versus negotiation/dependence.

> We have to arrive at a level of maturity in feminism in which the strategy of denouncing abuses goes hand in hand with negotiation, and in which both strategies spring from the same source without conflicts between us. In general, in Latin American countries, there is no negotiation unless it is preceded by denunciation. . . . Some organizations are more apt to negotiate. In others, there are groups advocating both paths. Ideally, there would be no "victims"; that is, we should be the ones to plan this dual strategy, and not have it be them [officials, the government] who divide us. It is impossible to say that one of these strategies is better than the other; it all depends on what you achieve with the strategy, so it is very important to respect the distinct achievements of each strategy (S. Chiarotti, CLADEM).

This mature and coordinated team strategy sounds, in theory, like a wonderful idea to resolve this central divisive issue in the Latin American women's movement, but in fact, when organizations take the route of denouncing government abuses, the strategy incurs real costs. Contracts with governments, and with bilateral and multilateral projects that require government approval,

have become a key source of income for NGOs, and the experience in Peru shows that governments penalize NGOs that take on the denunciatory role. One solution for this win-lose situation would be for donors who are not required to channel grants through government agencies to give special consideration to NGOs that take the political risk of serving as the public, outsider voice of denunciation when a government abuses human rights or fails to live up to its obligations. The other possibility for NGOs committed to the outsider role is to build their capacity to raise funds from sympathetic individuals, both within their countries and internationally.

The Political Risks of Controversy. Focus on sexual and reproductive rights incurs political costs for NGO advocacy networks and their members because the networks are immersed in cultures that are deeply polarized on these issues. The lack of an internationally recognized covenant covering sexual and reproductive rights is merely a symptom of the lack of consensus in most societies on certain key sexual and reproductive rights. Sexual and reproductive rights advocates generally agree in principle that the right to decide "freely and responsibly" on sexuality[67] should include sexual orientation issues. Likewise, most advocates agree that the "basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health"[68] should include access for people of all ages to all available contraceptive methods and safe abortion services. Intense levels of controversy surround these two issues in particular, and the second is most controversial when applied to youth. As recent participants in the 2002 UN Special Session on Children will attest, growing polarization surrounds young people's right to decide on their sexuality and their right to access to contraceptive and sexual health services.

Even agreement in principle among advocates, however, does not always translate into willingness to take action. As mentioned above, the more a network expands its social base in a society that is polarized on these issues, the greater the diversity of opinions within the network. Having a list of basic principles to which all network members must adhere may be essential, but the formal unity achieved by the list can mask important differences in the members' willingness to defend the most controversial principles on the list. Such underlying differences usually take the form of disagreements

about appropriate strategies for political action. Thus, some networks in this study did not undertake public advocacy for decriminalization of abortion, and none campaigned for abolishing discrimination based on sexual orientation.[69]

One of the largest regional networks, the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN), confronted the disagreements within the women's movement by setting a firm policy that prevents disagreement among board of directors members about actions defending more controversial sexual and reproductive rights issues.

> *When we talk about topics such as sexual orientation and decriminalization of abortion, undoubtedly there will be many groups who prefer to stay in the rearguard. . . . Our directors, before they are elected, know that we are going to work on all "feminist health issues," including those of sexual orientation and abortion. That is our bottom line. If they do not accept this, they cannot join the Board (Amparo Claro — LACWHN).*

It is important to note that LACWHN is somewhat protected from potential internal divisions caused by size and diversity of membership because the board, and not an assembly of members, is the group's decision-making body.

When networks do not strategically confront the risk of internal division, they experience conflicts that have the result of limiting the members to those committed to a controversial issue. In the case of abortion, Lucrecia Mesa, the first coordinator of the Colombian CWNSRR, explained how a strategic stalemate was resolved following a turning point for the network: an annual assembly in which a strategic planning facilitator helped keep the discussions constructive. Mesa's observations also point to the limitations on statements of principles of unity:

> There are diverse opinions within the Network about abortion. Some members have opted for emphasizing quality of care in services, while others work on abortion. It is a kind of division of labor. We have to be pluralist. . . and arrive at some kind of relationship in which we have basic agreements. They were constructed emotionally, without being clear about their implications. We were very enthusiastic when we first formed the Network, and only a few people wrote the principles. We weren't conscious enough of the difficulties, of the obstacles in our path. The second time that we wrote principles of unity, during the strategic planning exercise, they were developed among

those of us who remained [in the network], the most committed. Now we are sure what we want (Lucrecia Mesa, CWNSRR).

Focusing on the more controversial issues in the sexual and reproductive rights field can winnow out the indecisive, often limiting the size of a network. In order to work on issues such as abortion, it helps to have a cohesive group; this is harder to achieve as an NGO network becomes more numerous and diverse.

Besides the risk of dividing a network from within, this study found instances of three other types of political risk incurred by campaigning for decriminalization of abortion: 1) division of one or more NGO members from within, 2) alienation of the network from potential allies, and 3) "blacklisting,"[70] or marginalization by mainstream institutions or governments. In the first kind of risk, the more broad-based the membership of an NGO network member, the more likely that having the NGO's name attached to a controversial initiative on reproductive rights will produce internal conflicts (see the example from Colombia concerning the May 28 communiqué cited below). In the second case, sexual and reproductive rights networks often join broad-based coalitions on important public health or human rights issues, thus expanding their network of allies and contacts. However, their coalition partners may pressure the networks to silence any issues that would be divisive within the coalition. Those working on safe motherhood coalitions to lower maternal mortality know that some organizations in these coalitions are not receptive when other members advocate focusing on the lack of safe abortion services as a factor in mortality. In the citizen's peace movement in Colombia, uniting the women's networks, the human rights movement, and the Catholic Church, coalition partners pressured the CWNSRR to downplay the issue of abortion.

The third type of political risk also is common. Networks or NGOs that are very identified with abortion or other controversial issues (such as the sterilization controversies in Peru) might find themselves excluded from certain invitation lists, not considered as speakers at conferences, effectively barred from bidding on government contracts, and, in general, considered as persona non grata in any venue where the Catholic church has influence.

An example from Colombia illustrates how perceptions of political risk have interacted with strategic decisions and internal divisions in the CWNSRR network. Tensions over abortion-related

strategies kept the network from exercising leadership on that issue throughout most of its existence. A national assembly early in the network's life decided on the first "principles of unity," including defense of the right to safe abortion. This did not resolve tensions around the issue, which erupted soon afterward when the NGO in charge of communications for the network omitted all mention of abortion from a published communiqué on maternal mortality on May 28, the International Day for Women's Health. While the anger of the other network members was understandable, it is instructive to consider that the offending NGO was closely linked with a grassroots low-income women's network whose membership was divided on the issue of abortion.

In discussions after this incident, the NGO that issued the communiqué said the disagreement was on strategy, the network needed first to gain respect and legitimacy among a wide array of social actors before tackling the abortion issue, and too much focus on abortion would cut off channels of dialogue before they had even opened. This argument represents a universal theme of strategy debates in the advocacy networks in this study. In the author's experience, the most common reason given by feminist NGOs for not addressing the problem of unsafe abortion directly is that they need to gain legitimacy and a broad base of support *before* addressing the issue. While in many instances, especially early in the public life of an NGO or network, valid strategic reasons exist to address broader, related reproductive or civil rights first, this reasoning also has become a perennial excuse. Many NGOs or networks never decide that the time is ripe, whether due to division within their membership or to other political costs of taking on the issue.

Many networks reported stalemated discussions between the more "radical" or "activist" and the more "cautious" members of the network in discussions about strategy on abortion in particular, with mutual hard feelings and blame on both sides. The all-too-common judgment that the more cautious organizations have been "co-opted" poses an obstacle to dealing constructively with organizations' legitimate concern for their own well-being. The underlying challenge is how to collaborate on advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights while balancing three important considerations: the bottom-line principle of defense of rights, the goal of expanding a network's social base, and the ethical and organizational mandate to do more good than harm to the NGO members of the network. How

can one tell when postponing work on access to safe abortions is a valid strategic plan and when is it a perennial excuse? A network cannot ignore the real political costs that organizations incur when they espouse these more controversial reproductive rights. NGO members that suffer unacceptable political costs because of network initiatives, costs such as loss of political legitimacy, damaged relationships with important institutional partners, or loss of important sources of funding, may either become weaker institutions or drop out. In either case, the network suffers since it is only as strong as its members.

NGOs' fears of their inability to withstand political costs — their perception of their own weakness and lack of legitimacy — underlie the overly sequential strategic thinking that leads to permanent inaction on controversial issues. To combat these fears, NGO advocacy networks adopt strategies that offset the political and financial risks incurred by working on abortion. These strategies strengthen the member groups by expanding their social bases and building up their political capital in other ways, without postponing their public advocacy for access to safe abortion services. The most common strategy is to address simultaneously other less controversial, but related, issues that bring the network into positive relationships with a broad network of allies. Sometimes, these related issues provide a lead-in to the more controversial issues. Ideally, the NGOs or networks find opportunities in these broader alliances to educate other sectors on sexual and reproductive rights issues.

For example, safe motherhood initiatives have been based on areas of broad agreement in order to broach, carefully, the issue of unsafe abortion as a major cause of maternal mortality. In Colombia, the CWNSSR used the issue of sexual violence as the center of its annual campaign, reasoning that the campaign could serve to soften public opinion to the idea of legalizing abortion in cases of rape and incest. In several countries, highly publicized cases of a victim of sexual violence (Paulina in Mexico,[71] Alba Lucía in Colombia) have indeed served to expand the media's sympathetic coverage of pro-choice points of view. The NGOs in the Catholics for the Right to Decide network typically join the social justice organizations of the progressive Catholic church, where they give workshops and distribute their literature, thus working for social justice, allying themselves with broader efforts for church reform, and legitimizing themselves as Catholics.[72] Also in Mexico, a five-NGO consortium working to build a pro-choice movement has cata-

lyzed a broad-based citizen's campaign[73] for those civil rights and liberties, such as the right to freedom of religion, that form the foundation for sexual and reproductive rights.[74] The main slogan of the campaign is, "Respect for others' decisions is the foundation of civilization and liberty."

This discussion has analyzed how addressing the controversial aspects of sexual and reproductive rights involves trade-offs between defense of those rights and NGO members' institutional interests. Dependence on state funding of some network members causes pronounced differences of opinion on strategy. NGO networks generally fail to implement innovative fund-raising strategies that could reduce the financial vulnerability of their members. In these networks, the successful political strategies that mitigate this trade-off and enable advocacy have involved broadening of the political focus in new alliances for the network, so that the network is less politically vulnerable.

In summary, the juggling of fidelity to political principles and expansion of one's base of political and financial support leads to a constant search for equilibrium in the NGO networks in this field. The political inertia caused by internal conflicts due to diverse institutional interests leads to the conclusion that these organizational networks often are not an appropriate mechanism for advocacy strategies that require a rapid public response — strategies that demand agile and independent responses to unexpected situations.[75]

NGO Networks' Achievements and Limitations

From the complex data on the NGO advocacy networks we are considering, an equivocal response emerges to the question of how effectively they constitute themselves as actors in the political arena. The networks possess both undeniable achievements and clear limitations. This concluding section aims to summarize both, with an eye to drawing conclusions about what kinds of tasks and objectives such organizational networks are best suited to undertake.

Achievements

This study notes, but has not concentrated on, NGO networks' undeniable achievements in the arena of international United Nations conferences. National, regional, and global women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights NGO networks have

had an enormous political impact, whether in NGO Forums at these UN conferences or as members of country delegations. Many participants perceive that the networking and consultation processes before and after the UN conferences re-energized national women's movements and created new networks, although no reliable statistics track NGO network growth at the national level. In the countries in this study, the NGO members of national networks — especially the small and provincial groups — have a very positive view of the training sessions and national meetings that took place before and after the UN conferences.

An apparent contrast exists between the widely recognized gains of regional and global NGO networks in international policy and the national networks' difficulties in positioning themselves in national policy debates. However, the most controversial aspects of the feminist agenda on women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights have been sacrificed in the international policy arena. The points of great consensus, such as the need to eliminate violence against women, have shown important advances both globally and nationally.

On the national and regional level, evidence from this study indicates that advocacy by NGO networks has been timely and effective for questions on which wide consensus exists within the networks. For example, campaigns and political movements related to violence against women, sometimes including sexual violence, seem to realize a high level of political consensus among a broad range of institutions and exert effective pressure for policy change. In such cases, a coordinator or designated spokesperson is empowered to make public declarations and act on behalf of network members without engaging in time-consuming and logistically demanding consultations on strategy and on the wording of public pronouncements.

At the provincial level, several NGO network projects clearly have attained greater achievements than those at the national level. This study has pointed to serious problems related to the national NGO networks' relative exclusion of provincial, rural, and popular groups, especially when a network lacks adequate funding. Even though the provincial groups may be smaller, poorer, and less sophisticated than their sister groups in the capital, however, the interviews conducted for this study suggest that they have two advantages. The municipal and provincial chapters of a national network are better able to work out internal differ-

ences in face-to-face meetings, thus overcoming the logistical difficulties of making decisions on a national level. In addition, they can gain easier access to local officials and the media through their more localized social and political networks. As one member of Peru's post-Beijing group re-marked, "The provinces and Lima have different dynamics; we have a much harder time being heard here in Lima." In Colombia, Peru, and Chile, provincial network chapters have been much more successful than capital-based chapters in establish-ing relationships with policymakers that resulted in changes in policies and programs.[76] Possibly, in a less populous venue with multiple ties among middle- and upper-class professionals, it is much easier and less time consuming for provincial NGOs to activate their social and familial networks among local elites and in local centers of power. In all three countries, the provincial chapters have had much easier access to the local media, an ex-posure that increases their potential to influence local public opinion.

Other advocacy network achievements relate to the important long-term goal of building the mem-bers' capacity for advocacy on these often-contro-versial issues. The networks achieved this goal both through training workshops and through projects that funded activities nationwide. In this study, members rated training opportunities highly as a benefit of belonging to an advocacy network. At least one network — Chile's Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights — used training workshops to good effect as an im-portant means of orienting new members to the political framework and agreements forged within the network. However, the most compelling evi-dence on capacity-building comes from interviews and reports about project-related experiences. For example, although Peru's post-Beijing National Ini-tiative Group of Women for Equality (Grupo Impulsor) was unable to respond adequately to the reproductive rights abuses in government steriliza-tion campaigns, its national monitoring effort — which centered on compliance with quotas for women in electoral slates and on sexual and repro-ductive rights — energized, trained, and empow-ered many provincial groups. According to the tes-timony of provincial leaders,[77] the monitoring gave them an effective new way to exercise citizenship and demand accountability by local authorities, an advocacy skill that serves multiple purposes.

This study demonstrates how some NGO net-works have dealt successfully with the barriers to advocacy on controversial issues imposed by the

institutional interests of members. As noted above, advocacy on controversial issues such as abortion often incurs high political risks for the institutions involved; the risks include internal divisions, loss of alliances, loss of political influence, and loss of financial support. To counteract these risks, NGO networks have simultaneously joined broader alli-ances and taken important initiatives on less con-troversial issues. These alliances and initiatives help unite network members, building internal trust and relationships, and they help to ensure that a network and its members do not lose impor-tant political contacts and bases of support as they move forward on more controversial issues.

Finally, an experience from Peru suggests that while institutionalized NGO advocacy networks may not be well suited for rapid responses to po-litical crises, especially when confrontation with government is involved, they can serve an impor-tant function as a launching pad for organizing im-promptu political initiatives by civil society. Femi-nists in Peru, recognizing the limitations of institu-tional NGO networks with regard to participation in public debates, established an ad hoc, noninsti-tutional advocacy network to answer the need for coordinated feminist participation in such debates. After the 1996 Latin American Feminist Meeting in Cartagena,[78] both women from prominent feminist NGOs and autonomous feminists formed a new in-formal network called the Mass Women's Move-ment (Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres — MAM). Unlike the Cartagena movement, this initiative, while not explicitly anti-NGO, arose from the members' recognition that a space independent of the NGOs was needed for feminist initiatives. In forming MAM, the members hoped that NGO inter-ests would not block collective participation in public debates, as had occurred with networks composed of organizational representatives. "It was the NGO women who determined that they needed a political mechanism to cast a broad net for outreach in order to reconstruct the constitu-ency needed to participate in public debates," MAM's Giulia Tamayo noted.[79] In effect, MAM was the only Peruvian network that publicly de-nounced President Fujimori's sterilization cam-paigns. This experience suggests that similar ad hoc coalitions, arising from multiple overlapping institutional and informal networks, may be a more useful vehicle than NGO networks for engaging in public debate on controversial initiatives that could incur political costs for NGOs.

Especially as access to the Internet has ex-panded to the provincial and less-developed re-

gions of Latin American countries, the facility with which ad hoc coalitions can be formed has increased exponentially. However, some participants in MAM in Peru have pointed out that as the life of their ad hoc coalition continues, MAM has begun to suffer from some of the same obstacles to decisionmaking experienced in the more institutionalized NGO networks. Although ad hoc coalitions may achieve notable political successes, their ability to act decisively in politically risky situations may actually depend on having a short life and informal character. If so, then the longer such a coalition stays alive, the more it will fall prey to the same institutional pressures noted in this study.

Limitations

Why do the agendas of women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights NGOs seem to face more obstacles in the national arena than in international UN-sponsored venues? One answer is that the relevant international agreements, such as the ICPD Programme of Action and the FWCW Platform for Action, are not binding; they are consensus documents. National policy gains, on the other hand, take the form of specific programs, regulations, judicial precedents, and laws that supposedly are binding on the government and have budgetary implications.[80] At the national level, therefore, the NGO networks' lack of connection to local political and financial elites is an important obstacle.

National NGO networks could correct the limiting factors related to internal governance (see Appendix B for recommendations). The newer national networks in this study had unclear membership procedures and criteria, and all adopted the logic of smaller women's movement collectives, operating on a consensus model of decisionmaking and using informal rules. This model works when consensus on basic strategies already exists, but breaks down in the face of conflicts about strategies to promote controversial sexual and reproductive rights such as legalization of abortion.

Other barriers to effective leadership in the NGO networks in this study stem from the institutional situations and interests of the NGO members and the polarized nature of public debate on sexual and reproductive rights issues, which can incur political costs for organizations. These potential costs cause severe internal disagreements about political strategy and about the NGO networks' stance vis-à-vis government, many times leading to lack of response or untimely responses to political

opportunities or crises.

The role of financial stresses in weakening the networks is clear from this study, leading to withdrawal from or limited participation in networks when the NGOs cannot spare the womanpower and causing inability to fund-raise for the networks. These stresses also pose obstacles to effective inclusion of marginalized sectors of women — grassroots low-income groups, groups representing ethnic minorities, and provincial and rural groups. Finally, financial vulnerability makes organizations less able to withstand the political costs associated with advocacy on controversial issues.

Concluding Thoughts

In summary, taking the long view, the benefits of advocacy NGO networks are significant and numerous. While they are limited in their ability to respond agilely in the short-term on the most controversial issues, this cannot and should not be the only criteria for judging the effectiveness of these networks. Furthermore, experience has shown that once the members of a network have reached consensus about political strategies and have developed mechanisms for rapid response on the issues, their potential impact is indeed greater than the sum of the parts.

The findings from this study should lead to a rethinking of many activists' assumption that public pronouncements on breaking news are the most important bottom-line activity for an advocacy network. While this study reveals both the obstacles to producing such pronouncements and some strategies for mitigating those obstacles, an NGO network clearly is a cumbersome vehicle for this particular strategy. Since the bottom line should be results, such as changes in policies and programs, the strategies that produce results, even if hidden from the public eye, are the ones that are worth pursuing. Indeed, given that the main obstacles to consensus on highly visible strategies arise from the political and financial risks incurred by the networks' NGO members, it may be that NGO networks are ideally suited for less visible strategies when the issues still are highly controversial. NGO networks still do serve as a training ground and a launching pad for participants in ad hoc broad coalitions, which can respond more agilely in the public arena.

Most definitely, an important intermediate objective for NGO advocacy networks is to build the capacity and legitimacy of member NGOs and the

social movements in which the networks participate. This study shows much evidence of such achievement. Those networks with limited capacity for short-term public response still engaged in complex national projects, such as opinion surveys and monitoring exercises that provided invaluable tools for advocacy efforts. All of the networks implemented programs that strengthened advocacy over the long term through building the capacity of the members and slowly — often painfully — forging cohesion among them. Internal discussions that explore the complexity of issues also increase the capacity of members to address issues appropriately and professionally with a variety of audiences.

On the other hand, the argument that NGO advocacy networks are best suited to pursue longer-term objectives related to increasing members' capacity and expanding their social base should not serve as a convenient excuse for lack of results. Why invest so much time and resources in advocacy networks if they do not produce better results in policy change than NGOs working on their own? However, the political risks arising from advocacy on the most controversial sexual and reproductive rights issues will not disappear. Strategies that could minimize these risks — building closer connections to financial and political elites, joining broader coalitions with related goals, and, in general, expanding the social base of the movement — will enable NGO coalitions and networks to move forward on the most politically risky issues and, at the same time, build capacity and legitimacy. The areas of achievement in this study, then, point a way forward.

The main questions that each network must ask itself and the tensions it must balance will remain. The basic questions have to do with the need to balance the institutional interests of the members with the advocacy goals of the network: How to minimize the political risks and still maximize the results of advocacy strategies? How to open doors and gain access to, and influence with, political elites without sacrificing the more controversial basic commitments to women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights? How to expand the membership and social base of a network without watering down those commitments?

Other important questions relate to the organizational means to these ends: How to be less "entangled" when deciding on strategies? How to organize decisionmaking efficiently and democratically? How to determine the breadth or narrowness of strategic focus a network should have? How to become less financially dependent on foreign donors or the government? Whether and how to expand or diversify in membership? How to involve popular-sector women, rural women, provincial women, women from ethnic minorities, and women from other marginalized sectors in meaningful ways?

Each network makes choices in responding to these questions, often without discussing the choices or foreseeing their consequences. The author hopes that this analysis of the experiences of NGO advocacy networks in Latin America may help similar networks make conscious, well-informed decisions in the future on these important questions.

Appendix A: Networks Interviewed for This Study and Sources of Information

Some networks for which information is incomplete are included in this list because the author took advantage of unforeseen opportunities to interview activists from these networks during the data collection phase, from 1998 through 2000.

National Networks

Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights — CWNSRR (Red Colombiana de Mujeres por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos) was founded in 1992 at a national meeting and has six city chapters. Resources: group interviews by the author in Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín; reports to the Ford Foundation; and internal CWNSRR documents.

National Women's Network, Colombia (Red Nacional de Mujeres) was formed in 1991 to unify women's organizations' input into the Constitutional Assembly. The network now includes 14 provincial networks and 80 organizations. The current focal point is the Corporación Sisma Mujer (SISMA Women's Corporation) in Bogotá. Resources: a group interview in Bogotá and personal correspondence with Beatriz Quintero. Web site: <http://www.colnodo.apc.org/~wwwrednl/index.html>.

National Initiative Group of Women for Equality, Peru (Grupo Impulsor Nacional Mujeres por la Igualdad), a Lima-based group of NGOs formed before the Beijing Conference, has expanded in numbers since 1995 to monitor compliance with the Beijing Plan of Action. The group coordinates actions with an average of 10 NGOs in each region of the country. Resources: a group interview in Lima and the author's attendance at a national meeting with representatives from all of the active provinces. A Peruvian NGO, CESIP (Center for Social Studies and Publications), has coordinated the group since its inception. Web site: <http://www.siperu.org/cesip/cesip.htm>.

Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights-Chile (Red de Salud y Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos-Chile) (now called Health Forum or Foro Salud). Founded in 1989, this NGO network now has six provincial subnetworks and 52 member organizations. Resources: two group interviews in 1998-1999, reports to the Ford Foundation, and publications. Web site: <www.forosalud.cl/acerca.html>.

Post-Beijing Initiative Group, Chile (Grupo Iniciativa) is a Santiago-based group of NGOs formed before the Beijing Conference and expanded since 1995 to promote and monitor compliance with the Beijing Plan of Action. Resources: interviews with ISIS Internacional and Teresa Valdés of FLACSO and publications of the Group. Web site: <http://www.flacso.cl/gim.html>.

Network against Violence against Women, Chile (Red contra Violencia contra las Mujeres). Resources: partial information only, from interview with Mireya Zuleta, Casa de la Mujer de Valparaiso, and Isabel Duque of ISIS Internacional.

The National Forum of Women and Population Policy, México (Foro Nacional de Mujeres y Políticas de Población) was created in 1993 in preparation for ICPD and now monitors and promotes governmental compliance with the ICPD Programme of Action. The Forum includes 80 Mexican women's organizations and academic institutions from 18 of the 31 Mexican states. Resources: incomplete information from interview with one of the coordinators and Forum documents. Web site: <http://www.laneta.apc.org/foropob/>.

Community Network for Prevention of HIV/AIDS (Chile) is an NGO network founded in 1991 that has a history of divisions and conflicts. Resources: partial information only from interview with ex-member, and two papers about the Network.

Regional Networks

Catholics for the Right to Decide in Latin America (Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Latinoamérica — CDD/LA) is a network of seven sister organizations with the same name in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. The network promotes women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights from a Catholic perspective through research, education, and advocacy. The CDDs in Latin America participate with the U.S.-based Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) in various global activities and exchanges.

ISIS Internacional (Chile) is a women's information and communication service founded in 1974. Two other sister organizations named ISIS were founded in the Philippines and Uganda. ISIS promotes the formation of communications networks, both global and regional. Resources: group interview providing information on several networks and observations on networks in general. Web site: <http://www.isis.cl/>.

Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer — CLADEM) was founded in 1987 and now has 17 country groups or active contacts (*enlaces*). Its mission is to develop and disseminate legal research, training, jurisprudence, campaigns, and proposals to defend women's rights. Web site: <http://www.cladem.org/>.

Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network — LACWHN (Red de Salud de Mujeres Latinoamericanos y del Caribe — RSMLAC) was created in 1984 in the First Regional Meeting on Women's Health in Tenza, Colombia. This large network is composed of organizations and individuals, with publications, training programs, and activist campaigns in favor of women's health and rights. The regional office is in Santiago, Chile. Web site: <http://www.reddesalud. web.cl/>.

Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Red Feminista Latinomaericano y del Caribe contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual). Resources: partial information only from ISIS Internacional interview and web site, <http://www.isis.cl/redes/redfeminista.htm>.

Appendix B: Recommendations for Network Governance[81]

Building Democracy: Membership, Decision-Making Rules, and Authority Structures

Membership

• Decisions on requirements for membership, levels of membership, and goals for outreach and growth are important, yet often are implicit.

• Advocacy networks need a statement of principles of agreement to which all members who will have any decision-making power subscribe upon joining. These principles may evolve over time, but the process for amending them should be spelled out.

• Legal incorporation by an advocacy network does not seem necessary for effective functioning, as long as the designation of NGOs that receive grants for the network does not become a source of tension. However, written bylaws for the basic principles of membership, decisionmaking, and authority structures are important.

• Larger, complex networks may need to develop levels of membership: subscribers to newsletter or e-mail groups, supporters who are called on for campaigns and other actions, and activist members with decision-making power.

• A network may consist of organizations, individuals, or both. When a network decides to recruit both, the different needs and constraints of each must be recognized. Ideally, organizations subsidize the participation of their representatives and view participation as an integral component of their organizational strategy. The degree to which the goals of the organization and the goals of the network match is a crucial factor in reducing conflicts of interest between NGOs and their networks. Individuals usually participate at their own expense and can only make commitments that do not conflict with their regular employment. The network needs to decide explicitly how individuals fit into decision-making processes and activities, recognize that both organizations and individuals incur costs in the form of time and money when they participate, and address variance in members' ability to incur these costs.

Decision-Making Rules

• The consensus model of decisionmaking can be highly undemocratic, as it means that only one group's opposition to a decision can stop that decision from being approved. Even if a network decides not to incorporate formally, it would be best to develop written bylaws for making decisions in case of disagreements about strategy. Among other things, bylaws should specify who has the right to participate in these decisions, that is, should establish criteria for membership with decisionmaking authority. This consideration is particularly important when the coalition is dealing with sensitive or controversial issues like abortion because group members' level of commitment to such issues is likely to become more diverse as the network expands its social base.

• Member organizations that send individual representatives to coalition planning meetings need to give those individuals decision-making authority for the organization they represent.

Authority Structures

• The establishment of guidelines for rotating coordination and leadership is important. It is not healthy for a network if one individual or organization is viewed as having a lockhold on the authority structures. Networks employ various mechanisms for rotation and expanding the leadership base. Systematic rotation infuses new ideas and energy into the network and allows younger members to rise to leadership positions. Periodic elections, age diversity, and expansion of the pool of leaders keep the network vital.

Coordination

• Paid coordinators are essential for most network functions. When decisions need to be made between Board or Assembly meetings, the coordinators play a vital role in facilitating communication.

The Tension Between Growth/Diversity and Cohesiveness/Efficiency

Increasing Diversity

• A broad group — particularly one that includes women from states/provinces outside of the capital and working class, rural, and/or ethnic minority women — will be more representative of the country's population and will allow women who are usually voiceless to speak. However, both logistical and financial obstacles confront their involvement because they have less access to transportation and to communication technologies, making it harder and more expensive to include them in regular meetings. If a network is serious about involving these more disenfranchised women, it must raise funds to make this possible and be willing to take extra measures to share decision-making power.

• Rural and urban low-income grassroots women's organizations (which often include ethnic and indigenous minorities) may take a more conservative approach to abortion advocacy and other controversial sexual and reproductive rights issues than do women who are used to being activists at a national or international level. The inclusion of women who usually are disenfranchised not only implies more costs in travel, communications, and so on, but also a greater commitment to dialogue and intensive training, and more accommodation to differing priorities among subgroups of network members.

• Networks that represent diverse groups and provinces function best when decentralized. The main strategies are agreed on by the network assembly or board, and then the activities are planned and implemented autonomously by the local groups in ways that are appropriate for their locale and audience.

Rapid Response Networks

• Homogenous groups with tightly controlled membership often find it easier to agree on their main goals and activities and on political strategy. These may be more appropriate vehicles than large, broad-based networks when rapid response to breaking events is an essential function of the network and when the focus is on controversial sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. Also suited to rapid response is another type of network, which may have a broader constituency: the informal, ad hoc network composed of organizations and individuals called to support a specific campaign.

Financial Sustainability

• Groups that are better funded may be able to participate more reliably in the activities of the network or coalition. Organizations that are struggling to survive often cannot spare the human resources for coalition activities. The coalition needs to decide how to deal with these differences in level of commitment so that they do not cause undue internal tension.

• NGO network members should incorporate their network-related activities and expenses (including staff time) into their core funding proposals.

• A structure that relies on short-term projects without sufficient support for core operating costs is prejudicial to institutional NGO advocacy networks. While training programs that are easily packaged to donors as projects fill important capacity-building needs for network members, these networks need general operating support if they are to build the relationships with decisionmakers, media, and potential partners that will increase their effectiveness in the long term. Donors should use interim evaluation criteria for capacity-building and increasing spheres of influence, rather than the activity/product criteria that now prevail.

Political Coordination and Sustainability

• Both NGOs and donors should promote coordinated but diverse advocacy strategies in the NGO and donor communities. When coordination with other donors is possible, donors who do not have to channel grants through government agencies can give priority to support groups that are willing to take the most political and financial risks — whether because they are denouncing official abuses or because they are addressing the most controversial sexual and reproductive health issues.

Political Strategies and Strategic Tensions

Face-to-Face Meetings

• The need for such meetings to construct shared definitions, goals, and strategies is clear from the interviews. Intensive dialogue enables a network to address the ambivalence and strong emotions stimulated by sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. E-mail discussions cannot handle this level of give-and-take among large numbers of people and institutions. In addition, unequal access to technology excludes many provincial and grassroots groups from the discussions. E-mail can reduce the need for meetings but cannot eliminate it.

Alliances and Coalition Building

• For issue-oriented networks such as those concentrating on sexual and reproductive rights, participation in broader alliances on related issues, such as human rights, women's rights, or antipoverty efforts, is important for several reasons. Not only are these other issues intrinsically important, but also, in the long term, these alliances broaden possible bases of support for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

NOTES

1. "Las redes enredan, pero han abierto muchas puertas." (The networks entangle, but they have opened many doors.) Interview with Beatriz Quintero, National Women's Network, Colombia. A prominent Colombian feminist scholar, Magdalena León, is quoted in Alvarez (1998, 315), as saying, "The movement today is a tangle of networks (*un enredo de redes*)."

2. The national networks included in this study are in Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Mexico. This paper contains some information updated in 2002.

3. The Pathfinder Fund has since changed its name to Pathfinder International. During an internal reorganization, Pathfinder eliminated the Women's Programs Division in 1986.

4. The sample for this study is opportunistic, based on organizations the author worked with or had access to during the data collection phase in 1998-2000. Updated information from 2002 comes partly from e-mails exchanged with those interviewed at the earlier time. In addition, the author has worked as a senior consultant for Catholics for Free Choice since September 2001, coordinating that group's program in Latin America and working closely with Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir. This work has put her in touch with current developments in the regional networks and some of the country networks. Some information from the Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir network was added in 2002.

5. The countries discussed in this article differ in nomenclature for their political-geographical subdivisions. Some countries have regions and provinces within regions, while others have states or departments. To avoid confusion, I use the term "provinces" throughout to refer to the geopolitical divisions of a country outside the capital.

6. The exceptions to this rule are the foundations such as the Global Fund for Women, which are set up explicitly as small grants programs.

7. Alvarez (1999a) argues that transnational feminist activism obeys two distinct logics: the transnational advocacy logic attempts "to expand formal rights or influence public policy," as in the advocacy surrounding the UN conferences, while the "logic of mutual solidarity and identity" aims mainly to "(re)construct and or reaffirm subaltern political identities and to establish strategic and personal bonds of solidarity with others who share particular values, (e.g., feminist ideals) or traits, (e.g., lesbians)."

8. The NGO (non-governmental organization) Forum is the civil society conference that parallels an official UN conference composed of government delegations. Many of the UN conferences have had NGO Forums with substantial representation from NGOs.

9. The literature on the role of NGO networks in the Cairo and Beijing UN conferences in particular is vast, and only a handful of sources that provide summaries are included in the references (Gruskin 1995; Dunlop, Kyte, and MacDonald 1996; Girard 1999; Population Council and Population Reference Bureau 1999). The web sites of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, the International Women's Health Coalition, ISIS Internacional, the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer — CLADEM), the United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) all contain useful articles, summaries, and access to other publications.

10. See Center for Reproductive Law and Policy and DEMUS (Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer — Office for the Defense of Women's Rights) 2001, 80-88, for a full discussion of reproductive rights trends in the region. The full text of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women ("Convention of Belém Do Pará," ratified in 1994) is available at <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Treaties/a-61.htm>.

11. See the regional analyses from CLADEM's November 2001 seminar on sexual and reproductive rights in the region at the web site of the Campaign to Promote an Inter-American Sexual and Reproductive Rights Convention. Available at <http://www.convencion.org.uy/menu8-020Pone.htm>.

12. The full report is available at <http://www.unaids.org/barcelona/presskit/barcelona%20report/contents.html>.

13. See endnote 10.

14. Personal communications in 2002 with Astrid Bant of the International Women's Health Coalition, Luisa Cabal of the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, Susana Chiarotti of CLADEM, Virginia Chambers of IPAS, Frances Kissling of Catholics for Free Choice (USA), and Gaby Oré Aguilar of the Ford Foundation.

15. Mexico is the exception to this trend.

16. The Global Gag Rule prohibits organizations that receive U.S. foreign aid from engaging in advocacy for legal abortion and from providing legal abortion

services or referrals for legal abortions. See the web site of the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy's for more information about the Global Gag Rule. Available at <http://www.crlp.org/hill_ggr.html#fact>.

17. The most notable recent achievements include the success of the Brazilian HIV/AIDS movement in securing access to medicines, approval for and availability of emergency contraception in several countries, and expansion of the grounds for legal abortion in some Mexican states.

18. With their ability to achieve impact on the abortion issue stalled, the NGO networks and their members tend to judge the relative success of any advocacy or communications strategy by the number of people or organizations involved in the action, by direct feedback from participants in events, and by the amount of media coverage. While these are important intermediate indicators, over the long run the relative lack of continuing policy impact will erode the support of the few donors still active in Latin America with a focus on reproductive rights.

19. See the web site <http://www.convencion. org.uy/menu1-02.htm> for a description of the campaign and a list of the sponsoring networks and organizations.

20. Information on the Alliance comes from internal documents.

21. The Erik E. and Edith H. Bergstrom Foundation and IPAS have supported many of these efforts.

22. See all writings listed in references by Sonia Alvarez, Maruja Barrig, and Roberto P. Korzeniewicz and William C. Smith.

23. In 1992, only 5.5 percent of Colombian NGOs reported receiving aid from foreign governments, while 18 percent report support from international and national foundations (Vargas et al. 1992, 61-62). Some 62 percent of revenues are self-generated. The figures for Peru are similar, with 68 percent of self-generated income, while 22 percent of nonprofit income comes from international donors and lenders (Sanborn 2000, 6).

24. For a fuller discussion of recent trends in the philanthropic sector in Latin America, see Sanborn 2000 and the Latin American section of Salamon et al. 1999.

25. This statement does not pertain to organizations advocating civil and sexual rights for lesbians and gay men. These organizations usually are composed of volunteer activists. A small number of U.S. foundations provide general support in Latin America for women's rights and reproductive rights advocacy, and several of these foundations explicitly focus on efforts to legalize abortion. The author's conversations with NGOs from several different Latin American countries support

Sanborn's finding that most international and national donors support projects that directly benefit low-income and vulnerable sectors, as opposed to advocacy projects that aim to influence political and financial elites.

26. In part, this is because the activists in these movements often come from the ranks of the left or progressive movements, which have been weakened greatly in most countries. The exception that proves the rule is the strong connection of many members of the Brazilian feminist movement with the leftist, but very powerful, Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores — PT), which has helped to bring many feminists into positions of local or national influence. After the PT's win in the November 2002 presidential election, it will be interesting to see whether the party's feminist supporters gain significant access to power.

27. Knoke 1990 describes persuasive power: "[It] relies only on the informational content of messages, with no ability to invoke sanctions for refusal to comply." Persuasive power cannot rely on domination (such as the "power to control the behavior of another by offering or withholding some benefit or harm") but does rely on influence (such as the transmission of information that alters another's behavior through communication from a source viewed as "legitimate" and authoritative). Coercive power has domination, but no influence, while authoritative power has both.

28. See a former draft of this paper, available from the author, for a fuller discussion of this issue.

29. An interesting discussion of the pros and cons of various strategies was published by the Ford Foundation following a meeting of grantees of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Program in the Andean and Southern Cone Region (Ford Foundation and ICMER 1999).

30. Some of the content of this section has been updated to include the author's personal knowledge of strategies initiated during the 2000-2002 period.

31. See the web site of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (RSMLAC) under "Strategies for Action" for information on the current focus of each of these days of action. Available at <www.reddesalud.web.cl/estrategy.html#sep>.

32. Paulo Freire's classic work (1986 [1970]) explains how his ideas transformed "popular education" in Brazil by combining a new method of teaching reading with consciousness raising (*conscientização*) techniques. Freire and other Brazilian exiles disseminated these practices throughout Latin America and among progressive community development groups worldwide. The framework of *conscientização* was adopted by the women's movement and has formed the theoretical and methodological basis for training by women's groups for such a long time that many no

longer acknowledge or even realize its origins.

33. In participatory methods, the professionals "own" the resulting plans for improvement, yielding much better results when such plans are implemented. These methods also provide NGOs with an insider's view of the stresses faced by overworked, underpaid health professionals in the public sector. The resulting empathy has enabled these NGOs to be effective brokers in promoting dialogue between the health sector and community organizations. Most of the networks in this study were able to give examples of such mediation. See Shepard 2002 for an in-depth case study of Consorcio Mujer (Women's Consortium) in Peru, an alliance of five NGOs that used this strategy combined with training of women's organizations in the rights of users of health services.

34. Many of the networks in this study receive a significant proportion of their funds from U.S. donors, which somewhat restricts their ability to engage in these campaigns because of U.S. IRS restrictions on lobbying by nonprofits. NGOs that receive general support from European donors can lobby, but European support is decreasing in the region. The Global Gag Rule was not in effect at the time of this study but must pose another significant obstacle at present (2002).

35. See endnote 19 on the Convention. Information on the campaign in Chile from personal communication of the author with Lidia Casas and Dr. Soledad Diaz of the Instituto Chileno de Medicina Reproductiva (ICMER) in October 2001, and with Claudia Dides of Grupo de Estudios Sociales (GES) in Chile in May 2002. Information on the coalition in Colombia came from Janneth Lozano of Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir in Colombia and Cecilia Barraza from Sisma Mujer.

36. A fuller discussion of some lessons from experience in the Peruvian multisectoral committee is available from Consorcio Mujer 2000 and Shepard 2002.

37. Anderson and Frasca 1993 and Swedish International Development Agency 2000 are the main examples the author has found from Latin America that specifically focus on internal governance. The various writings of Maruja Barrig and Sonia Alvarez tend to focus more on tensions within the women's movement and on relations between the women's movement and the state. For literature on internal tensions in the transnational advocacy networks, see Keck and Sikkink 1998 and Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001.

38. Much of the literature relevant to national NGO advocacy networks focuses on political coalitions.

39. Note that the ratings in Table 1, for the most part, represent the situation in 2000 and have not been updated.

40. The regional networks CLADEM and Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Latinoamérica consciously limit growth, as do the two post-Beijing networks in Peru and Chile. LACWHN, on the other hand, is a much larger network and aims to expand.

41. Knoke 1990 (62-64) summarizes the influential theories of economist Mancur Olson (*The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) about the "free rider" problem. Olson argued that incentives were insufficient for collective action to produce public goods such as environmental protection and nuclear disarmament. Knoke cites the numerous studies that point out the complexity of people's motivations for becoming politically engaged in advocacy for public goods.

42. Elizabeth Jelin makes this point about the lack of financial accountability of the NGO sector in general in "Toward a Culture of Participation and Citizenship," in Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998, 412.

43. A full description of the decision-making and authority structure of the major regional networks in the study is available from the author. This was part of the first draft of the study, which was distributed in Spanish to all the networks in the study and will soon be published as *La Salud como Derecho Ciudadano* (provisional title), the proceedings of the VI Latin American Congress of Social Science and Health (in preparation), to be published by REDESS Jovenes of Lima, Peru.

44. The post-Beijing Grupo Impulsor (National Initiative Group of Women for Equality) in Peru. This was true of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN) until early 2002, when a new coordinator from Colombia took over.

45. The literature on this subject is extensive, much of it inspired by the seminal work by Carol Gilligan*, In a Different Voice*: *Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982 and 1993.

46. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute, sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991. Participants chose the dates between November 25, International Day against Violence against Women, and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to make a symbolic linkage of violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights. More information is available from the web site of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Available at <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days99/logoann.htm>.

47. United Nations Development Fund for Women. See information on the web site, <http://www.undp. org/unifem/>.

48. For purposes of this article, "membership"

involves full entitlement in decisionmaking and in receiving the benefits accruing to members, while the "social base" of the network is a more general concept that refers to the broader set of social actors (entities and individuals) with whom the network interacts and who can be counted on to support at least some of the network's initiatives. Increases in membership result from either an invitation by the network or an application by those interested in joining, with varying degrees of formality in the process. Increases in the social base usually result from expanded outreach through coalition building, training/education, and communications.

49. This observation is based on the author's personal experience in working on strategic planning with NGOs in Latin America and on some statements in the interviews in this study.

50. Both the Colombian National Women's Network and the Chilean Post-Beijing Initiative Group have received some support from international donors since the 1998 interviews.

51. See endnote 40 for the names of the networks that limit growth.

52. Conversations with the author by women's NGO coalition leaders in Peru and Mexico in 2002. The coalitions that were the subject of these conversations are not included in this study.

53. Of the countries included in this study, Colombia is an exception to this generalization. Throughout much of Colombia's history, the urban centers of Cali and Medellín have been strong centers of political and economic power. In the Colombian network, therefore, the Cali and Medellín chapters are not relatively disadvantaged. To the contrary, they exercised much stronger national leadership within the network than the Bogotá chapter, which has tended to be weak and divided.

54. The two post-Beijing groups (Peru and Chile) and CLADEM in Peru belong to the latter group, while the most institutionalized examples of the former are the Open Forum in Chile, the Colombian Sexual and Reproductive Rights Network (CWNSRR), and the National Forum of Women and Population Policy in Mexico. Some of the less-institutionalized networks, such as the National Women's Network in Colombia, were still in the process of developing clear decision rules on this issue at the time of the interviews in 1998.

55. "Voluntary motherhood" emphasizes the idea that no woman with an unplanned pregnancy should be forced to be a mother if she is unwilling to be one. The phrase refers to the "basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so." See language in ICPD Programme of Action, Chapter 7. Summary available at

<http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm#chapter7>.

56. The information on the National Women's Network reflects the situation at the time of the interview with Beatriz Quintero and other network members in October 1998. In July 2000, Quintero noted, "The Network has received some resources, and communication has improved greatly. What I said was true at the time, but now [this communication] has generated positive changes and the Network is more visible" (personal communication to the author).

57. This account of events represents the perception of the Network members who were excluded.

58. See Alvarez's writings on this topic and endnote 7 above. Many of the "autonomous" Latin American women's organizations view all collaboration with the state as a compromise of the feminist agenda.

59. The EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional — Zapatista Army for National Liberation) is a guerrilla group — closely identified with the indigenous movement — that controls large areas in the highlands of Chiapas.

60. All of Sonia Alvarez's writings also deal with this topic.

61. Multilateral refers to agencies such as UN agencies and the World Bank, which channel aid from many governments. Bilateral aid is government to government.

62. The Basic Health and Nutrition Project, funded by the World Bank, conducted community-based needs assessments, for which they contracted feminist NGOs. Project 2000, funded by USAID with Pathfinder International, aimed to raise the quality of care and user satisfaction in many services where it intervened. Most notably, Reprosalud, a USAID-funded $19 million project, was awarded in 1994 to one of the largest feminist NGOs in Peru — Movimiento Manuela Ramos — to implement on a massive scale, in low-income provinces, a model community participation program in reproductive health and credit programs for women.

63. See Barrig 1999b for a fuller discussion of these tensions and the role of Opus Dei in the public controversies about the sterilization campaigns.

64. The report from this monitoring describes, but does not highlight, the coercive practices of the sterilization campaigns in one page out of 52 pages on sexual and reproductive health. Only two recommendations out of the 15 presented mention the campaigns, with no corrective action suggested.

65. The home office of attorney Guilia Tamayo of CLADEM, the principal investigator in the study, was

broken into, and all of her work-related materials were stolen in October 1998.

66. This coalition — Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres (MAM) — is described in more detail in the text below.

67. Fourth World Conference on Women, Platform for Action, paragraph 96: "The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence." The full document is available from UNIFEM web site at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm>.

68. ICPD Programme of Action Summary, chapter 7, section A, paragraph 2, quoting "international human rights documents and other relevant UN consensus documents." Full text is available at <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm>.

69. This statement pertains to the situation through the year 2000. The author did not secure updates on all of the networks.

70. This term is used as employed in the United States to designate a widely circulated list of people who are denied employment because of their political beliefs or activities. The U.S. business sector has employed blacklists to exclude known trade union organizers. The entertainment industry during the McCarthy era in the 1950s excluded people accused of sympathizing with communism. The term *lista negra* can have more extreme connotations in Latin America, for example, meaning people identified for execution or imprisonment by dictatorships or death squads.

71. This highly publicized case is documented in a book by Elena Poniatowska, *Las mil y una … la herida de Paulina* (Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2000). A 13-year-old girl in Baja California who had been raped was denied a legal abortion in her local hospital through delay tactics and harassment. Marta Lamas wrote a brief description of the case in her recent book, *Política y Reproducción Aborto: La Frontera del Derecho a Decidir* (Barcelona and Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2001), 153-160.

72. The church hierarchy typically tries to delegitimize these organizations by saying that they are not true Catholics. In one case in which a Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD) group successfully educated such allies, more than 40 Catholic organizations awarded CDD Mexico the prestigious Don Sergio National Human Rights Prize in 2002 for "defense of women's human rights both within and beyond the Catholic Church."

73. La Ronda Ciudadana (the citizen's round) is the name of the campaign, connoting the playful and musical aspects of a circle game or a dance. For more information, see the following web site, in Spanish: <http://www.laronda.org.mx/>.

74. This five-organization consortium aims to build a massive pro-choice movement in Mexico, and La Ronda Ciudadana is just one of the strategies adopted. The organizations are Information Group for Reproductive Choice (Grupo de Información sobre Reproducción Elegida — GIRE); Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia (Gender Equity: Citizenship, Labor and Family); Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir; the Population Council; and IPAS. La Ronda is actually a movement of prominent individuals, but the first two organizations in the consortium have assumed the main responsibility for getting La Ronda Ciudadana off the ground and expect La Ronda to assume a life of its own. In the letter of principles, the first principle includes liberty of conscience and liberty of political and religious beliefs, saying, "We demand that others do not impose these beliefs on us, even if they are in the majority."

75. Jael Silliman (1999, 141) makes a similar point with regard to the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in Kenya: "I would go so far as to argue that [resisting institutionalization] has allowed the GBM to act independent of political pressures, as the organization's survival does not rest on donor or government approval, but on its members' tree-planting actions and the ability to galvanize them into political action."

76. These successes also depend on the degree of decentralization in a country. Provincial organizations in the Consorcio Mujer project in Peru also achieved more gains in negotiations with their local health officials than did the three capital-based NGOs. See Shepard 2002.

77. The author heard this testimony at a national meeting of the Grupo Impulsora in 1998.

78. See the text above for a description of this meeting.

79. The information on MAM is based on a personal communication to the author by Giulia Tamayo, April 15, 2000.

80. In many countries, excellent and progressive health policies and programs were officially adopted but were not implemented due to lack of funding and political will. Hence the qualifier "supposedly." Colombia and Brazil are the examples known to the author. In Brazil, the Program of Integral Assistance for Women's Health (PAISM) was adopted as policy in the 1980s but received only enough funds to be implemented in scattered cases over the following decade.

81. My thanks to Charlott Hord, Policy Director, IPAS, for culling some of these recommendations from my first draft.

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