

# 2

---

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

Networks entangle us, but they have opened many doors.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the experiences during the 1990s<sup>2</sup> of thirteen Latin American regional and national networks<sup>3</sup> of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that advocate for the issues of sexual and reproductive rights and women's rights. Although the chapter includes some observations on regional NGO advocacy networks, its primary focus is on national networks.

Research for this study addressed three interlocking 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?

---

This chapter is reprinted with some changes and updates with the permission of the North-South Center Press at the University of Miami; *NGO Advocacy Networks in Latin America: Lessons from Experience in Promoting Women's and Reproductive Rights in Latin America* was published previously as North-South Agenda Paper #61 of The Dante B. Fascell North-South Center at the University of Miami, 2003; a shorter Spanish version based on an earlier draft of this article was published as "Redes de ONGs reivindicativas en América Latina: Lecciones de la experiencia de promover los derechos reproductivos y de la mujer," in *La Salud como Derecho Ciudadano—Perspectivas y Propuestas desde América Latina*, edited by Carlos Cáceres, M. Cueto, M. Ramos, S. Vallenás, conference proceedings of the VI Congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales y Salud, Lima, Peru: Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, 2001.

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?

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 emerge all the time and could benefit from the experience of the existing Latin American networks. This chapter aims to present what the NGO networks in this study have learned about how to face common advocacy challenges.

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.”<sup>4</sup> 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 had as a representative of international agencies that supported these networks, first in the Women’s Programs Division of The Pathfinder Fund<sup>5</sup> 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, between 1992 and 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.<sup>6</sup>

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:

- 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.

- 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.
- NGO networks hold the promise of breaking down inequalities and isolation between groups in national capitals and in provinces,<sup>7</sup> thus addressing the needs and concerns of the relatively underprivileged and isolated provincial groups.
- Sharing information and learning from experience can prevent smaller and newer groups from repeating mistakes and having to reinvent the wheel.
- 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.<sup>8</sup> A substantial grant to an NGO network can benefit a large number of smaller groups, directly or indirectly, at the same administrative cost as a small grant to one group. 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 provide benefit to 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. Finally, 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 formation of new NGO networks in the 1990s was favored 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.<sup>9</sup> The following brief summary of this recent history surrounding the international successes of NGO networks 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.<sup>10</sup>

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 held 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,”<sup>11</sup> 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,<sup>12</sup> 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 formation 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).<sup>13</sup> 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. Following these impressive global policy achievements of civil society advocacy networks during the 1990s, the challenge for NGO networks has been to translate these important policy gains in international UN consensus documents into national policies and programs.

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. During preparations for the Beijing Women's Conference, for example, many embryonic women's networks 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.

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 twenty-five 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.<sup>14</sup> 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 in line with the recommendations of ICPD and many 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.<sup>15</sup>

### **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, and 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."<sup>16</sup> Mediated by processes of health-sector reform and the rise of religious fundamentalism, governments' ability and political will to provide sufficient funding for sexual and reproductive health services are limited.<sup>17</sup>

Since 2000, the major issues remaining on the agenda of the sexual/reproductive rights movement have become more contentious. In 2002, several

regional advocates and donors<sup>18</sup> noted the relative lack of progress toward expanding the legal causes for abortions.<sup>19</sup> Beginning in 2001, the reinstatement of the “Global Gag Rule,”<sup>20</sup> 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 elimination of discrimination on the basis of HIV status and sexual orientation, and access to a range of sexual and reproductive health products and services: condoms, contraception and sex education for adolescents, emergency contraception, abortions in situations where they are legal, prevention education on HIV/AIDS, and medicines for those living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>21</sup> The Catholic Church and the religious right pose serious political roadblocks to progress on all 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 social forces against reproductive rights.<sup>22</sup> The following interrelated trends help to explain the relative lack of progress:

- 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;
- 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;
- increased activism and communications campaigns opposed to reproductive rights issues, in particular by the Catholic Church and other conservative religious groups and organizations;
- the dearth of proactive strategies for reproductive rights that could take back the initiative from the religious right; and
- 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 responded to these strategic challenges. Some notable examples are the Campaign for a Convention for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, with sixteen regional networks and national NGOs;<sup>23</sup> the recently formed Latin American Consortium on Emergency Contraception, with more than thirty NGO or agency members in the United States and Latin America; La Alianza—a pro-choice consortium in Mexico, with two international and three national NGOs spearheading an ambitious effort to expand pro-choice constituencies;<sup>24</sup>

and campaigns in several countries—Brazil is the best-known example—to expand the availability of those abortions that already are legal.<sup>25</sup>

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

On the national level, the structure, financial situation, and constituencies of many 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.<sup>26</sup>

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 low-income 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 generous “solidarity funding” for 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.<sup>27</sup> Although 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<sup>28</sup> as the Chileans, and the concept of voluntary activism (*militancia*) was more firmly entrenched in the culture of women's NGOs.<sup>29</sup>

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 a traditional charitable or, more recently, an antipoverty or community development focus.<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

Although 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 have social and familial connections to political and financial elites. However, they rarely use these connections to benefit their programs. Social movements by definition fall outside the framework of institutional political systems.<sup>33</sup> The movements for women's rights and for sexual and reproductive rights are relatively marginalized from political parties or other centers of power.<sup>34</sup> As such, they rely almost entirely on what political network theorist David Knoke calls "persuasive" power,<sup>35</sup> 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 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."<sup>36</sup>

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 could 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 financial and political vulnerability as they address highly controversial issues.

As noted above, despite their relative marginalization from political elites, NGO networks have gained some access to international, regional, and national policymaking spheres, often linked to UN summit processes. NGO networks seemed a logical choice for inclusion in country delegations, especially when they coordinated 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 policymaking processes.

However, this logic of representing sectors of civil society is quite problematic because NGO networks are not broad membership organizations. Korzeniewicz and Smith say that international labor leaders often refer to NGO activists as NGIs or “non-governmental individuals.”<sup>37</sup> 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<sup>38</sup>

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 low-income grassroots (*sector popular*) organizations are excluded from these few instances of NGO networks’ access to spheres of influence.

This study revealed other representation problems in venues such as the International AIDS Conferences and regional or global women’s conferences. First, often the donors to a conference weigh in on who gets to attend, and so CSOs with few contacts among donors rarely attend. Second, global networks are set up at global meetings, and so the leadership—including the regional or country representatives—consists of those who had the funds and the time to attend. Third, global NGO meetings are usually in English, and so non-English-speakers are underrepresented. In summary, the representation issues for regional and global conferences and networks are also of great concern. 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.<sup>39</sup> In general, the strategies have fallen into one or more of the following categories: (1) direct communications with decision-makers, 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 points will only briefly note significant aspects of the strategies identified in the study.<sup>40</sup>

#### ***Participation in the Days of Action Established in the Calendars of the Women's Movement<sup>41</sup>***

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 overreliance 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 Platform for Action***

This is the second most popular political strategy among the networks, possibly because they participated in the UN summits that produced these agreements. The advocacy groups have been involved in monitoring

their governments and demanding accountability for the 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.

However, these are consensus documents and do not create binding obligations for the governments who sign them. They do not have the status of international human rights treaties, which, when ratified, create binding obligations on governments. This study only found three examples of use of international human rights treaty bodies or regional human rights commissions by the networks. This seems to be an important gap in the strategies of these networks.<sup>42</sup>

### *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<sup>43</sup> participatory training methods, a mode of engagement with the health sector that has proved to be mutually beneficial.<sup>44</sup>

### *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 decision-makers.

### ***Legislative Campaigns***<sup>45</sup>

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. 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.<sup>46</sup>

### ***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,<sup>47</sup> 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 decision-making 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 and campaigns.

### ***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 Lucia in Colombia and Paulina in Mexico,<sup>48</sup> 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.

### ***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 with weekly radio programs aired over the course of two years. In this study, media in provincial cities seemed to be more open to the inclusion of content provided by NGOs than 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. One of the main conclusions from this study, to be discussed later in this chapter, is that such ad hoc coalitions 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.

### *Public Pronouncements in Response to Rights Abuses or Critical Political Junctures in Reproductive Rights Advocacy*

Many advocates view this strategy as the 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, the members remain committed, in spite of lack of funding and the demands that entail burdensome time commitments.

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.<sup>49</sup>

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 representation problems 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.”<sup>50</sup>
- *Connections between provincial NGOs and capital-based NGOs* have several positive effects. Provincial NGOs are strengthened through the network’s access to information and resources, and they gain access to national forums to represent their concerns.
- *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 outside of capital 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 privileged class within the network. Obstacles exist to equitable distribution of benefits between provincial and grassroots groups on the one hand, and capital-based NGOs on the other (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 to appoint particular groups or individuals as representatives of 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 their 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.

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.

### **CHALLENGES IN THE INTERNAL GOVERNANCE OF NGO NETWORKS**

As late as 1995, Joe Foweraker remarked, "Enduring coalitions between [professionalized] social movement organizations (SMOs)<sup>51</sup> remain rare" partly due to the presence of "counter-movements and competing SMOs." In Latin America, the NGO advocacy network is a relatively new phenomenon, and scant literature addresses the networks' internal governance at the national level.<sup>52</sup> However, the U.S. literature<sup>53</sup> on interest group and legislative coalitions mentions many of the issues that emerged in the present study, as follows:

1. the challenge of building trust and unified stands among diverse organizations;
2. the need to manage different levels of involvement of organizations in 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 on the one hand, and the ability to take united stands on controversial issues, on the other.

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, public and private organizations, or complex and polarized political environments. 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 decisions, they need to institutionalize along several dimensions discussed in this section.

#### **Aspects of Institutionalization**

Ways of organizing NGO networks vary widely. Yet all networks face certain common issues and decisions as they move from a loose movement structure toward institutionalization or "bureaucratization"<sup>54</sup> 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. The networks in this study varied along all these dimensions. However, three aspects of institutionalization—authority structures with decision-making rules, defined membership structures, and financial sustainability—seem to be key factors in a network's ability to respond adequately to political crises and opportunities, and will be discussed at length.

The evidence in this study suggests that the relationship between the other dimensions 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, decided not to incorporate legally, with little adverse effect on its 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 with no legal standing has been more agile and timely than institutionalized networks in responding to political controversies over reproductive rights.

### **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.<sup>55</sup> 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 essential 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. Second, 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 most 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. In reality, most social movement organizations count mainly on *militantes*—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].<sup>56</sup>

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. Although some national network leaders referred to tensions related to the “free riders” in the network, that is those members not doing their share of the work, the major conflicts did not revolve around this issue, which is so prominent in the early academic literature on collective action.<sup>57</sup>

Institutionalization of criteria and procedures for membership can be an important step forward for an NGO network, facilitating decision-making, transparency in the distribution of benefits, and adjustment of benefits to levels of commitment and participation, while 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 decision-making. Amparo Claro, former coordinator of the LACWHN, expressed this tension succinctly: “To what extent should we democratize, without becoming so democratic that we cannot take action?” All the networks in this study have struggled to decide where to land on the continuum between sharing decision-making as broadly as possible among all the members and restricting decision-making 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 because the actual authority structures are hidden and unofficial. The second tendency results in more efficient and transparent decision-making, but, when taken to the extreme, can result in entrenched power elites and in the exclusion of significant membership groups from decision-making.

All these networks with their base in the women's movement embraced the first inclusive tendency in their early stages; this seemed 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 that 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 often the members have no financial committee.<sup>58</sup>

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, such as 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, financing and managing the logistics of 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 decision-making 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; they 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 or steering committee. The difficulty and expense of organizing regional meetings means

that these networks rarely have membership meetings, which are costly, and so 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.<sup>59</sup>

One important way to organize decision-making 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;<sup>60</sup> 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 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 with few dissenters. 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 adheres to parliamentary procedures; possibly, its members’ training as lawyers makes them more comfortable with this mode of decision-making than most feminist organizations.

In voting, we use the system of absolute majority, 50 percent, plus one. We believe that seeking 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.<sup>61</sup>

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 as 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.”<sup>62</sup> Another common explanation is that female socialization causes women to place high value on cooperative interpersonal links and relationships, and so networks dominated by women will give high priority to the quality of relationships<sup>63</sup> within the group and the cohesiveness of the group, in some cases sacrificing the political principle at stake in any given disagreement. While some cases support the latter theory, others do not. In many cases, dissenting members left the network rather than sacrifice their political principles, while others stayed within, but engaged 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.”<sup>64</sup>

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. Increasingly, 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.<sup>65</sup>

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, almost causing 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.”<sup>66</sup> 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 decision-making and political costs in detail in the section below on financial stresses and political risks.

Although 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.<sup>67</sup>

The literature on political coalitions<sup>68</sup> and many network members point out that there is no substitute for face-to-face meetings. 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 resolutions and decisions more efficiently when dealing with complex issues and diverse opinions.

Global networks and the Latin American regional networks have taken advantage of the revolution in electronic communications to foster dialogue among members, but with important 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 interchanges 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 activism against gender violence.”<sup>69</sup>

[I]f [this network] has no money, it loses momentum without being able to have conversations about structure, and about political action... UNIFEM 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.<sup>70</sup>

The next section will continue to explore the complexities of NGO network decision-making, with a focus on how expansion and diversity—both of which are viewed as intermediate indicators 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.

As 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<sup>71</sup> 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 strategies, especially when the network’s issues are socially 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 organization or business, as evidenced by the vast literature on the topic and the proliferation of consulting companies offering advice on growth strategies to businesses. Network leaders are aware of these challenges. In many cases, NGO members and network staff members already feel so overloaded with their current projects and activities that expending the additional effort required for expansion is unthinkable to them.<sup>72</sup> 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 resources, which usually are fully committed to ongoing projects with restricted (and often insufficient) budgets. Thus, the lack of planning for expansion relates directly to the precarious financial situation of most Latin American NGOs involved in advocacy for women's rights and sexual and reproductive 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 expanded demands.

The case of the Alba Lucia Campaign in Colombia (see box 2. 1) illustrates why NGO networks in Latin America often are unable to take advantage of opportunities for growth. This experience illustrates a successful strategy for growth in the social base of the reproductive rights movement and highlights the importance of planning for growth so that the resources needed to manage expansion are in place.

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.<sup>73</sup>

**Box 2.1****The Alba Lucia Campaign in Columbia**

A campaign of the Colombian Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (CWNSRR), led by the Medellín chapter from 1997 to 2002 illustrates the challenges posed by unplanned growth resulting from successful advocacy campaigns. In the Alba Lucia 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 forty-two years in prison.

At first, the Medellín chapter identified a feminist lawyer to defend Alba Lucia 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 Lucia 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 in membership and 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 Lucia's release from prison after six years of incarceration.

In some cases, these NGO advocacy networks consider that expansion would hamper their efficiency in decision-making, and they have made a conscious decision not to expand, or to do so very slowly and deliberately. Making a political coalition more broad based may entail either suppressing the more controversial aspects of members' political agendas<sup>74</sup> or broadening the focus to include the diversity of members' agendas.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

It takes time and effort to build a well-functioning leadership team in such a complex undertaking as an advocacy network. These 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 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.<sup>77</sup> This plus, however, must be weighed against the potential minus: the entrenchment of leaders within a movement that fails to renew its strategies and leadership, and to reach out to new sectors of the population and to the next generation.

### Managing Diversity

Some of the literature on political coalitions<sup>78</sup> emphasizes multisectorality and diversity as the reasons for the coalitions’ “complex, fractious, and fragile” nature.<sup>79</sup> 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.”<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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 Grassroots/low-income<sup>82</sup> 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 community-based organizations and networks representing low-income women. Although both the Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights in Chile and the Colombian CWNSRR have included grassroots women's organizations as full members of their networks, this is the exception rather than the rule. In general, low-income women's organizations do not share the full feminist agenda, especially in sexual and reproductive rights.<sup>83</sup> Their inclusion, therefore, can lead to problems. For example, in 1999, the coordinator of the Bogotá chapter of the CWNSRR represented a grassroots 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 grassroots 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.

A study of sexual and reproductive rights networks in the United States showed that they are more focused on abortion rights than their Latin

American counterparts, and they 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.<sup>84</sup>

Latin American sexual and reproductive rights and women's rights advocacy networks face similar challenges when incorporating grassroots women's organizations as full partners; their priorities may be different. In some cases, the priorities of the network have expanded as a result. 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 socioeconomic 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 technical expertise 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.<sup>85</sup> 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 decision-making and those whose core NGOs in the capital make the major decisions.<sup>86</sup>

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 the ensuing historic tensions between capital and provinces. Ensnared 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, albeit unintentionally. 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. "Groups 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."<sup>87</sup>

Power and resource imbalances did indeed create tensions in relationships between the capital-based and provincial NGOs that participated in this study. Tensions involved 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. Although 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, and so 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"<sup>88</sup> 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 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 conduct 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 in 2000, the network recovered and expanded its national representation.<sup>89</sup>

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 grass-roots 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 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 with the author).

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 G\_\_\_\_\_ come, while the women from the city of V\_\_\_\_\_ 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.].<sup>90</sup>

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.<sup>91</sup>

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 the relatively privileged urban organizations enjoy the benefits of connectivity with each other and with global networks at low cost, thus increasing 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 or use a keyboard. In addition, the telecenters in rural towns charge for Internet time, creating a financial barrier.

### **Growth and Diversity: Summary**

NGO advocacy networks need to plan for growth in membership, both to expand the sectors working toward their goals and to keep the networks vital. However, balancing the trade-offs of diversity and growth versus focused and efficient action on controversial issues, some NGO networks may decide to remain small advocacy working groups that limit growth in membership and instead 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 therefore 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 in order to accommodate the agendas of new sectors, but without sacrificing the basic founding principles.

This discussion has revealed how growth and diversity make decision-making 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 low-income 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, grassroots 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 grassroots, provincial, and rural women meaningfully in those committees. Increased access to electronic mail has not yet solved the problem of the relative marginalization of low-income 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 potential 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 decision-making 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 financial vulnerability creates caution. The marked increase in partnerships between the state and the NGO sector has been a source of

survival and renewed influence for struggling NGOs, as well as a point of tension within the women's movement in Latin America. Such relationships obstruct the ability of NGOs to act as independent critical voices when the state abuses its 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 among and professional support for 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.

In contrast, the advocacy networks' *raison d'être* is to achieve long-term political goals shared by members, and only secondarily to benefit the member organizations. Indeed, the political function of NGO advocacy networks entails increased demands on their members and often considerable sacrifices. However, one should not create too sharp a 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.

In advocacy networks, 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. A coordinator of the Open Forum in Chile spoke on 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 to women's rights or sexual and reproductive health organizations 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.

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 in the

mid-1990s 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. These members felt that the others had violated the spirit in which they formed the network by excluding some member organizations in order to better their own position with potential sources of support.<sup>92</sup>

### **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."<sup>93</sup> 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 1990s 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,<sup>94</sup> 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 in this study 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 are accused of 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 decision-making.

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<sup>95</sup> and indigenous movements, could not conceive of cooperating with the state.

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 by 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.

Several 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 coexecute governmental programs. The present challenge is to avoid conceding nonnegotiable principles; however, the limits of such principles often are hazy and ill defined.<sup>96</sup>

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 decision-making 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 coercive MOH campaign, large governmental projects supported by multilateral and bilateral donors<sup>97</sup> contracted women's NGOs to carry out programs that were designed to improve quality of care in health services.<sup>98</sup> 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 the sterilization campaigns.

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.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> 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 action to document and publicize the human rights abuses,

and took most of the public heat when the media publicized their study 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 USAID support to Peru. The Fujimori government blamed the network NGOs 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.<sup>101</sup>

Another element in the Peruvian women's movement's response to this situation sheds light on the way forward when institutionalized networks—for all the reasons discussed earlier—are unable to reach agreement on their public response to an emerging advocacy issue. After the divisive 1996 Latin American Feminist Meeting in Cartagena and partly in response to the divisions within the Peruvian women's movement on collaboration with the government, feminists in Peru established a noninstitutional advocacy network to answer the need for coordinated feminist participation in such debates. Individual women from prominent feminist NGOs, autonomous feminists, and a few organizations formed a new informal network called the Mass Women's Movement (Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres—MAM).<sup>102</sup> Unlike the Cartagena movement, this initiative was not explicitly anti-NGO, but arose from the members' recognition that a space independent of the NGOs was needed for feminist advocacy initiatives. In forming MAM, the members hoped that NGO interests would not block the collective participation of feminists 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 constituency needed to participate in public debates," MAM's Giulia Tamayo noted.<sup>103</sup> Besides CLADEM, MAM was the only Peruvian feminist network that publicly attacked President Fujimori's sterilization campaigns, denouncing both the human rights abuses of the sterilization campaigns and the rights-restricting initiatives of the religious conservatives. Possibly, ad hoc "outsider" coalitions of individuals and some organizations—such as MAM in this case in Peru—are better suited than the institutional NGO networks to carry out public, high-profile responses when governments abuse rights, or when the debate surrounding an advocacy issue is highly polarized. These situations are apt to be politically and financially risky for NGOs in the current economic context in most Latin American countries.

Several other 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.<sup>104</sup>

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 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<sup>105</sup> 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”<sup>106</sup> 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.

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 until 2000, none had campaigned for abolishing discrimination based on sexual orientation.

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 director members about 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 rear-guard. . . . 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.<sup>107</sup>

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 confront the risk of internal division strategically, they experience conflicts that have the result of limiting the members committed to a controversial issue. In the case of abortion, the coordinator of the Colombian CWNSRR in 1998 explained how a stalemate was resolved following a turning point for the network: an annual assembly in which a strategic planning facilitator helped keep the discussions constructive. Her 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.

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) internal division, (2) alienation of the network from potential allies, and (3) “blacklisting,<sup>108</sup> 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. 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 is also common. Networks or NGOs that are 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.

Perceptions of political risk have interfered 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 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, and that the network needed first to

gain respect and legitimacy among a wide array of social actors before tackling the abortion issue. They argued that 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 in 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 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. When members are weakened, the network suffers, because 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, many NGO advocacy networks adopt strategies that offset the political and financial risks incurred by working on issues such as 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, advocates within safe motherhood initiatives can broach 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, realizing that the campaign could also serve to soften public opinion to the idea of legalizing abortion in cases of rape and incest. In several countries, highly publicized cases of sexual violence (Paulina in Mexico, Alba Lucia 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.<sup>109</sup> Also in Mexico, La Alianza—a five-NGO consortium working to build a pro-choice movement—has catalyzed a broad-based citizen's campaign<sup>110</sup> for those civil rights and liberties, such as the right to freedom of religion, that form the foundation for sexual and reproductive rights.<sup>111</sup> 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. 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, making the network 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 diverse institutional interests leads to the hypothesis that organizational networks often are not an appropriate mechanism for advocacy strategies related to politically controversial issues that require a rapid public response—strategies that demand agile and independent responses to unexpected situations.<sup>112</sup> The following section contains more reflection on this topic, suggesting how advocacy networks could realize their full political potential.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the rich data from NGO advocacy networks, this concluding section puts forward hypotheses about factors and strategies that facilitate NGO network advocacy, and about the tasks and objectives that organizational networks are best suited to undertake.

Evidence from this study indicates that *advocacy by NGO networks can be timely and effective for issues 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 attain a high level of political consensus among a broad range of institutions, thus enabling the network to 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.

The data on network governance clearly indicates that establishing clear rules on membership, decision-making, financial accountability, and rotation of leadership greatly facilitates NGO network functioning. Networks who attempted to operate by consensus became “entangled” in their decisions on advocacy strategy.

*Workshops for internal dialogue and training on the issues can help to produce the needed agreement on basic political principles and strategies.* Internal discussions through special workshops and at annual national meetings educated members on controversial sexual and reproductive rights issues and helped them to engage in values clarification through dialogue. For example, Chile’s Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights used training workshops as an effective means of orienting new members to the political framework and agreements forged within the network.

The Forum and others understood that building political agreement among increasingly diverse members is an ongoing activity and a relative concept. If the network is successful in expanding its constituencies, it might never achieve one hundred percent consensus among the members on certain crucial issues. *Many of these networks also benefited from tolerating different levels of risk-taking among their members*, with the understanding that not all public communications strategies are appropriate in varied provincial locales. However, determining when a chapter’s strategy does not adhere to the founding principles of the network, and when the chapter is on the same path as the whole network, but at an earlier stage, is a complex exercise and the topic of heated debates in many of these networks.

*Provincial level work enjoys some clear advantages.* Several provincial NGO network chapters clearly attained greater achievements than those at the national level. Even though the provincial NGOs may be smaller, poorer, and less technically savvy than their sister groups in the capital, this study suggests that they have two advantages. The provincial chapters of a national network are better able to work out internal differences in face-to-face meetings, thus overcoming the logistical difficulties of making decisions on a national level. In Colombia, Peru, and Chile, provincial network chapters have been much more successful than capital-based chapters in establishing dialogue with policymakers that resulted in changes in policies and

programs.<sup>113</sup> Possibly, in the less populous venue of provinces, where there are multiple ties among diverse professionals and organizations, it is easier and less time consuming for provincial NGOs to activate their social and political networks among local elites and in local centers of power. Furthermore, in all three countries, the provincial chapters have had better access to the local media, an exposure that increases their potential to influence local public opinion. As one member of Peru's post-Beijing group remarked, "The provinces and Lima have different dynamics; we have a much harder time being heard here in Lima."

*Investment in training and internal dialogue not only helps network members to forge agreements on political strategy, but also to advance the important long-term goal of building the members' capacity* to address advocacy issues appropriately and professionally with a variety of audiences. NGO advocacy networks seem to be well-suited to this strategy, which is of clear benefit to the members. In this study, training opportunities were one of the most-mentioned benefits of belonging to an advocacy network. Training interventions thus served the dual purpose of forging cohesion among older and newer networks members, and building advocacy capacity in a variety of ways.

*The networks also achieved the goal of capacity-building in advocacy through projects that funded provincial chapters' activities in network-wide initiatives;* in this study the most compelling evidence on capacity-building comes from interviews and reports about such initiatives, which have the added advantage of corresponding to the project-based logic of donor agencies. For example, Peru's post-Beijing National Initiative Group of Women for Equality's (Grupo Impulsor) national monitoring effort centered on compliance with quotas for women in electoral slates and on sexual and reproductive rights. Even though the national network was unable to respond adequately to the reproductive rights abuses in government sterilization campaigns, this initiative energized, trained, and empowered many provincial groups. According to the testimony of provincial leaders,<sup>114</sup> the monitoring gave them an effective new way to exercise citizenship and demand accountability from local authorities, an advocacy skill that will serve them for multiple purposes into the future.

One prominent example of such beneficial national initiatives emerged from this study. *Support for national consultation processes before and after UN conferences* re-energized national women's movements and created new networks. In the countries in this study, the NGO members of national networks—especially the small and provincial groups—had a very positive view of the training sessions and national meetings that took place before and after the UN conferences in the mid-1990s. The study also documents the negative consequences for a national network when funding disappears after the UN summit is over. Without adequate follow-up funding, the diverse range of women's perspectives—especially from low-income,

provincial, and/or rural women—are not represented in a network's decision-making structures.

As noted earlier, advocacy on controversial issues such as abortion can cause internal divisions, loss of alliances, loss of political influence, and loss of financial support. This study demonstrates how some NGO networks have counteracted these risks to the institutional interests of members. *NGO networks have joined broader alliances and undertaken significant initiatives on less controversial issues.* These alliances and initiatives help unite network members, build internal trust and relationships, and they provide opportunities to educate the broad alliance members on the core issues of the advocacy network. Finally, they help to ensure that a network and its members do not lose important political contacts and bases of support as they move forward on more controversial issues.

Finally, the experience from Peru with MAM—the ad hoc feminist coalition that denounced the sterilization campaigns—suggests that similar *ad hoc coalitions, arising from multiple overlapping institutional and informal networks, may be the most useful vehicle for engaging in public debate on controversial emerging issues* that could incur political costs for NGOs. Although institutionalized NGO advocacy networks may not be well-suited for these rapid responses to political crises, especially when confrontation with government is involved, they can *serve an important function as a launching pad for organizing these impromptu political initiatives*, which often draw on selected members of more than one advocacy network.

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 decision-making 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 barriers noted in this study.<sup>115</sup>

Evidence from the study noted that *access to the Internet* is a facilitating factor for networks, reducing the cost of communications as access expands to the provincial and less-developed regions of Latin American countries. With regard to forming ad hoc coalitions, the Internet has increased exponentially the speed at which these can be formed. However, many women in rural areas or with lower educational levels still face considerable barriers to engagement in Internet-based networks or coalitions.

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 seems that *NGO networks are ideally suited for less visible advocacy strategies*, such as private policy dialogue with decision-makers, when the issues are highly controversial. The findings from this study should lead to a rethinking of many activists' unspoken assumption that a public

pronouncement on breaking news is the most important bottom-line activity for an advocacy network. While the study suggests some strategies for mitigating those risks, an NGO network clearly is a cumbersome vehicle for highly public, controversial advocacy strategies. On the other hand, NGO network members could be deployed to great advantage to engage in private dialogue and negotiations with each one's contacts among the political and media elites, thus realizing the networks' potential for complementary and synergistic actions.

In summary, NGO advocacy networks may be best suited to pursue longer-term objectives related to increasing members' advocacy capacity and expanding their social base, while engaging in the painstaking and often conflictual process of building agreement on political objectives and strategies among diverse organizations. However, the investment in time and resources in advocacy networks is only justified if they produce better results in policy change than NGOs working on their own. Although these networks may be limited in their ability to respond agilely on emerging controversial issues, this study suggests that once the members of a network have reached agreement about political strategies and have developed mechanisms for rapid response, their potential positive impact on rights-related policies is indeed greater than the sum of the parts.

The areas of achievement in this study, then, point a way forward to realizing this potential. The political and financial risks for NGOs arising from advocacy on the most controversial sexual and reproductive rights issues are a given fact. They will not disappear, and at the moment of writing this conclusion in 2005 they seem to be increasing. Therefore, networks need to take advantage of all the facilitating factors and strategies mentioned above in order to minimize risks and increase results—building closer connections to financial and political elites, joining broader coalitions with related goals, strengthening advocacy work at the provincial and local levels, investing in internal dialogue and training to build agreements and technical expertise, tolerating varying levels of risk-taking among members, and engaging in private, behind-the-scenes policy dialogue. In this way, NGO networks should be enabled to move forward on the most politically risky issues and, at the same time, build capacity among their members and increased legitimacy for the full range of issues in their political agenda.

The main questions that each NGO advocacy network must ask itself 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, yet still maximize the results of advocacy strategies? How to 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 these commitments?

Other important questions relate to the organizational means to these ends: How to be less “entangled” when deciding on strategies? How to organize decision-making efficiently and democratically? How to become less financially dependent on foreign donors and/or the government? Whether and how to expand and diversify in membership? How to involve low-income 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, sometimes implicitly, or without 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 on these important questions.<sup>116</sup>

## 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. Sources of data: 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 fourteen provincial networks and eighty organizations. The current focal point is the Corporación Sisma Mujer (SISMA Women’s Corporation) in Bogotá. Sources of data: a group interview in Bogotá and personal correspondence with Beatriz Quintero.<sup>117</sup>

*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 ten NGOs in each region of the country. Sources of data: 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.cesip.org.pe>.

*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 fifty-two member organizations. Sources of data: two group interviews in 1998–1999, reports to the Ford Foundation, and publications. Web site: [www.forosalud.cl/acerca.html](http://www.forosalud.cl/acerca.html).

*Post-Beijing Initiative Group, Chile* (Grupo Iniciativa de Mujeres) 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. Sources of data: interviews with ISIS Internacional and Teresa Valdés of FLACSO and publications of the Group. Web site: <http://www.flacso.cl>. Go to Investigaciones, Estudios de Género, then “Ciudadanía y Control Ciudadano.”

*Network against Violence against Women, Chile* (Red contra Violencia contra las Mujeres). Sources of data: partial information only, from interview with Mireya Zuleta, Casa de la Mujer de Valparaíso, 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 eighty Mexican women’s organizations and academic institutions from eighteen of the thirty-one Mexican states. Sources of data: 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. Sources of data: 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. Web site: <http://www.catolicasporelderechoadecidir.org/>.

*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. Sources of

data: 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 seventeen 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 Latinoamericanas 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.org/>.

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

## NOTES

1. Beatriz Quintero, the National Women's Network, Colombia.
2. This paper contains some information updated in 2002.
3. See Appendix A for a list and description of the networks included in this study. The national networks included in this study are in Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Mexico.
4. Oré Aguilar 1999, 2.
5. The Pathfinder Fund has since changed its name to Pathfinder International. During an internal reorganization, Pathfinder eliminated the Women's Programs Division in 1986.
6. 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 worked as a senior consultant for Catholics for Free Choice during 2001–2005, working closely with members of the Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD) network. This work has put her in touch with current developments in the regional networks and some of the country networks. Some information from the CDD network was added in 2002.
7. 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.
8. The exceptions to this rule are foundations such as the Global Fund for Women, which are set up explicitly as small grants programs.
9. See Keck and Sikkink 1998 for details.

10. Keck and Sikkink 1998, 168–169.

11. In “Thoughts on Distinctive Logics of Transnational Feminism,” Alvarez 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 (for example feminist ideals), or traits (for example lesbians).”

12. The NGO (nongovernmental 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.

13. 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). For past and current information on follow-up actions from these conferences, the web sites of the following organizations contain useful articles, summaries, and access to other publications: WomenWatch (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>); the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO); the Center for Reproductive Rights; 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 (CLADEM—Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer); the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA); and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

14. See Center for Reproductive Rights 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); accessed on October 2005: <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-61.html>.

15. Regional analyses from CLADEM’s November 2001 seminar on sexual and reproductive rights; accessed in 2002 on the web site of the Campaign to Promote an Inter-American Sexual and Reproductive Rights Convention: <http://www.convencion.org.uy>, but no longer available; see latest regional analysis for 2003 under “documentos.”

16. UNAIDS, Barcelona Presskit, 2002, 35. This is no longer available on the Web site.

17. CLADEM 2001, *op. cit.*

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

19. As of 2006, the following section is somewhat outdated. In 2002, Mexico was the exception to this trend, and as of January 2006, abortion law reform efforts are in

process in Colombia and Argentina. A 2004 effort in Uruguay almost gained enough support to win.

20. 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 Rights for more information about the Global Gag Rule, accessed on October 2005: [http://www.reproductiverights.org/hill\\_int\\_ggr.html](http://www.reproductiverights.org/hill_int_ggr.html).

21. 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.

22. 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 a relative lack of continuing policy impact might erode the support of the few donors still active in Latin America with a focus on reproductive rights.

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

24. Information on the Alliance comes from internal documents.

25. The Erik E. and Edith H. Bergstrom Foundation and Ipas have supported many of these efforts.

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

27. Barrig, *De Cal y Arena*, 1997.

28. 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 were 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).

29. Barrig, *La Larga Marcha*, 1997.

30. 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.

31. Sanborn 2000, 6.

32. 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.

33. Wisely 1990, 57.

34. In part, this is because the activists in these movements often come from the ranks of the left or progressive movements, which had been weakened greatly in most countries in 2002 at the time of writing this article. However, in 2006, four years after completing this article, the panorama looks quite different, with several left-of-center governments in Latin America. The strong connection of many members of the Brazilian feminist movement with the leftist, but very powerful, Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores—PT) of President Luiz Inácio da Silva (Lula) has helped to bring many feminists into positions of local or national authority.

35. Knoke 1990, 5–6. Knoke 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.

36. Wisely 1990, 65.

37. Korzeniewicz, *Civil Society Networks*, 2001, 16.

38. A leader from the Open Forum for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights—Chile.

39. 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).

40. 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.

41. See the web site of the Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network (RSMILAC) under “Campaigns” for information on the current focus of each of these days of action; accessed in October 2005: <http://www.reddesalud.org/english>.

42. The author had no opportunity to update this observation to 2005 in light of recent trends in NGO network advocacy.

43. 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.

44. 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 Chapter 3 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 to promote the rights of users of health services.

45. 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 nonprofit organizations. 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 poses another significant obstacle at present (2005).

46. CLADEM 2001 op. cit.; 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 FLACSO 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.

47. A fuller discussion of some lessons from experience in the Peruvian multisectoral committee is in Chapter 3 on Consorcio Mujer and in Consorcio Mujer 2000.

48. On the Alba Lucía case, see discussions and box in the section below on Managing Growth and Diversity. The highly publicized case of Paulina is documented in a book by Elena Poniatowska, *Las mil y una ... la herida de Paulina*, Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2000; a thirteen-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.

49. Barrig, *Relatoría General*, 1999, 12.

50. Medillin chapter, CWNSRR.

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

52. 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.

53. Hula 1999; Kingslow Associates 1998; Rose 2000.

54. Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001, 6.

55. 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.

56. Beatriz Quintero, National Women's Network, Columbia.

57. Knoke 1990, 62–64 summarizes the influential theories of economist Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge, MA: 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.

58. 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.

59. 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.

60. 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.

61. S. Chiarotti, CLADEM.

62. ISIS International group interview.

63. 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, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982 and 1993.

64. ISIS interview, op. cit. (see note 63).

65. T. Valdes, Post-Beijing Initiative Group, Chile.

66. ISIS International group interview.

67. Coordinator of Cali Chapter, CWNSRR at the time of the interviews in 1999.

68. Brown and Fox 1998, 18-20.

69. 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; accessed in October 2005: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>.

70. Isabel Duque, network coordinator at the time of the interviews in 2000.

71. For purposes of this article, "membership" involves full entitlement in decision-making 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.

72. 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.

73. T. Valdes, Initiative Group, Chile, December 1998. 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.

74. Mische and Pattison 2000, 169; Watts 1996.

75. Rose 2000; Kingslow Associates 1998.

76. CWNSRR, Cali Chapter, Group interview.

77. 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.

78. Foweraker 1995; Hula 1999; Mische and Pattison 2000; Rose 2000; Watts 1996.

79. Mische and Pattison 2000, 164.

80. Watts 1996, 43.

81. Rose 2000, 143.

82. The terms "grassroots," "community-based," and "low-income" are used somewhat interchangeably in the following section as translations for the ubiquitous adjective in Spanish: "popular."

83. The divisions between the low-income women's organizations and the feminist NGOs have often erupted into the public eye, and have been written about extensively by Latin American feminists, including Virginia Vargas, Maruja Barrig, and Sonia Alvarez.

84. Kingslow Associates 1998, 34–36.

85. 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 tended to be weak and divided.

86. 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.

87. Rich 1996, 6–7.

88. "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.

89. 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). The Network is still mentioned in 2005 communications on Colombian women’s movement activities, but the author is no longer in touch with the coordinators to verify its current status.

90. Coordinator of the Open Forum, Chile.

91. CWNSSR, Medellín group interview.

92. This account of events represents the perception of the Network members who were excluded. Tim Frasca and Karen Anderson circulated an unpublished paper in 1993 describing the Network’s process.

93. Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001, 4–6.

94. See Alvarez’s writings on this topic and Keck and Sikkink 1998, 168–169. Many of the “autonomous” Latin American women’s organizations view all collaboration with the state as a compromise of the feminist agenda.

95. 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.

96. Barrig, *Relatoría General*, 1999, 6; Sonia Alvarez’s writings also deal with this topic.

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

98. 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.

99. See Barrig, *La Persistencia*, 1999, for a fuller discussion of these tensions and the role of Opus Dei in the public controversies about the sterilization campaigns.

100. Grupo Impulsor Nacional 1998. The report from this monitoring describes, but does not highlight, the coercive practices of the sterilization campaigns in one page out of fifty-two pages on sexual and reproductive health. Only two recommendations out of the fifteen presented mention the campaigns, with no corrective action suggested.

101. 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.

102. [http://www.apuntes.org/paises/peru/ensayo/mam\\_agenda.html](http://www.apuntes.org/paises/peru/ensayo/mam_agenda.html), accessed on October 31, 2005; contains the political agenda of MAM, developed at a much later date than these events, in 2000.

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

104. S. Chiarotti, CLADEM.

105. 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 WomenWatch web site accessed in October 2005: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm>.

106. ICPD Programme of Action Summary, Chapter 7, section A, paragraph 2, quoting “international human rights documents and other relevant UN consensus documents.”

107. Amparo Claro, the Coordinator of the LACWHN through much of its early history until 1998.

108. The term “blacklist” is used in its meaning in the United States: 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* has more extreme connotations in Latin America, often meaning a list of people identified for execution or imprisonment by dictatorships or death squads.

109. 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 forty 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.”

110. *La Ronda Ciudadana* (the citizen’s round dance) 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; accessed in October 2005 at <http://www.laronda.org.mx/>.

111. 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. 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.”

112. 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.”

113. These provincial-level successes in policy impact probably depend at least partially on the degree of decentralization in a country. In the study in Chapter 3, provincial organizations in the *Consortio Mujer* project in Peru achieved more gains in negotiations with their local health officials than did the three capital-based NGOs, in a situation in which the decentralization structures of the health sector reform had not yet been implemented in Lima.

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

115. It seems that MAM split into two groups—one called “MAM—The Founding Line” (*Linea Fundacional*) at some point after the events in this study; see Web site accessed January 29, 2006: <http://mamfundacional.org/>. However, the author was not able to verify this with a MAM participant.

116. The former publication based on this study, published by North-South Center Press, includes an appendix with recommendations for network governance, adapted and expanded from Hord 2002, 55–56.

117. As of October 2005, this network did not have a functioning Web site, but seems to be still active in women’s movement initiatives.