



Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots Women's Perspective on Good Governance



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME



HUAIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community

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Urban Governance Toolkit Series

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Foreword



UN-HABITAT has for long been working with NGOs, civil society organisations and women's groups, in particular, to ensure that services and opportunities in human settlements are accessible to the people who are really in need. Increasing urbanisation and feminisation of poverty means that poor women in cities are a particularly vulnerable stakeholder group, and that special emphasis needs to be placed on their needs and priorities, in order to enable them to participate in and enjoy the benefits of development. The UN-HABITAT Gender Policy, first adopted in 1996 and recently reviewed, is based on two important objectives: (a) Women's right to empowerment through participation in human settlements development; and (b) Gender mainstreaming in human settlements development.

Building and strengthening capacities of women's groups to engage actively and effectively in development decision-making, is one of the most important mechanisms to achieve the aforementioned objectives. This publication *Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots Women's Perspective on Good Governance*, describes locally designed strategies through which grassroots women's groups initiate and engage in ongoing dialogue with local authorities, with a view to influence policies, plans and programmes in ways that address women's priorities. The activities of these groups illustrate the creative ways in which women use their skills and knowledge to mobilise communities, raise resources, build alliances with local authorities and indeed, transform the institutions around them, to advance the interests of women and their communities.

This publication has been developed under the umbrella of UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign on Urban Governance, which was launched in 1999 with the objective of reducing urban poverty through improved urban governance. Recognising that women are one of the biggest levers for positive change in society, the Campaign promotes the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels. The theme of the Campaign – "inclusiveness" – reflects both the campaign's vision and strategy. The vision is to realise the "Inclusive City," a place where everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities have to offer. Inclusive decision-making processes are an essential means to achieve this and are the cornerstone of the campaign.

The Local to Local Dialogues described in this publication are illustrative of such inclusive decision-making processes. The six case studies chronicle the experiences and efforts of each of the women's groups to identify priorities and negotiate with local authorities and in some cases other government authorities. The six organizations that participated in the Local to Local Dialogues funded by UN-HABITAT and USAID were: GROOTS Kenya; The Information Centre of Independent Women's Forum, Russia; The Centre of Services and Exchange for the Southern Cone, Argentina; Women Advancement Trust, Tanzania;



The Mother Centres, Czech Republic; and Forum for Women in Democracy, Uganda. I would like to commend the efforts of these organisations for making this work a reality. I would also like to especially congratulate the Huairou Commission on their untiring efforts in promoting women's development since before and after the Beijing conference.

UN-HABITAT and the Huairou Commission wish to promote the concept of Local to Local Dialogues, across sectors as well as across cities and countries. UN-HABITAT, through its Global Campaign on Urban Governance, is working with a number of countries and cities to raise awareness of, advocate for and build capacity for the adoption of key principles or norms of good urban governance. Gender mainstreaming is an integral part of these activities. The Local to Local Dialogue Tool is envisaged to be used to support gender mainstreaming in National Action Plans in the Campaign countries.

I hope that the ideas expressed in this publication will be useful for both development professionals and grassroots women whose work it seeks to reaffirm.

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka

Executive Director

UN-HABITAT



PREFACE

The Huairou Commission is a network of networks working together to forge strategic partnerships to advance the capacity of grassroots women worldwide to strengthen and create sustainable communities. The Huairou Commission's association with the Good Urban Governance Programme of UN-HABITAT has focused on finding ways to make democracy work for grassroots women. How do grassroots women realise the promise of decentralization? *Local to Local Dialogue* sets out to understand how women in different parts of the world are grappling with the practical ways to claim their citizenship. "Governance" is a sanitised term that masks many messy realities. One such reality that is frequently overlooked in discussions on governance is the question of power and power sharing. Yet it is this which is at the heart of true democracy. This book addresses ways in which grassroots women can reconfigure power relationships to advance their interests and thereby transform the practice of governance. The strategies laid out in this guide are not mere directives, but are drawn from experiences of grassroots women's organizations in different countries.

Local to Local Dialogue is the result of the accumulated efforts of many women all over the world. The idea first surfaced in India in discussions with Sheela Patel, Director SPARC and Prema Gopalan, Director of Swayam Shikshan Prayog. Sri Husnaini Sofjan facilitated UNDP's Urban Governance Initiative funding for four organizations in Asia to advance existing negotiations with local authorities. The Local to Local Dialogue initiatives in six countries were funded by UN-HABITAT and USAID. We would like to thank Esther Mwaura-Muiru of Groots Kenya, Elizabeta Bozhkova of ICWIF in Russia, Patricia Munabe from FOWODE in Uganda, Tabitha Siwale from Women Advancement Trust in Tanzania, Rut Kolinska from The Czech Mother Centres in the Czech Republic and Liliana Rainero from CISCSA in Argentina for co-ordinating the Dialogues in their countries. In addition, GROOTS International funded the Local to Local Dialogues of the Stuttgart Mother Centres. We would like to thank the local and national authorities who participated in these Dialogues and continue to work towards advancing the interests of women and strengthening democratic practice.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog, India and the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work were not officially part of this project but represent two organizations within the Huairou Commission that have evolved a host of strategies for partnering with local authorities. Hence their work has been mentioned several times in the guide.

UN-HABITAT's Good Urban Governance Campaign, of which the Huairou Commission is a partner, inspired this effort as we sought to link local efforts to a global campaign. We are grateful to Paul Taylor for his ongoing support of the Huairou Commission and to Liz Case, Raf Tuts and Shipra Narang, who provided useful inputs on previous drafts of this document.



Suranjana Gupta is the principal author of this document but she was assisted by a large team in both developing the framework and creating the final product. Achola Pala Okeyo, Gender Advisor to the Huairou Commission, deserves special mention for her report of the Local to Local Dialogues which the case studies in this document have drawn on. Sandy Schilen, Global Facilitator of Groots International and Srilatha Batliwala, Research Fellow at the Hauser Center for Non-Profit Organizations at Harvard University played a crucial role in helping to develop the analytical framework for the guide. Emmy M'Mbwanga in Kenya, Beatrice Mugambe in Uganda, Liza Bozhkova in Russia, Georgia Marman in Argentina, Lucy Tesha Merere of Tanzania, Jitka Bartakova in the Czech Republic were the authors of the Dialogues in six countries. Sheryl Feldman provided useful inputs and feedback. Sangeetha Purushothaman interviewed the leaders of participating organizations and suggested changes in previous drafts and moderated an ongoing e-group on engendering governance through which Huairou Commission members shared their evolving ideas on governance. Nina Kantcheva, assisted the direction of the Dialogues from New York, translated Russian reports and edited drafts; Katie Miele worked on several rewrites and formats for the document.

We hope that readers who find this book useful will join the Huairou Commission's efforts to address the challenge of giving grassroots women a greater voice in decision-making.

Jan Peterson
Chair, Huairou Commission



1. Introduction

For grassroots women governance is not an abstract concept; it is part of their daily lives. Governance is about who gets what, who does what and who decides who gets what. In other words, governance is about rights, responsibilities, and resource allocations, and the processes by which these are decided upon.

- *Srilatha Batliwala, Fellow, Hauser Center for Non Profit Management, Harvard University*

Poor women are constantly struggling to feed their families, get clean drinking water and access healthcare, education and shelter. Despite their contributions to the survival of their households and the well being of their communities, grassroots women are excluded from planning and decision-making processes. Women are perceived as either beneficiaries or clients. In either case, low-income women are not seen as citizens who can play an important role in transforming governance.

For the poor and marginalized, governance institutions are considered effective when they deliver resources and services effectively. In order for this to occur, responsive institutional arrangements must be created in collaboration with local and national authorities.

Grassroots women's strategies for good governance address both the practical and the strategic needs of women. On the practical side, they address women's material conditions: how women can access better services, improve their living conditions and increase infrastructure for the community. On the strategic side, grassroots women's efforts seek to ensure that women are seen as agents of change by themselves, their communities and the state.

Grassroots women often have to be in dialogue not just with local authorities but also with national or central governments. Our emphasis on the local draws attention to the fact that all the dialogues between women and authorities are grounded in the local realities of women and bring to the surface their priorities as specific, concrete issues that affect their neighbourhoods, families and communities. The "local-ness" of the dialogues emphasises the local perspectives from which communities operate and seek to demand accountability from national and local authorities.

Because the priorities of women are inextricably intertwined with the needs of their families and communities, this book often refers to the interests and priorities of communities and families rather than just women. But it is true that in all the examples discussed women have been at the centre of the negotiations on behalf of their communities.

1.1 Where the Local to Local Dialogues Began

The Huairou Commission observed that since the late 1980s there have been organizations both inside and outside their own network, which were steadily advancing grassroots women's agendas in institutional and policy arenas. Swayam Shikshan Prayog in India, a member of the Huairou Commission, is one such organization that has been identifying strategies to give grassroots women a voice in decision-making. The German Mother Centres and the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work are other examples of such organizations.



A source of great inspiration outside the Huairou Commission's network has been the SPARC. SPARC has supported the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan (members of Slum Dwellers International) in getting city planning and development authorities to address the needs of poor women and their communities.

The Local to Local Dialogues between community groups and local authorities were initiated by members of the Asia Women and Shelter Network (AWAS) with seed funding from a regional programme of the United Nations Development Programme, The Urban Governance Initiative (UNDP-TUGI). The concept of Local to Local Dialogues was introduced in three countries in Asia – India, Malaysia and Nepal.

India

Women and Reconstruction in India

When a devastating earthquake struck Maharashtra in India in 1993, killing close to 10,000 people and destroying over 50 villages and damaging homes in 1,200 villages, the Government was thrown into a state of crisis. In the state-led reconstruction programme that followed the earthquake in Maharashtra, women's collectives, supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog, worked with district authorities to disseminate information on entitlements, how to access these and how to repair and strengthen their houses using earthquake-safe technology. The women also learned construction and were able to monitor the implementation of the Government's repair and strengthening programme, supported by the World Bank. Monitoring the programme meant that women first had to disseminate information on entitlements in their communities; then they had to ensure that earthquake-resistant techniques were being used to repair damaged houses. At regular meetings with officials, women would report on the progress made on construction as well as the reasons for which construction was not proceeding.

The public roles that women took on in the reconstruction process dramatically changed the way in which their own communities and their governments perceived them. Communities saw how valuable women's assistance was in accessing state entitlements. The Government was forced to acknowledge that women were key partners who had improved the effectiveness of the reconstruction programme by assisting in information dissemination, providing feedback to officials about communities, preventing corruption by reporting corrupt practices and ensuring that communities knew how to access entitlements.

Toilets in Indian cities

There simply are not enough toilets in Indian slums. Women literally have nowhere to go, or are forced to walk long distances for privacy. Conditions are unhygienic and safety is a serious concern. The National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan (MM), supported by an NGO called SPARC, have been working in Mumbai and other cities in India for over a decade to address the problem of sanitation for the urban poor.

When toilets in slums become unusable it happens for many reasons. The Federation has found that sanitation solutions designed and planned by the government are unviable. Communities need to participate in developing sanitation facilities because they know



what will and won't work in their communities. By experimenting with different options and building their skills in construction and negotiation, communities have developed a model in which communities plan, construct and maintain their own toilets in their settlements. The State brings sewers and water supply to the site and pays for the materials.

In the city of Pune, a partnership between the municipal government, NGOs and community-based organizations has built more than 400 community toilet blocks. They have also demonstrated the potential of municipal-community partnerships to improve conditions for low-income groups.

Some women community leaders took on contracts themselves and managed the whole construction process, supported by engineers and architects from SPARC. It took a while for the women in each community to develop the confidence that they could manage this process. As one leader, Savita Sonawane, noted, "In the beginning we did not know what a drawing or a plinth was. We did not understand what a foundation was or how to do the plastering. But as we went along, we learnt more and more and now we can build toilets with our eyes closed." Over time, these women's groups gained confidence and as they learned how to deal with the local government bureaucracy, they became active in dealing with other government officials. They also kept a close watch on costs.

This programme enabled the reconfiguring of relationships among the city government, NGOs and communities. The city government recognized the capacity of community organizations to develop their own solutions, supported by local NGOs. The city authorities changed their role from being a toilet provider to setting standards, funding the capital cost of construction and providing water and electricity.¹

Women & the Changing City in Penang, Malaysia

The Local to Local Dialogue in Malaysia was undertaken jointly by Penang Heritage Trust with support from the Asia West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation (AWPNUC).

George Town, Penang, is a historic port city of great cultural diversity. In the last 30 years, the Control of Rent Act protected inner city communities inhabiting about 10,000 pre-1940 buildings from market forces, while new housing areas expanded in the periphery. With the Repeal of the Control of Rent Act at the turn of the millennium, many households are facing rental hikes and evictions, accelerating the decline of population in the inner city neighbourhoods. In addition the plan to restore the community market also threatens the situation of residents in the area.

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) undertook the Local to Local Dialogues in George Town, Penang, to explore how women were affected by the changes in the city and how local government can improve quality of life and opportunities for women. The first phase of the Dialogues consisted of small dialogues hosted by non-governmental organisations and community groups to identify and prioritise issues. This was followed by the main Local-Local Dialogue, which brought together various stakeholders from community and government. Broad policy recommendations as well as concretised proposals were put

¹ This is excerpted from two documents ...Toilet talk and "Community Toilets in Pune and Other Indian Cities" by Sundar Burra and Sheela Patel in PLA notes, special issue June 2002



forward to pursue follow-up actions. Approximately 200 participants participated in the Local-Local Dialogue, of whom nearly three-fourths were women.

The event provided a forum for the community women – normally members of the silent majority – to learn more about the city's plans to restore the Cambell Street Market, and to voice their opposition to top-down planning which ignored their needs. Community women were supported by women professionals who asserted that removing the market would violate principles of planning, as it would undermine the economic and social base of the community. The politicians and bureaucrats both were compelled to recognise that the maintenance of the community market was necessary to support the government's vision of a 'living heritage city'.

The Dialogue also highlighted the fact that it was not only buildings but also people, that had to be 'sensitised' to the special needs of the disabled community —and this included the police, bus drivers, civil servants etc. Traffic crossings, for example, have to be accessible not only to the disabled, but the elderly and the very young too. However, this is perhaps the first time that the case for disabled access policies and implementation was being presented before a public forum. Both government and ordinary people were educated about the attitudinal and technical requirements of providing an enabling environment, and the State Women's Development Committee and local authority promised to follow up on the dialogue.

Allegations of unfair allocations, inefficiency and corruption in processing social housing applications have been circulating for some time. However, previous community surveys and mobilisation helped participants communicate their concerns clearly. The affected applicants who were present at the event stood by their complaints. They highlighted the plight of the urban poor, representing hundreds of other poor families and women-headed households who were suffering the same predicament. Politicians and bureaucrats promised to monitor the situation more closely.

Overall, there was a realisation of the inter-relatedness of urban issues. Accessible design, heritage conservation, public safety, more social housing and improved security of tenure, better community amenities, would all be improved with more community feedback, bottom-up planning and public participation in decision-making.

Securing the right to live in the city, Kathmandu, Nepal

The Local to Local Dialogue in Nepal was undertaken by LUMANTI –Support Group for Shelter in Kathmandu, which focused on the issues surrounding women and the security of shelter.

The Local to Local Dialogues process initiated by LUMANTI in Kathmandu was divided into two phases: the preparation of Family Identity Cards and a two-day workshop. The family ID cards of the squatter families were prepared and jointly issued by the Women's Federation (Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj) and Squatters' Federation (Nepal Basobas Basti Sanrakshan Samaj). The provision of these identity cards to squatters was a historical breakthrough as it symbolised the city's recognition of the rights of squatters as citizens, thus providing them with a form of secure tenure. On the second day of the workshop the Mayor of KMC distributed the ID cards to the squatters in Balaju community.



The dialogue workshop that followed had more than 100 participants of whom 75% were women, with the majority of the participants coming from the urban poor communities. The workshop addressed women's priorities in relation to safe and secure housing, strategies to address this, the roles and responsibility of various level of governments as well as NGOs and communities in collaborating to find solutions.

Squatters discussed their concerns and why they were compelled to encroach on public lands, such as a campus compound in one city. Officials from the local authority, Kathmandu Metropolitan Council (KMC) recognized that they needed inputs and help from the community in policy formulation process to ensure that that implementation and activities will have direct benefit for the target groups.

The Dialogues brought to the attention of local authorities that one prerequisite of good governance is the recognition of all inhabitants as true citizens who contribute in their own unique ways to tackle key problems faced by cities. The provision of identity cards was one way to recognise poor communities as legitimate citizens who have a key role in problem solving in the city. Participants from districts other than Kathmandu were inspired by this Dialogue process and decided to take this Local to Local Dialogue to other districts. Active participation of women was seen in the process of the Dialogues.

These initiatives from Asia² have in common ongoing dialogue as the basis for their success. Their experiences point to the fact that wherever communities have influenced government authorities to respond to their needs by involving communities in planning, designing, implementing and monitoring programmes, it has been because of an ongoing engagement through which women's groups and their communities have been able to devise solutions that work for both sets of actors. In other words, partnerships with authorities require an investment in a local dialogue process. The Huairou Commission decided to take the strategy of Local to Local Dialogues to grassroots women's groups in other parts of the world to encourage these groups to test out their abilities to collaborate with and influence local authorities.

1.2 The Local to Local Dialogue Initiative

Local to Local Dialogues are locally designed strategies whereby grassroots women's groups initiate and engage in ongoing dialogue with local authorities to negotiate a range of development issues and priorities to influence policies, plans and programmes in ways that address women's priorities.

The four organizations in Asia that first put into practice the notion of the Local to Local Dialogues represent mature groups who have over many years developed a scale of operation and robust relationships with their governments enabling them to work as partners. The Huairou Commission was interested in exploring how groups that do not

² These initiatives were funded by The Good Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI).



operate on a comparable scale would adapt the idea of Local to Local Dialogues in their own contexts. The six organizations that participated in the Local to Local Dialogues funded by UN-HABITAT and USAID were:

- GROOTS Kenya, Kenya
- The Information Centre of Independent Women's Forum, Russia
- The Centre of Services and Exchange for the Southern Cone, Argentina
- Women Advancement Trust, Tanzania
- The Mother Centres, Czech Republic
- Forum for Women in Democracy, Uganda

The Local to Local Dialogues in Kenya, Russia, Argentina, Tanzania, the Czech Republic and Uganda point to the creative ways in which women use their skills and knowledge to mobilize communities, raise resources and build alliances with local authorities to advance the interests of women and their communities.

Readers should know that the organizations are of varied levels in terms of scale, resources, constituencies and capacities and this is reflected in their varied experiences. This variation in capacity combined with the diverse political contexts in which the dialogues were located meant that each group's agenda was different.

1.3 The Local to Local Dialogue Guide

The first segment of this book is a guide to framing governance in a grassroots women's perspective. A host of development agencies have defined governance, discussed the criteria for good governance and identified the reasons for bad governance. However, very little has been said about what grassroots women perceive as being the central issues of governance, and this document attempts to respond to that.

The guide also looks at the numerous ways in which women are trying to transform the institutions around them. The strategies women use to influence institutions are not a theoretical list of strategies. The examples provided demonstrate that all the strategies discussed here have been used by women's groups. These strategies are drawn from—but are not restricted to—the six Local to Local Dialogue initiatives funded by UN-HABITAT. The experiences and insights discussed here include those of other efforts within the Huairou Commission's network.

The second segment of this document is the six case studies that chronicle the experiences and efforts of each of the women's groups to identify priorities and negotiate with local authorities and in some cases other government authorities. The case studies attempt to highlight strategies and accomplishments of groups, keeping in mind however that for the women's groups and communities involved, the Dialogues are intended as a tool for *ongoing* engagement that has only just begun.



While in some cases women have successfully negotiated access to resources for their communities from local authorities, in other cases the negotiations are ongoing. In both situations, women are beginning to understand and practice more strategic engagement with authorities by mobilising groups, building their information base and capacities, and building strategic alliances. Through their dialogue with state actors, women are beginning to interface with and understand the power structures and decision-making processes of government institutions and how women can impact these.

1.4 Who is This Guide For?

The question of audience is an interesting one. It raises the question of how people actually learn. How do professionals learn? How do grassroots women really learn? Having debated these questions, the Huairou Commission decided to use this document as an opportunity to articulate its collective thinking on the question of women and governance. We hope that the ideas expressed here will be useful for both development professionals and grassroots women whose work it seeks to reaffirm.

For development professionals, this guide provides a new perspective on governance that enriches the debates on governance. As far as grassroots women readers are concerned, the guide attempts to convey to community leaders and women that governance is not something outside their everyday efforts to negotiate for improved access to resources, services and decision-making processes. If the ideas, experiences or strategies in this document resonate with them, it means that they are in fact participating in efforts to en-gender and democratise governance.

1.5 Governance, Good Governance and Grassroots Women

Since the 1990s, the question of governance has been at the heart of the development debate. It was clear to aid agencies that development aid had failed to bring about the kind of institutional changes required. Good governance was identified as the missing ingredient.

What is Governance?

The term “governance” refers to the ways in which institutions function. It is how power and resources are distributed and managed within institutional structures. The term encompasses all the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, citizens are given a voice, and decisions are made on issues of public concern.³

³ Institute on Governance. “What is Governance? Getting to a Definition” as found in Institute on Governance. 2002 (December).

⁴ Kauzya, John-Mary. “Reconceptualising Governance.” UNDP: Discussion Paper 2, 1997.

⁵ UN-HABITAT. “Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance Concept Paper.” UN-HABITAT: November 2000.



What is Good Governance?

Good governance is the exercise of this authority with the participation, interest and livelihoods of the governed as the driving force.⁴ UN-HABITAT states, “Good urban governance must enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Good urban governance, based on the principle of urban citizenship, affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security of tenure, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment and public safety and mobility. Through good urban governance, citizens are provided with the platform which will allow them to use their talents to the full to improve their social and economic conditions.”⁵ This idea entails citizens working with governments to address all of these needs in ways that improve the lives of citizens.

While much has been written about criteria for good governance and the features of good governance, little has been said about how marginalized groups such as women from poor communities can actually influence governance structures and create institutions that are inclusive of women and communities living in poverty.

“The Local to Local Dialogue is a methodology where dialogues become the means to open up channels of policy discussion for grassroots communities, amplifying an understanding of why gender matters, why participation is key to local decision-making and how democracy can be achieved in a very practical way....”
- Dr. Achola Pala Okeyo, Advisor to the Huairou Commission

1.6 Localising Good Governance

Societies ascribe different sets of roles to men and women. This means that men and women use and contribute to living environments in different ways. Yet, planners and policymakers frequently leave out the analysis and priorities of grassroots women when designing such programmes.⁶

Interventions to increase women’s voice in planning and policy processes have generally focused on legislation and women’s participation in electoral politics. These efforts have generally established legal entitlements for women, and sought to institute quotas to increase the number of women in political office. But laws, policies and programs are only as effective as women’s abilities to claim the rights and resources. The Local to Local Dialogues are a means by which women engage governing institutions to attain concrete outcomes to realise the opportunities created through laws, policies and programmes.

Distinct from one-time policy consultations in which governments control the venues, agenda, invitees and what information will be used, Local to Local Dialogues are ongoing engagements between women’s groups and local authorities in which women set the agenda and initiate a dialogue with local authorities and evolve relationships of people with influence.

Given the power differences between grassroots women’s collectives and local authorities, an ongoing negotiation with local authorities entails an investment in building

⁶ Beall, Jo. “Urban Governance: Why Gender Matters.” UNDP: Gender in Development Monograph Series #1. March 1996.



and mobilising women's capacities. Women's groups have used these Dialogues in varied ways to mobilize their communities and interact with government authorities in order to influence decision-makers.

The Local to Local Dialogues discussed here present efforts of women's collectives and communities in six countries. In most cases, local and national governments as well as citizens are entering uncharted territory as they try out new ways of engaging with each other and working together. The Dialogues are an investment in a two-way learning process in which local authorities and communities move into new roles. Thus, the dialogue process has a dual purpose:

1. To build women's capacities and empower them to influence decision-making; and
2. To shift how local authorities respond to poor women and perceive them as constituent-problem solvers rather than as client-beneficiaries.

In these ways, the Dialogue process works make a concrete difference in the lives of the poor.

Local to Local Dialogue is an evolving methodology but the first round of Dialogues provide a glimpse of the many complexities that women's groups are negotiating in their engagements with authorities. Women's groups from the six communities involved used the dialogues to demonstrate their capacities to find innovative solutions to important problems and identify ways in which these solutions could be scaled-up in partnership with local authorities and the state.

In the six Local to Local Dialogues supported by the Huairou Commission, women organised around their priorities. Some women's groups advanced further in their negotiations with the state—they were part of joint planning processes; while others invested in gathering accurate information and demonstrated capacities to solve problems. Other, less experienced groups simply used the Local to Local Dialogues to interact with state institutions and familiarise themselves with how these institutions function.



1.7 The Six Local to Local Dialogues

Location	NGO	Focus
Kenya	GROOTS Kenya	GROOTS Kenya facilitated a process through which slum communities identified questions of infrastructure, security, they wanted to address in collaboration with authorities.
Russia	Information Centre of Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF)	ICIWF is concerned with how to find ways to strengthen the resource base, information base and build capacities of women to create safe neighbourhoods and find ways to improve and maintain community infrastructure.
Argentina	Centre of Services and Exchange for the Southern Cone (CISCSA)	CISCSA is working with four community-based organizations (Family Community Market, Council of Neighbourhood Centres, the Women's Council, and the Cosquín River Commission) to collectively create a plan for sustainable use of the resources from the Cosquín River.
Tanzania	Women Advancement Trust (WAT)	Two groups supported by WAT worked to negotiate with local authorities to reclaim collectively purchased land and gain legal status for their group.
Czech Republic	Mother Centres	The Mother Centres organised a campaign with local authorities, the media and schools to get the city to fund a playground for children.
Uganda	Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)	FOWODE organised a workshop for elected women and communities to help women set priorities and identify strategies to address settlement problems.



The Huairou Commission

The Huairou Commission is a coalition of six grassroots women's networks who work in partnership with development professionals. Together they forge "strategic partnerships to advance the capacity of grassroots women worldwide to strengthen and create sustainable communities."

Grassroots women issued their first major international statement on community development at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. Meeting at the conference's NGO margins in the town of Huairou (why-row), they laid out a platform that incorporated their uniquely practical knowledge of communities. Its points were recognized as being essential to the creation of sound development policies and the Huairou Commission was established, thus moving grassroots women towards the centre of international policy-making.

Huairou has institutionalised its allegiance to its grassroots source. The core of its policy setting council is made up of representatives from international women's network organizations. Deeply rooted in local communities, the council negotiates partnerships with other NGOs, the United Nations, local governments, parliamentarians, scholars and researchers. For its work in global governance, specifically, Huairou has partnered with UN-HABITAT, UNDP, UNIFEM, International Union of Local Authorities, and the City of Montreal.

While women's participation in decision-making in global forums have been a major focus in Huairou's interventions since the beginning, in recent years, it has increasingly emphasised local governance. Its 2003-6 strategic plan promises to take its local governance work to even greater levels of effectiveness. Follow its growth on the Huairou website: www.huairou.org.



2. Three Big Ideas

2.1 From Beneficiaries and Clients to Citizens

When the state interacts with grassroots women's groups or takes decisions on behalf of women, there is a tendency to see women either as beneficiaries or as clients.

In fact, many state-led reforms around the delivery of resources and services seek to change women from beneficiaries to clients. In most cases, this means getting people to pay for services provided by the state (and increasingly, by the private sector).

The term "clients" suggests that grassroots women are buyers in a free market with a range of products and services from which to choose. It also implies that the willingness and ability to pay, in other words demand, drives the quality of services. When dissatisfied with a particular service, clients in a free market are expected to move to another service provider. In reality, communities living in poverty have few choices. Whether they belong to the government or to the private sector, service providers usually have a monopoly in the market and poor people are forced to pay for these services, regardless of their quality.

The term "clients" also suggests that women and communities who previously availed of free services are now being incorporated into the formal cash economy. In reality, these communities have always been "paying" in some form or other for the resources and services they use. Frequently, these payments are in the form of bribes or part of an informal market.

Far from being passive beneficiaries waiting for state handouts, women are organising to find innovative solutions to their everyday problems of housing, healthcare, childcare, education, livelihoods, water supply and sanitation. That is, they are engaging with the state as citizens, who are ready to take an active role in problem solving with the support of the government.

Asserting Citizenship

In the Czech Republic, women from the Mother Centre in Breznice decided that their children needed a playground. They approached the local authorities to give them one. The women then went on to organise a media campaign, involve schools and helped to raise funds to make the playground a reality. Women were not acting like beneficiaries but partners to local authorities, sharing the responsibilities for implementing their ideas.

In Turkey, with help from the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work, women from disaster hit communities organised and began running women and children's centres in the temporary housing settlements in Adapazari and Izmit. Based on this experience, the Foundation negotiated a partnership agreement with the SHCEK, the General Directorate of Social Services, in which the women's collectives rather than the Government would manage these centres while the Government would provide the infrastructure. So women were not beneficiaries waiting for the government to set up childcare services for them, instead they proactively set up these services and asked the government to support them.

Several strategies that women are using to dialogue with state actors attempt to convey the fact that women are neither true clients in a free market nor are they passive beneficiaries.



“In Russia, initial workshops organized by the citizen’s group of Solneichnyi, one of the most active cities in the province of Saratov, was less a dialogue about finding solutions and more about writing letters of complaint to the government.”

—Local to Local Dialogue Report from ICIWF, Russia

2.2 From Adversaries to Allies

In most cases neither national governments nor local authorities have the institutional mechanisms to engage with grassroots women or their communities in ways that can generate collaborative solutions to problems. Grassroots women share this problem with many other marginalized groups, who then resort to protests, demonstrations and letters of complaint to advance their causes.

Citizens need to find new ways to engage with authorities if globalization, decentralization and devolution is to serve citizens’ interests. Without this they will revert to patterns of engagement that reflect their historical relationship with the state. Some of the “old ways” in which citizens relate to the state are by protesting, demonstrating or simply waiting for the state to take action. Grassroots women have to find ways to work with state authorities to jointly find solutions to the everyday problems that their communities face.

2.3 Political Transformation and the Redistribution of Power

Much of the discussion on good governance appears to be about reforming institutions. Yet these debates rarely acknowledge that dysfunctional institutions persist because there are powerful interests that support such institutions and benefit from them. Thus, reforming institutions entails a redistribution of power. Women’s groups engaging with institutions to transform governance must empower themselves in order to reconfigure the power relationships among women and the state in ways that enable poor women to influence these institutions.

By acquiring skills, knowledge and assets; by creating collectives, working on scale and by building alliances, women are working to tip the balance of power in their favour. This will then enable women to influence the policies and programmes of the government. It is this transformation that would help the state to see women as potential allies, rather than beneficiaries or clients.



3. Principles of Engagement

How can women engage constructively with decision-makers to promote accountability to citizens otherwise marginalized from decision-making processes?

In 2002, a group of Turkish women from disaster-hit communities visited disaster-hit communities in India to exchange experiences and review the reconstruction efforts of both communities and governments. A recurring theme in the discussions during this learning exchange was how women's collectives are working to influence authorities. Based on observations of the Sakhi Women's Federations' achievements in India and experiences of women's collectives in Turkey, Hamiye Yacizi, one of the Turkish women, summarised the key strategies that inform women's engagement with government officials:

- "Women have to collectively address problems if they want success. Take collective, not individual problems to officials.
- Visit officials regularly. Don't be discouraged. Show them that women have to be taken seriously and that we won't give up easily.
- "Be prepared by collecting information on their settlements so that they can contest the information the officials have.
- "Women should approach officials as partners. Don't go as victims . . . don't always complain. Help to find a solution."

These remarks highlight the four key areas that grassroots women must address in their negotiations with state actors:

- I. Collective Action
- II. Capacity Building
- III. Building Alliances
- IV. Demonstrating Capacities

These four strategies used by women's groups to negotiate with authorities are discussed in this guide: collective action, capacity building, demonstrating capacities and alliance building.

Political transformation requires the strategies discussed in this toolkit be used in tandem with one another rather than in a sequential, linear manner. The multiple strategies that women use to influence the state complement one another. They cannot be viewed in isolation. Collectives are strengthened by demonstrations of their capacities; their capacities are enhanced through the negotiation process; their capacities are expanded when they scale-up operations. Large scale organised operations by community based organizations who have a set of skills to manage resources compel local and national governments to respond to the demands of communities. Each element should thus be seen as one piece of the good governance puzzle.



“Women have to collectively address problems if they want success.”

—Hamiye Yacizi,
Community Leader,
Izmit, Turkey

3.1 Collective Action

Grassroots women recognise that they are rarely able to gain from individual negotiations. Collective efforts to influence state actors have been far more successful than individual ones. Increasingly, women are recognising the power of networks of collectives across neighbourhoods, villages and cities. When individual women break away from rigid institutional structures they are deified or vilified. It is easier for powerful interests to isolate them. They are seen as exceptions to the norm. This does not help to create institutional change. It simply enables the marginalisation of those who threaten the status quo.⁷



Grassroots women working together in Russia

In some cases the structures or formations that women’s collectives operate from have been mandated by the state, for example, the Territorial Self Governing Committees (TSGCs) in Russia; or the Council of Neighbourhood Centres in Argentina. In India, Mahila Mandals or women’s collectives were created by the government in the 1980s as part of literacy programmes.

While state mandated organizations have the official recognition of the government, women have to ensure that these organizations address their agendas. For women initiated collectives, it is quite the opposite. Being initiated by women, there is a

strong sense of ownership and thus women set the agendas of the organization. It is to gain the legitimacy and recognition from the state that these collectives invariably have to struggle.

Collective Action at Work

Regardless of origin, all women’s collectives must arm themselves with information, skills, resources and allies if they are to influence policies, as seen in the following Local to Local Dialogue examples.

State Mandated Collectives:

In Russia, the decentralization process and municipal reform has resulted in the creation of Territorial Self Governing Committees (TSGCs). These TSGCs are expected to find local solutions to local problems in collaboration with other local actors. However the Committees did not have any experience in improving their neighbourhoods. The TSGC in the Zonalnyi demonstrated how the self-governing committee can actually organise communities to maintain the existing infrastructure of their neighbourhoods and partner with communities to get the national governments to respond to community priorities. The TSGCs were already recognized by the government, but they had to work with the community and then the government to demonstrate to the communities that TSGCs could in fact address community issues.

⁷ Balliwala, Srilatha. “Workshop on Women’s Empowerment” at WEDO: New York, 2003.



Women Initiated Collectives

In Turkey, women initiated collective action around childcare and pre-school education in their temporary housing settlements. After the 1999 earthquake, women in the tent cities got together to advocate for better sanitation and food. Equipped with this experience in the tents, they later went on to organise and run women and children's centres in the temporary housing settlements that they moved to. In addition to running the centre, the women began to meet regularly with government authorities to improve their living conditions and find out about the Government's permanent housing programme. Women in these collectives realised the value of working as a collective on their priorities. But they had to go through a negotiation with the state to be seen as legitimate actors in the decisions that the government was making to permanently re-house disaster hit families.

Critical Mass of Actors

Creating a widespread network or a critical mass of actors is an intrinsic part of reconfiguring institutional arrangements. The knowledge that there are thousands of women who face similar problems and are working together to find solutions reaffirms women's own commitment to create change. The feeling of solidarity through regular interaction among women's collectives energises and enriches the learning creating a widespread network process.

From an advocacy perspective, widespread participation is necessary to demonstrate the viability of community-based solutions to the state and to leverage resources and policy support to accommodate the needs of communities. While the state will often disregard the demands of a few, it can rarely afford not to engage with or not to respond to the demands of large numbers.

Priority Setting and Consensus Building

A key element of the mobilisation process is bringing collectives or communities together to discuss issues and reach a consensus on how to prioritise their actions. Civil society organizations, communities and women's groups have to invest in continually communicating among each other to agree on an agenda for advocacy and identify areas for collaboration.



Women's Group Representatives Consulting One Another in Kenya

Priority Setting and Consensus Building

In Nairobi, Kenya, the women in the slums of Mathare 4 organised a series of meetings among the women's self help groups to identify the priorities of women in the Mathare 4 slums. The women identified HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and the lack of secure tenure and consequently the lack of basic services such as water and street lighting as the problems that they wanted to address.



“We want to use our new position to solve other common problems concerning children. Some ideas we have are ensuring children can walk safely to school, the reconstruction of a public swimming pool, new ecological programs, etc.”
- Report on Local to Local Dialogue in Breznice

In Cosquin, Argentina, the Local to Local process was used primarily to bring together the community based organizations of the Inter-Community River Group, The Family Community Market (an organization of family based entrepreneurs) and the Council of Neighbourhood Centres to discuss how the pollution of river resources was impacting the livelihoods of communities and strategize around what action to take. Through the series of events they organised – meeting, workshops, a river marathon – the Dialogues not only raised awareness among community actors but also drew the attention of local authorities. This was the first step in the direction of bringing government attention to community priorities.

Success empowers groups and encourages them to work together

A crucial element in sustaining a dynamic mobilising process is success. No matter how small these successes are, it is important for the group to experience the success through collective action. It is for this reason that it is important for women’s collectives to simultaneously use multiple strategies that address multiple issues. The multiplicity of efforts ensures that there are some successes, which encourage women’s groups to stay together and keep trying.

3.2 Capacity Building

In order to strengthen their position in any negotiation with authorities, increase their leverage and make the somewhat protracted dialogue process a worthwhile investment, women’s groups need to build their capacities.



Mothers in the Czech Republic Raising Money for their Playground Project

The Local to Local Dialogues as a capacity building tool

Since much of their learning is through experience and practice rather than through instruction and classroom learning, it will rarely occur before or outside the negotiation process. Thus the dialogue process is itself the site of learning. It provides opportunities for women to learn to negotiate with authorities. This includes a range of areas such as understanding hierarchies, understanding where power is located and learning how to communicate strategically with authorities.

Capacity Building through Dialogues

In Tanzania, the Mpambano Women’s Group and Mshikamano Housing Group in Dar es Salaam, found that advancing the Dialogue meant that they had to learn about the legislation, regulations and procedures for grievance redressal. They also had to invest in understanding how the municipal structure functioned and where the decision-making powers are located.

In the Czech Republic, members the Mother Centre Pampeliska said that the Dialogue Process had helped them to sharpen their skills in problem solving and negotiation, learn about local politics and learn how to raise funds. During this negotiation the women also



said that they had to build their writing skills because they had to keep written records of discussions with local authorities, write letters and proposals to raise money for their playground.

In Uganda, FOWODE organised a workshop which helped participants learn how to strategize to negotiate with local authorities. Some things workshop participants learned included how to present issues to local and central governments, the importance of gathering updated information and conveying it in their dialogues and how important it was to build networks of community based actors to create a critical mass of actors to support women's priorities.

In Kenya, the women's self help groups in Mathare supported by Groots Kenya used the Local to Local Dialogues to spend time first reviewing their work and discussing their priorities and then learning how to negotiate with authorities. Through these activities they were building their capacities to collectively address problems in their settlements and present these to officials.

Building capacities to manage resources

While women have learned to manage resources through practice, this set of capacities and skills can be learned outside the negotiation process. Many grassroots women have years of experience in managing childcare centres, managing their own financial resources, or accessing and disseminating information.

Building Capacities

In Germany, The Stuttgart Mother Centre has spent many years managing childcare facilities with very meagre resources. But they found that their depth of experience in this helped them to negotiate with other actors on how the Intergenerational House – a building that the Mother Centre would be sharing with eldercare service providers and kindergarten – should be designed.

In Turkey, women's collectives supported by FSWW learned to set up and manage their own women and children's centres where they organised childcare, pre-school education in the earthquake hit areas of the Marmara region, so in a negotiation with the government, women know that this is something they are experts in and can use this to leverage agreements with local authorities.

In India, women's groups supported by SSP have been building their capacities both in and outside their interactions with government. They have been mobilising community resources, learning construction and organising the construction of their own information centres. The construction of a building requires a range of skills that include acquiring land, raising money, buying materials, keeping inventories and supervising construction. This means that the women's collectives are being empowered to collectively manage and control resources, which means that women have a range of capacities that they can bring to a negotiating table.



Building and demonstrating a strong information base

One of the most valuable resources that women can bring to the table in a coalition with the government is accurate and up to date information on their settlements and communities. Authorities always need information; they need to know that programmes are working for people. The women need to show that as partners to authorities they can bring updated, accurate information about what is going on in communities. The processes by which information is gathered by women often combine information gathering with mobilising, organising and collective analysis. The information that women bring is usually more reliable than the numbers and data that officials collect.

Women in Turkey Using Information Strategically

Following the Marmara earthquake in 1999, women in the prefabricated settlements in Turkey used information collection and analysis as a means to building their capacities, building a sound information base and creating a basis for negotiation with authorities.

In Duzce, women came together at women and children's centres. They organised a survey of 1,200 households in the temporary prefabricated settlements to identify homeowners and tenants and to find out the extent to which houses were damaged in the earthquake. Women prepared a questionnaire and went door to door to meet families. This not only helped understand the extent of house damage, but also helped more women find out about local women and children's centres. The information gathered by the women was then used to counter the Government's information regarding the extent to which houses were habitable. The women then invited local officials for a discussion of their concerns about resettlement. The questions women asked officials included what would happen to tenants, where permanent housing sites were, who was supervising the quality of construction and how women can get involved in assisting with the resettlement of families.

In Adapazari, women surveyed the settlement and created a map showing the locations of shops, markets, schools, medical centres and community centres. This led to a discussion on the extent to which residents in the temporary prefabricated settlements had access to goods and services. The information collected was then used to go to government officials and discuss ways of improving access to services.



A Meeting in Argentina Where Organizations Could Exchange Experiences and Discuss Themes of Importance to the Inhabitants of their Area.

Consolidating Knowledge and Sharing Learning⁸

Connected to capacity building is the need for women's collectives to have a space to share experiences, reflect, analyse and learn from their experiences. These processes play a crucial role in enabling women to learn from collective experiences and bring the lessons from experiences into decision-making arenas. In short, women's groups need to develop mechanisms that enable them to process their knowledge and experiences in ways that create an institutional memory of women's

⁸ This insight emerged from a discussion with Srilatha Battliwala, February 2003.



knowledge and practices within their organizations. The regular sharing of stories and experiences when women teach one another their strategies keeps the ideas and experiences alive and also enables each of the ideas to get refined as they get tested and adapted by groups in their own environments.

Building Collective Knowledge

In Argentina, CISCSA brought three sets of actors—the family based entrepreneurs, the Intercommunity River Group and the Council of Neighbourhood Centres together—to discuss the degradation of the river water and its surroundings. For the first time, these three actors came together to share their work, experiences and agree on how to work in collaboration with the municipalities on cleaning up the river. This process has the potential to become a collective space for reflection.

In Turkey, the women and children's centres, supported by FSWW, where women meet regularly are spaces where women bring many of their experiences, analysis and questions. They use this space to discuss their problems, find solutions and strategize.

In Germany, the Mother Centre housed in the Intergenerational House in the city of Stuttgart is seen as a space for collective analysis and reflection. A member of the Mother Centre said, "this place is more than just day-care. We see it as our public living room. Here we can meet and talk about things...here we can share work and share problems. We are somehow bringing the problems out of our individual isolated space and trying to address them collectively here."

In India, cluster meetings of Sakhi Women's Federation members are forums for learning in which leaders of groups from 10-15 villages meet regularly to share problems and solutions. The regular cluster meetings and the local learning exchanges that women undertake have meant that women are experts at articulating their experiences and lessons.

In Kenya, the ten preparatory meetings with the women's organizations in the Mathare4 enabled a discussion, through which community actors could identify their priorities, was part of mobilising communities. It also created an opportunity for groups to reflect on their own capacities and realities and collectively develop strategies that would advance community interests.

We need to recognize that participation and all that it entails is as unfamiliar to decision makers as to communities.

3.3 Building Alliances

In order to impact the programmes and policies of state institutions and city government, women's collectives have to find ways to build alliances with these institutions.

These alliances are important for two reasons:

1. **They make bureaucrats and elected officials accountable to communities/constituencies.** The incentives built into state bureaucracies demand that officials be primarily concerned with managing macro policies and implementing directives from "above." While there may be demands from below, there are



Grassroots women in Russia building alliances with local authorities through a grassroots-initiated meeting.

rarely any incentives to respond to these. Even where national policies have created a favourable environment for grassroots participation in planning, frequently these policies are not reflected in operational mechanisms that enable information flow and dialogue between planners and local communities. Addressing this problem is one of the central challenges for those working towards more decentralised, democratic, gender-sensitive governance.

2. They support and strengthen institutional actors. Help those in authority to represent the interests of communities by helping them understand the realities of communities and providing them with accurate information.

Focus on Institutional Actors in Uganda

By looking specifically to institutional actors women in Uganda were able to secure gender-neutral language and a focus on women in the constitution.

In Uganda, FOWODE has worked with the women's caucus to support newly elected women candidates. FOWODE grew out of the Women's Caucus of the Uganda Constituent Assembly, 1994-1995. To increase their political clout and broaden the base of support for women's issues, women in the Constituent Assembly embarked on a series of strategic alliances, building coalitions to influence the new constitution. Caucus members participated in training on managing campaigns, constituency and coalition building, speech making and parliamentary procedures. The Caucus formed working relationships with other professional associations and NGOs with ties to women. The success of the Caucus can be measured: the constitution of Uganda is written in gender-neutral language, and an explicit statement of equality before the law is included, which must be written into the laws to be passed by the new parliament. The new Constitution explicitly prohibits laws, cultures, traditions or customs that undermine the dignity and well-being of women, and provides for affirmative action for women, to redress historic imbalances.

Joint planning and collaboration with local authorities

One way for women's collectives to ensure that policies and programmes reflect their interests is to be involved in joint planning processes with authorities. If the government is ready for such a collaboration, it usually this means that there is a supportive political environment in which at least some state actors see the value of enabling women to have a strong voice in how programmes are planned, designed and implemented. When authorities convene the joint planning groups it formally recognises women's contributions.

Working with Authorities

In **Breznice**, in order to plan for their playground the Czech Mothers, Pampeliska were on a joint working group with their local authorities. There were two mothers, two councillors and an architect. This meant that the Czech Mothers were given the formal status of a partner of the local authorities in the playground project.



In **Stuttgart**, as one of the key stakeholders in the city's project to build an Intergenerational House, the Mother Centres were part of a three-year, multi-stakeholder joint planning process. As the only grassroots women's groups in the partnership, they found that they had to develop strategies to ensure that their voice was not drowned out by the professionals who included the architect, city planners, and municipality officials. They decided never to attend meetings alone. When they took someone along they felt more confident about voicing their concerns. They also worked with an architect friend who helped them understand the implications of different design options. This meant that they were really well prepared at the planning meetings.

Monitoring government services

Monitoring is a kind of collaboration with authorities that simultaneously encompasses a range of processes that enable communities to demand greater accountability from service providers. Women have to know what should be happening, how should schools or clinics be functioning, women have to collect information regularly and report to authorities about what is happening so that they can develop solutions to existing problems. The ongoing nature of monitoring services such as health services or schools means that local authorities and women will be in an ongoing partnership. The process of monitoring creates a win-win for women's collectives and authorities. Authorities get accurate information about how state resources are being used. Women's collectives gain a new kind of visibility and authority that changes the way in which they are seen both by their communities and the government.

Monitoring Schools in India

In **India**, supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog in Maharashtra, women's groups are involved in monitoring basic services in their villages. One example of their monitoring efforts is their regular school visits. They have been finding that schools are in a state of disrepair, or that teachers are absent. They find that girl children are dropping out. They use their observations to keep higher authorities informed, but they don't simply wait for the government to take action. Women's groups are constantly finding ways to ensure that children stay in school, they find resources to improve the school building and build toilets and they work together to ensure that the teachers get to class on time and are actually fulfilling their duties.

State support is won not by coercion, but the demonstration of women's groups' abilities to scale up operations by mobilizing support and managing local development projects.

Alliances with powerful insiders

Sometimes it is useful to have a powerful ally within the government who supports women's initiatives. This ally can help support women by talking to colleagues within her organization. He or she can get others within the organization to start a dialogue with women by setting up meetings. He or she can create new rules in the organization to support women's initiatives, provide incentives to those who get involved in dialogues or get personally involved in dialogues. Whatever they do will help to draw the institution's attention to women's capacities, priorities and initiatives.



The Mayor (the man in a white shirt to the left) celebrating the Success of the Czech Republic Playground Project with Grassroots Women and their Families



Building Alliances with Powerful Actors

In Nairobi, Kenya several key officials who had responsibilities in the priority areas identified by the women came to Local to Local Dialogue workshops where they offered their advice and support in different ways. These included the Assistant Director from the Physical Planning Dept. of the Ministry of Lands and Settlement, two councillors and the head of the AIDS Control Unit in the Ministry of Local Government. Their presence and their advice at the workshop means that women's groups can develop their own plans based on these ideas and go back to government authorities for information, policy support or resources.

In Dar, Tanzania MHG tried to get the support of the Municipal Director of the Temeke Municipality to help them reclaim their land.

In Breznice, the Czech Mothers were able to get the Mayor to support their campaign for a playground.

Sites for Dialogues

The location of the dialogue is important and should be used strategically.

- **Invite Officials to Visit Communities:** Inviting decision-makers to settlements or villages for a meeting is a good way to get officials to see for themselves the realities of women's lives and what women have accomplished. Often officials who spend most of their time in offices will be moved, energised and enthused when they come face to face with women's solutions to problems. The fact that officials are the guests of communities means that the agenda and the setting of the visit will be in the hands of women's collectives rather than officials. The official visit also helps the group gain visibility in the eyes of the rest of the community
- **Visit Officials:** Interacting with officials in their territory is unquestionably intimidating for poor women because these spaces are usually male-dominated environments that are hostile to anyone who is an "outsider" to the system. For many rural women whose mobility is traditionally restricted, visits to administrative offices represent an empowering experience in terms of increased control over their mobility.⁹ When a group of women begin to visit officials and ask questions about who is in charge of what and with whom women should speak to address their problems, then officials can rarely refuse to speak to them. By visiting officials regularly and talking to them, women are actually making themselves more "real" to officials and thus, much harder to dismiss. With regular visits, women are saying to officials that they are not only accountable to their supervisors but also to the communities that they work in.

⁹ Gurumurthy 1998.



Dialoguing with Officials in India

In India, women belonging to the Sakhi Mahila Federations supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) have an extensive system for dialoguing with officials to build alliances. This dialogue becomes the first step toward the “demystification” of the state. In a sense, it provides an basic understanding of how state resources are administered, thus laying the groundwork for future advocacy effects of women’s collectives. It is important to note that in each venue women are controlling the site and related factors of the dialogue.

- **Block Level Study Tours**

Members of the Sakhi Federations of women’s groups along with elected women from village councils are assisted by SSP to learn about how the government is organised at the sub-district or block level. Groups of women regularly visit officials. They introduce themselves to officials and find out their names and responsibilities.

- **Village Assemblies**

The village assembly is a forum where citizens engage with authorities. In India, the Gram Sabha or village assembly is where decisions taken by the local governing body are shared with people and people are expected to raise questions and talk about issues that are important to them. Women usually stay away from such forums either because of their household responsibilities or a fear of speaking in such forums. But, when women are organised and confident of articulating their priorities, these public meetings are useful for voicing women’s interests. This public interaction in the presence of the community gives everyone a chance to find out about women’s initiatives and support them, and also provides opportunity for debate and discussion.

- **Sakhi Panchayat**

A block level (administrative units that make up a district with each block consisting of approximately one hundred villages) forum has been designed to create opportunities for women’s groups and elected women to interface with officials. The forum was used to provide feedback to officials, communicate problems and put forward demands of the communities. For officials these forums represent an opportunity to widen their information base for planning since it draws people from many villages. Accurate information on user groups would otherwise be delayed and distorted when routed through “the proper channels.” Such dialogue forums also play a significant role in consensus building on future programs and policies.

- **Information Fairs**

One of the forums used by the Sakhi Federation in Latur and Osmanabad districts is the Information Fair. Hundreds of women attend these fairs to share strategies and celebrate success stories. Women frequently invite elected officials and administrators to these forums to honour them, thank them for their support and participate in debates and dialogue. The large numbers of women present give officials an opportunity to see the magnitude of women’s efforts.



What makes authorities listen to women?

Information, capacity and scale are three assets that women's collectives can use to leverage change.

3.4 Demonstrating Capacities

Women have to counter the images of being victims, clients and beneficiaries and demonstrate to authorities that they are worthy allies. They must show the state they have skills, information and the ability to mobilize communities to make state programs more effective. These are some of the strongest reasons to include women in decision-making processes.

Five Tools to Demonstrate Capacities:

1. **Demonstrate capacities to manage resources:** Authorities are more likely to hand over control of resources to women's groups or increase women's access to resource if they are convinced that the group knows how to manage resources.

Women Demonstrating Capacities to Manage Resources

There are several different ways in which women can demonstrate this ability. The following examples present resource management capacity in terms of infrastructure repair, service distribution and savings.

In Czech Republic the Czech Mothers in Breznice demonstrated that they were not just demanding a playground, they were ready to share the responsibilities of making the playground a reality. They demonstrated their ability to get the entire community including children to rally around the cause. They also demonstrated that they could raise funds from the private sector to build the playground. Now they have a track record, which will certainly impress any partners they want to collaborate with in the future

In Tanzania, the Mpambano Women's Group members were passing through a small broken bridge in their neighbourhood. They stopped and looked at the bridge; they decided that it was dangerous for people who used the bridge at night and also for children. The group agreed to contribute 1000 shillings each to have the bridge repaired. It took two days for all the members to collect the money and two more days to renovate it using a building technician. The local authorities were surprised by the initiative taken by MWG. Soon after, Kaganda was selected by the city authorities to be the chairperson of the Social Services Committee in Sinza A Ward. Hearing of her selection Kaganda stated that, "the news has encouraged us. We do believe that our needs such as water and roads [will] be taken into consideration now on." The city authorities saw that the women's group took the initiative to handle a problem that affected the entire community. It was this that prompted them to include the group leader on their Social Services Committee. For the MWG, this means that they now have an ally in the Committee who will be accountable to the needs of the women.

In Argentina the Women's Council proactively created its own plan for a cleaner and better-maintained Cosquin. This included garbage collection, planting flowers and a public lighting system for downtown. The Municipality saw such a campaign would benefit tourism in the city. They did not partner with the Women's Council but they did provide a small amount of resources to operationalise this plan. In this way the women's organization was able to get the attention and some support from the city.



In India, SSP partners with more than 800 active savings and credit groups in Western India. When women's savings and credit group members go to banks for loans, they can demonstrate that they have saved their own money and have been borrowing and repaying small loans. They can also demonstrate that they have been accounting for the money and taking decisions collectively to ensure that members repay regularly.

- 2. Support women in elected office:** Sometimes women in elected office are not experienced in voicing their interests in public fora, so they need to be supported by women's collectives to participate actively and take up women's issues in decision-making fora. Supporting them means having discussions with them, arming them with information and helping them gain the confidence to speak in public fora.

Supporting Women in Elected Office

While having women in positions of power is important, it is necessary for women's groups to support women in office in prioritising women's issues and asserting themselves in decision-making processes.

In Uganda, FOWODE is working with elected women helping them not only in their election campaigns, but also supporting them to take up issues of poor women by providing them with information and strategies. FOWODE organised a workshop in which women's groups identified priority areas that they wanted local authorities to address. These included HIV/AIDS, adolescent sexual behaviour and violence against women. At the end of the workshop the women councillors acknowledged the value of working with grassroots women's groups in identifying priority issues for the communities. They mentioned that without this discussion with the women, the councillors would not have been in a position to initiate policy dialogues about these issues.

In India, 1.3 million women entered local government bodies because of a constitutional amendment that makes it mandatory that a third of all local governments be women. However, these women have had little experience in participating in the public sphere. The support of Sakhi Mahila Federations helps these women to have the community support they need for both confidence and capacity building.

- 3. Large-scale operations:** The scale of operation always impresses officials. They need solutions that work for large numbers of people. When women demonstrate that there are many others like them who have the same problems, the same skills and agree on the same solutions, then officials are likely to want to collaborate.
- 4. Demonstration of pilot projects:** Getting authorities to support something usually means doing a pilot project that demonstrates the skills, capacities and knowledge that women have. Once you have a living example of what women can do it is easier to get officials and authorities to support such initiatives.



Pilot Projects at Work in Russia

Beyond the basic impact on the community involved in a pilot project, these projects can promote the women's groups involved and help other communities begin dialogues about similar issues.

In Saratov, Russia, the efforts of the communities in the Zonalnyi neighbourhood to clean up the neighbourhood and repair and improve infrastructure helped advance the Territorial Self-Governing Committee's negotiations with local and national authorities. It also demonstrated to other cities what organised communities can do to improve their settlements.

- 5. Global allies raise the stakes for local change:** Whenever visitors come to see and learn from your work it is useful to bring authorities into the discussion. They can see that others value the work that women have done locally and sometimes women can use the presence of outsiders to bring up 'uncomfortable' issues and extract promises.

Bringing Outsiders to Local Dialogues

When international visitors from GROOTS International or the Huairou Commission visit grassroots women, they often use outsiders' presence to set up meetings with local authorities in which grassroots women can advance their negotiations. As a group of foreigners it is considerably easier for the visitors to get an appointment with district level officials. The presence of outsiders at the negotiating table signals to local actors that a global network is watching and learning from this process. This affirms the efforts of grassroots women and ensures that officials take their interventions seriously.



4. Experiencing Good Governance Internally¹⁰

The notion of demonstration goes beyond demonstrating to outsiders. It includes the idea of women seeing for themselves what is possible for them to accomplish through their own collective efforts.

Women's organizations need to create internal systems and strategies that mirror the democratic values they want to advocate for in governing institutions. Hence, the processes by which collectives and communities set agendas, take action, build leadership and take decisions are as important as the ways in which they interact with state institutions.

Capacities to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes include not just information, knowledge and skills but also simulations: experiences of what good governance means inside women's collectives and organizations. It is experiencing democratic processes of how things can be done differently through collective leadership, decision making, and transparency that provide women with the confidence, conviction and credibility to bring about change in other institutions. When people experience how their values operate in their working and living environments they are then prepared (both in terms of capacity and conviction) to advocate for 'good governance' in other arenas and institutions.

Democratic Processes in Action within Savings and Credit Groups

In India, savings and credit groups, which are part of the Sakhi Women's Federations supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog are encouraged to create internal systems that enable collective decision making, transparency and a high degree of internal accountability among members of the group. The application of these democratic decision-making processes enable members to experience what it means practice good governance.

¹⁰ This insight came from Srilatha Batliwala.



5. Assessing Dialogue Initiatives

Starting with Dreams and Moving to Realities

As part of an internal self-assessment of the first round of Local to Local Dialogues, the Huairou Commission encouraged participating organizations to think about what they had accomplished through the Dialogues. Sometimes it is hard for people to evaluate themselves and to articulate their vision and the direction they want to go in. It's important to create evaluation tools that help women's groups build their capacities to assess their own work and create their own vision of success. So the Huairou Commission provided a set of questions to help women walk through their evaluation of this experience¹¹. The questions began with a vision of the ideal relationship with the government and then moved on to an assessment of what was possible in reality in a short time frame. The questions given to the participating organizations were as follows:

1. **What did participants' ideal relationship with their local authorities look like?**
This question was to help women close out their realities and imagine an ideal situation.
2. **How could participants improve their relationship with state actors in different time frames? (10 years, 5 years, 3 years, 1 year)**
Here women were supposed to envision what changes were possible in the long term, medium term and then the short term, given the circumstances in which they have to operate. This means taking into consideration both women's capacities as well as political support
3. **In comparison to what they felt was possible, what did women actually accomplish in their Dialogues?**
This question was to get women to assess their achievements against the backdrop of the changes that could have occurred in the six-month period that the Local to Local Dialogues occurred in.

How do you know if you are advancing grassroots women's agendas in good governance?

CISCSA, Argentina suggests a set of questions to help in assessing the dialogue initiatives:

Questions for Grassroots Women:

- How many community initiatives and collaborations have been carried out among the organizations and their allies?
- What kinds of links exist between women and local organizations?

¹¹ This methodology was provided by Srilatha Battilwala, Fellow, Hauser Center for Non Profit Management, Harvard University.



- How many activities has the local organization undertaken to sensitize the community about citizens' and women's rights?
- How many women have participated in the activities mentioned above?
- What proportion of community-based organizations are women?
- How many women are leading the demand for participation in local decision-making?
- How many petitions and proposals that address women's priorities have been formally presented by local civil society or community based organizations to government authorities?
- What local development activities have the organizations have undertaken?

Questions for Local Authorities:

- How many meetings have taken place involving community-based organizations and local authorities?
- Have local authorities have attended meetings organised by local organizations?
- How many agreements have been reached between community-based organizations and local authorities in response to citizen's needs and demands?
- How many women are in local government in positions with decision-making authority?
- What resources have the municipality assigned for the development of community led projects?
- What budget has been assigned to women's priority areas?
- What projects and programs have been developed in response to local realities?



6. Conclusion

A critical resource for women involved in any kind of negotiation is information. Poor women's vulnerability is exacerbated by their lack of information about state entitlements and how to access them. Once they know about legal provisions, policies and programs they can start organising to get these entitlements.

Developing projects in which authorities collaborate with women's groups provides a way for both sets of actors – women's groups and local authorities to work together over a period of time and get to know each other's strengths and thus negotiate roles that are best suited to them.

The Local to Local Dialogue process is an attempt to shift both governing authorities and women's groups out of their conventional roles. This requires an investment on both sides. For poor communities investing in a process whose outcomes are uncertain represents risks and costs. This is

sometimes manifested in a reluctance to participate in processes whose outcomes will usually be uncertain in the short term and at best, will be visible only in the long term.

The Local to Local Dialogue Initiative of the Huairou Commission was an effort to seed an ongoing negotiation process. While groups did gain from the Dialogues, the real rewards of dialogue processes lie in their ability to build long-term robust relationships with government authorities, leading to partnerships. This occurs when there is an ongoing engagement and the scaling up of community driven initiatives on the one hand and on the ability of the government to provide the space to sustain the engagement, on the other.

In order to advance the negotiations and learning that the Local to Local Dialogues began, women's groups and local authorities need to be supported through resources and policies to continue their efforts.



Councilor Kamande Providing Information to Women in Kenya at a Workshop they Organized to Begin the Ongoing Dialogue Process



KENYA

Women Setting Agendas for Dialogue¹

National Context

The Dialogues in Kenya took place during a period of great political transition from one government regime to another and as would be expected, the election of a new government in December of 2002 created a political climate of great optimism.

GROOTS Kenya

The Local to Local Dialogue initiative in Kenya was facilitated by GROOTS Kenya. GROOTS Kenya is a network of Grassroots women's self-help groups and community based organizations from across Kenya. Founded after the Fourth UN Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995, its objective is to ensure that grassroots women are at the forefront of development processes in their communities. Today, the network has over 2,000 member groups from across the country.

Local to Local Dialogues in Kenya

Four villages in the Mathare Valley of Nairobi were selected as the location for the Dialogues. Mathare is a major slum area located 5 Km east of the city center. The four villages selected were Kosovo, Bondeni, Kiboro and Mathare 3B. While some villages are located on government land or trust land others are located on private land. The residents living in the villages of the Mathare Valley lack any kind of security of tenure. The threat of eviction is compounded by the fact that landowners speculate in the land market. The living conditions are poor and communities are densely settled with 1,200 persons per hectare. Most of the households in the four villages involved in the Dialogues were women headed and living below the poverty line with incomes less than a dollar a day. The dense population and poverty create a situation in which there is acute competition for meagre resources. These settlements are highly insecure and have been the epicentres of violence in the past. Large sections of the Mathare population depend on criminal or illegal activities for their livelihoods. The high crime rate in Mathare makes it difficult for community members, particularly women, to engage in effective development activities.

Many poor urban communities such as those in Mathare have been burnt by their experiences with government, police, researchers and donors, who failed to deliver what they promised. Hence the communities are reluctant to participate in projects and programmes in partnership with or initiated by outsiders. Nevertheless, GROOTS Kenya has invested in building strong relationships with the community that helped in the implementation of the dialogue.

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Building a consensus across community groups on what issues they would like to address was the first step.

¹ This case study draws on the Local to Local Dialogue reports written by Emmy M'mbwanga, Social Planner, Ministry of Local Government.



The ten preparatory meetings in the community were part of mobilizing communities. It created an opportunity for groups to reflect on their own capacities and realities and collectively develop strategies that would advance the interests of the communities.

Identifying Community Priorities

Before beginning the dialogue with government officials and elected officials, GROOTS Kenya organised more than ten preparatory meetings with the women's organizations in the four villages of Mathare to facilitate a discussion through which community actors could identify their priorities.

It was decided at the ten meetings that the communities would be best served by a series of workshops that would bring community leaders face to face with local authorities, the national government and other NGOs.

The participants in the workshop were drawn from ten self-help groups operating in the area, which were dealing with similar issues (HIV/AIDS, drugs, shelter, economic empowerment and land tenure).



Councillor Wanjohi of Huruma Ward acknowledged that squatters must be seen as legitimate citizens.

The First Consensus Workshop: Coming Face to Face with Authorities

In attendance at the Workshop held on 15 August 2002 were 77 community members from Kosovo, Bondeni, Kiboro and Mathare 3B, ten partners and two councillors from the Nairobi City Council. Communities used the dialogue process to identify distinct priority areas they would like to address in collaboration with their government.

The Consensus Workshop addressed five key issues raised by communities, HIV/AIDS, land tenure, drug peddling and abuse, poor shelter and environmental conditions, and

economic disparities.

The Consensus Workshop brought together a set of actors—from the community, local authorities and national government—to support grassroots initiatives and address community priorities.

For the first time, government representatives came to the community. Mr. George Onyiro, the Assistant Director from the Physical Planning Department in the Ministry of Lands and Settlement, came to the slum to address security of tenure, an issue that communities had identified as a priority. In particular, he requested that they stop using middlemen for land issues and come directly to the Ministry of Land Affairs instead. He added that his office was accessible to all and that he was ready to work with groups who were well organised and well governed. The Assistant Director's address was an eye opener to the community as expressed by one of the women attending the workshop, "I have lived in this settlement for the last 60 years and could have done a lot if only I knew the way."

Councillor Kamande, the Area Councillor, specifically spoke of his appreciation of the opportunity to dialogue with the people he represents.

Councillor Wanjohi of Huruma Ward recalled that the settlements have been in existence for the last 40 years and their residents can no longer be referred to as squatters. He emphasised the need to formalise their residences by following the required procedures and considering the fact that land buying companies were involved. In addition to this, he stated the necessity of discussing economic interventions suitable for the settlement and dialoguing with the communities before any demolitions are done. The key to all these require good leadership and hence good governance, which he stated he was ready to provide.



Councillor Kamande, the Area Councillor, appreciated the facilitation of the workshop as he had a chance to dialogue with the people he represents. The issues of drugs, AIDS, land and economic empowerment were major issues affecting his ward. He promised to assist his community by:

- Presenting the sanitation problems to the relevant department in the Local Authority.
- Working together with the community on handling the drug issues and urging the communities to cooperate and report the ills in the settlement to him or those in authority.
- Respecting the various roles of the groups in the settlement.

The dialogue with officials at the workshop opened up new avenues for action and dialogue. For example women became aware that they could seek guidance from Ministry of Local Government on issues relating to HIV/AIDS and that they need to form into settlement groups to be able to address their land issues.

Mrs. Grace Masese, head of the AIDS Control Unit (ACU) in the Ministry of Local Government, explained the role the government is playing in addressing the AIDS Pandemic. She said that since the pandemic was declared a national disaster in 1999, the government formed the National Aids Control Council (NACC) whose main objective is to co-ordinate efforts in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The current activities being undertaken by the government and which the Mathare communities can benefit from include: education on AIDS, VCT Centres for free testing and counselling and encouraging good living. Since everyone is affected in one way or another, there is a need to promote preventive measures and support those who are infected.

The community groups also learned that government regulations on Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) and the Physical Planning Act 1996 require active citizens participation and that they have a right to ask the Local Council to address the priorities of the communities that it represents.

The groups were able to initiate dialogues that sought to build alliances with other organizations such as the Small Towns Development Project STDP/GTZ and the National Agency for the Control of Drug Abuse (NACADA) of which they stand to benefit.

The sharing of experiences by the different community groups unveiled new innovative ideas such as the pay toilets project by the "Tuelewane Self-Help Group" which addresses both sanitation problems and increases the incomes of the community.

The presence of officials at the Consensus Workshop enabled women to get information, strategize on how to address problems in the settlements and how to approach the government to support women's priorities.



Mr. Mshila of GTZ-Small Towns Talking to Participants

For the first time local councilors were able to meet the communities they represent. Moreover the councilors recognized that this meeting reflected a dialogue, which could lead to collaboration with citizens.

This workshop was unlike the meetings that elected officials usually attend in which the officials set the agenda.



Summary of Discussions in the First Workshop

Concerns Expressed by Women's Organizations	Strategies Discussed at the Workshop
<p>DRUGS</p> <p>How can drug peddling and abuse be controlled when the local leaders and administrators are unscrupulously colluding with the drug dealers?</p>	<p>The residents will start by reporting such cases to the authorities and other groups dealing with drug issues (NACADA).</p> <p>Women should play a key role, as they are the ones closest to the youth and spend most of the time in the settlement. They will work to have continuous education and awareness campaigns, in some cases using the drug addicts and peddlers as educators.</p> <p>Promotion of constructive activities to keep the youth involved in the economic development is necessary.</p>
<p>HIV/AIDS</p> <p>The anti-retroviral drugs for the control of AIDS opportunistic infections are expensive for low-income communities to afford.</p> <p>Lack of information and careless behaviour especially on the side of men is a major cause of the spread of AIDS.</p> <p>The low economic status of residents is pushing the youth to become involved in anti-social behaviour.</p>	<p>Behavioural change should begin by women and men accepting the fact that all are affected; hence change is necessary from within.</p> <p>There is a need for the government to negotiate for subsidised costs for anti-retroviral drugs.</p> <p>Actors should work in partnership to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.</p> <p>Promotion of proper diet, good behaviour and herbal medication is necessary.</p> <p>Organising more information and awareness for both men and women should be a priority.</p>
<p>LAND, ENVIRONMENT AND SHELTER</p> <p>Can one claim land after staying on it for 12 years?</p> <p>Why has the Mathare 4A land case been volcanic?</p> <p>What happens to land ownership when divorce occurs, especially for women?</p> <p>Confusion regarding double/triple allocations of land/title deeds.</p> <p>Some of the old women have stayed for even 60 years without any knowledge that the land doesn't belong to them.</p>	<p>This is only applicable for private land and not trust /government land.</p> <p>On the Mathare 4A case, proper intervention by the government right from the beginning could have solved a lot of the problems. In addition, there is the claim that project administration and politicians used the divide and rule approach for purely selfish gains.</p> <p>Community members can seek legal redress from court or other organizations like FIDA.</p> <p>Any application for land must generate a ground search report.</p> <p>There is a need to form community-upgrading groups, which will follow-up with the lands office to establish the tenure position of the land and draw a plan for the future.</p>
<p>ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT</p> <p>What are some of the strategies to address poverty in the slums?</p>	<p>Micro-credit facilities can be promoted.</p> <p>Links to the potential market should be established.</p> <p>Promoting the marketing of products will be helpful.</p> <p>There is a need to train communities in viable economic development activities such as income generating activities.</p>



At the end of the workshop the participants were divided into three working groups based on the issues discussed to develop an action plan for the future.

The Second Consensus Workshop: Review and Exploration

On 9-10 September 2003, 88 community members came together with six partners, two city council members, and two UN-HABITAT employees. This workshop was organised to encourage follow-up on the commitments made at the first workshop, a reanalysis of the issues discussed previously, and an exploration of ideas brought forward in the implementation of the past year's work.

To start the dialogue process the Workshop opened with a consideration of the roles of each person in attendance and other partners. Clarifying or developing new roles is critical to effective partnerships.

The Workshop participants next heard and responded to reports from the three working groups formed at the first Workshop, Drug Abuse, HIV/AIDS and Land Tenure and Shelter:

1. **Drug Abuse Working Group:** Coming out of the first Workshop the group was concentrated on creating awareness of drug abuse through drama, songs, traditional dances and sports, organising a TOT and counselling to the youth. The group focus was unfortunately derailed because of a lack of attendance on the part of most group members, a lack of funding and a lack of training. Regardless, the remaining group members were able to carry out parts of the original mission, including:
 - Football provision to encourage sports instead of idleness that often leads to drug use;
 - Basic counselling services to the youth;
 - The creation of a drama group to prevent youth inactivity and communicate positive messages; and
 - Car washing for youth income that was unfortunately stopped by the government because it constituted illegal water use.

One of the realisations of this group was that there was a need for a Mathare Resource Centre to house community activities.

2. **HIV/AIDS Working Group:** The HIV/AIDS Working Group centred their work on awareness and home-based care efforts. They were able to organise young people, single mothers, poor community members and micro-credit groups. Particular challenges that the group identified were a lack of outside support for their work, the lack of a Mathare ambulance, an inadequacy of food to give patients and a lack of funding for care of the sick and orphans. Women were successful in working across communities to meet some of their need for outside support and spread their knowledge through their area.
3. **Land Tenure and Shelter Working Group:** This group existed prior to the first Workshop, however, their relationship with the government was confrontational. Through the dialogue begun at the first Workshop the group realised the benefits of working with local authorities and other leaders as

The workshop with policy makers and local authorities kick-started a dialogue process. The problems identified by women require ongoing dialogue and collaboration with local authorities and support from national governments.

The increase in the number of community members since the first workshop indicates that community members saw the Dialogues as a credible negotiation process in which they were ready to invest.



allies. They were able to establish a good rapport with government through visits to the Assistant Director of Physical Planning in the Ministry of Lands and Settlements on the issue of secure tenure in the Mathare slums. Of course, the problems of eviction and the lack of basic services have not been solved, but the dialogue between the Ministry and the community is a critical first-step.

Government authorities and community partners responded to the working group reports with positive reactions and proposals for action plans. Mr. George Onyiro, the Assistant Director from the Physical Planning Department in the Ministry of Lands and Settlement, who also attended the first Workshop, stated that it was an obligation of the government to plan for its citizens and that the community members needed to continue their demand for secure tenure. He invited the Mathare community to give the government their accurate information of on the land that had been illegally taken. He noted that because most communities do not document their history it is difficult to follow-up on community land claims.

Mr. Dominic Mutheki of the Nairobi City Council Planning Department reiterated Mr. Onyiro's point regarding the importance of documentation. He asked community members to submit their complaints to the town clerk and also present them to the City Council. City plans for the rehabilitation of the social hall, construction of a health clinic in Mathare North and construction of streetlights and eight new public toilets were also presented to the community by Mr. Mutheki. This was vital information and without the Dialogue the community would have been unaware of these ventures.

The Divisional Medical Representative of the Nairobi City Council, Dr. Raphael, explained the recent government decentralization of basic medical services. He also expressed reservations about the proposal to provide food to HIV/ AIDS patients after they have been tested because he believed the idea would not be sustainable in the long-term.

A presenter from the Ministry of Local Government informed the Workshop participants about the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP), an important tool for communities across Kenya to plan and implement their own projects. She explained how community members could get more information about LASDAP and encouraged people to pursue this programme for their own projects. 687 million dollars have been awarded to community-led poverty eradication programmes across Kenya through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP).

Mr. David Mshila, the representative from GTZ, Small Towns Development Project, explained the concept of creating a land fund from which communities could purchase their own land.

Three additional issues discussed by the Workshop participants were Water and Waste Management, Security and Socio-Economic Support:

Accurate documentation is necessary for legal follow-up actions in regards to land tenure and it is also a good way for communities to demonstrate their capacity to local authorities.

Finding out about resources, allocations and entitlements is a good way for communities to put their plans into action and it is often an outcome of alliances with government authorities.



1. **Water and Waste Management:** Concerns over the price and quality of water available in the community were raised. There were no price controls for water and illegal water connections were ubiquitous. In addition, garbage permeated the slums of Mathare. Community ideas to address these problems included water kiosks provided by the city and city council managed toilets.
2. **Security:** The community pointed to many reasons for the security and safety issues in Mathare, including the prevalence of bars, lack of leadership, the dominance of the rich, poor infrastructure, poverty, idleness and child abandonment.
3. **Livelihoods:** Mathare residents are limited in their access to business financing opportunities and there is little market for some of their products, such as handicrafts. The size of homes often deters successful entrepreneurs from expanding their businesses. Overall, the community recognized the need to be innovative in their pursuits of income.

The Workshop broke into six groups to discuss the issues that had emerged from the both the working group reports and the Local to Local Dialogues that had followed. Each group was asked to analyse and strategize their problem.

Suggestions and considerations that surfaced from the group discussions were based in community realities.

Action Plans from the Second Consensus Workshop

To enable action from the many constructive discussions during the Workshop the participants organised into two main task forces to address the issues of HIV/ AIDS, Drug Abuse and Strengthening Economic Empowerment. Each team consisted of 16 community members and agreed to meet on a specific date within two weeks of the Workshop. Two other community members formed an interim committee to work on the issues of Land Tenure and Shelter, Security and Provision of Basic Services. The Workshop participants realised the necessity of involving the larger community in these three issues, so they decided to delay the creation of big teams.

Everyone agreed that it was necessary to continue the Local to Local Dialogues and to work together in eradicating community problems. The Workshop ended with everyone looking forward to the next Consensus Workshop.



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RUSSIA

Cleaning and Greening Neighbourhoods in Russia²

National Context

Since 1989, Russia has gone through a series of rapid economic and political changes. Many of these changes led to the impoverishment of communities in which women have had to bear the burden of coping in a hostile economic environment. Women were pushed out of jobs in the formal economy and were forced either to take on low paid jobs or to become part of the informal economy. The Government adopted the National Plan of Action for Advancement of Women, but the lack of financial support from the government meant that this plan has not been put into effect.

Territorial Self Governing Committees (TSGCs) were created through the municipal decentralization process in Russia. The TSGCs are citizen's committees that are expected to address local issues related to infrastructure and basic services for neighbourhoods. Resolution 1,000, passed by the government in 1996, states that all matters relating to building, rebuilding and ground tapping must be agreed to by the TSGCs. These committees are elected by their communities and recognized by the municipalities, but are not adequately resourced or given the powers to function effectively.

Information Centre of Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF)

ICIWF was created in 1994 at the initiative of several women's organizations as a resource center in support of women's issues in transition countries. They found that organizations and social initiatives interested in addressing women's problems need information, organization and educational support. ICIWF provides information exchange and regular consultations for women's organizations, gender researchers, grassroots organisers, women in local communities and self-governance bodies. ICIWF supports the activities aimed at the empowerment of women and solving of women's every day problems.

Towards these goals, ICIWF initiated the creation of the Association of the Independent Women's Organizations (36 organizations from Russia and 3 countries from CIS). ICIWF is the co-ordinator of this Association. In the past, this association of women's organizations organised a number of different activities, including a network of Information and Educational Centres that was created in ten cities and women's networks that were created in five cities for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

ICIWF is interested in supporting women to find solutions to the problems they face in their daily lives. This network of women's groups across Russian cities is committed to identifying ways for communities to improve infrastructure and services available to communities in collaboration with local institutions and service providers. ICIWF's efforts

² This case study draws on the Local to Local Dialogue reports written by Liza Bozhkova, Director, ICIWF.



include collaborations with schools to increase vocational opportunities for adolescents, building centres for women and helping women in the TSGCs have a greater voice in decision-making.

Local to Local Dialogues in Russia

ICIWF facilitated Local to Local Dialogues in two neighbourhoods, Zonalnyi and Solneichnyi, in the city of Saratov with a population of approximately 900,000. The Dialogues involved the Association of Territorial Self-Governance Committees and various NGOs with a combined membership of 450,000 and local community members consisting of 50,000 inhabitants.

Zonalnyi's Neighbourhood Transformation

The TSGC of Zonalnyi has been particularly active in mobilising citizens to improve and maintain infrastructure in the neighbourhoods. Citizens have been successful in getting roads built, organising community repair, cleaning spring wells, cleaning roads, planting trees and gardens and improving many other areas of the settlement. Today, the citizens of Zonalnyi are involved in addressing the following needs in their settlement:

- Lack of clean drinking water
- Poor street lighting
- Poor sewage systems
- Reopening the clinic and savings banks
- Poor playgrounds and gymnasiums
- Garbage not being collected from houses

Citizens Setting Precedents: Milestones

April 28, 2002

The TSGC organised "Voskresnik" (voluntary labour) with 50 residents from eight apartments. Children found discarded wheels, adults helped to dispose of these by burying them, forty seedlings were planted, eleven flower beds were made, children helped to bring fertile soil in buckets and spread it under trees and in the flower beds.

May 10, 2002

A meeting of teenagers and children was held. The slogan of this meeting was "Let us help each other and ourselves." The participants of the meeting decided to take responsibility for the seedlings planted during the voluntary labour and expressed their interest in participating in the process of improving the common spaces around the apartment blocks. They also prepared a plan for joint activities with the rest of the community.

May 12, 2002

Children elected their leaders and subsequently set up a Children's Board.

May 18, 2002

The Children's Board organised a children's subbotnik (Saturday spent on community service). They painted tires and playground equipment.

In Russia, local and national governments, as well as citizens, are trying to learn how to practice good governance in the context of decentralization.

In a short period of six months the citizens of Zonalnyi along with the children and youth of the neighborhood came together, took on specific tasks to clean and improve the facilities in their settlements and were able to advance their interests through a dialogue with government officials.



A Children's Board Member Hanging Signs Asking Residents to Help Remove Old Sand from a Playground.

May 25, 2002

The Children's Board conducted a meeting devoted to the organization and celebration of "Russia Day" to be held on 12 June for the children in the settlement. 10 residents sponsored the holiday.

June 8, 2002

Children and adults together made ten flowerbeds and planted flowers at their building porches. The children posted advertisements inviting everyone to come to the festival with their children.

June 12, 2002

Children decorated the yards with flags made of bright scraps. In the evening families—including mothers with babies came to the celebration organised by the children.

June 13, 2002

The Children's Board reviewed their work during the Festival. They decided to clean the playground and use it for dances and games. The next day, the children filled potholes and adults helped them use old tires to make football goals. 12 children played their first football match in the "new" playground.

June 14, 2002

The Children's Board was renamed the Children-Youth Board.

June 21, 2002

The adults discussed with the Children-Youth Board plans for preparing a compost pit for using waste matter to make fertilisers for their green zones, which lacked good soil.



Children Planting Trees and Bushes in a Playground Area.

Other Efforts to Improve the Community

The initiating group participated in cleaning a spring in the grove. Another group began improving the yards of two more apartment blocks. Two complexes in the neighbourhood have won the town competition for greening the town and improving their settlement. The winners were presented with 12-Kg of lawn grass and 25-meters of hose.

Eliciting the Support of Local and National Authorities to Address Community-Identified Priorities

May 10-20, 2002

Four people took the lead in preparing a letter conveying the problems of the neighbourhood to the deputies. They collected signatures of the community and sent the letter to four addresses: the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission of Saratov, the Gubernator of the Saratov Region, the Major of Saratov and the Director of the Municipal Sanitation Department.

As a community that has demonstrated its ability to organize and manage its own resources, the Zonalnyi residents used the media effectively to convey their dissatisfaction with the action taken by the government and to pressure their elected representative to address their problems.



July 17, 2002

Leaders of the same communities met to review any progress. There was none. In a discussion with a correspondent from the Povolzhsky Information Agency and the newspaper *Saratovskya Panorama*, they expressed their concerns with the participation of the authorities in all levels of solving the dwellers' problems stated in the letter. They told him they were offended by the indifference of the authorities and had decided to boycott the elections of the regional legislature to be held in September. On 17 July, this was published in an article called "Residents of Zonalnyi and TsDK voted in advance—against everybody."



Community Planning Processes

August 2, 2002

The second meeting was held to monitor improvements in the settlement. No changes were observed. People hoped that the approaching elections would force authorities to address their problems. Their concern appeared in an article in the regional "Reporter" on August 9.

September 3, 2002

Vladmir Nikolaevich Yuzhakov, Deputy of the State Duma met with the community. Children, teenagers and youth were also invited to the meeting as concerned citizens who were interested in solving problems related to childhood education, sport and a healthy mode of life. "It was the first lively and concrete dialogue in years," said members of the self-governing committee. After meeting with the communities, Yuzhakov and sanitation officials decided to stop working on water supply in spring 2003 and instead focus on improving sewage systems, which will continue until 2005. The deputy promised to work with the leaders of the community in future. He encouraged all the citizens to vote.

September 2002

The *Saratov Regional Weekly*, "Sovfax," published an article in which Lyuboy Derevyagina said, "We understood the great power of dialogue and what about the authorities?"

More than 46% of the residents participated in elections. This percentage is higher than that of the city or the region.

Citizens also want to reduce the cost of new telephone connections. By September more than 78 phones were installed on better terms than the telephone company agreements.

Summary of Action in Zonalnyi

- Residents repaired the children's playgrounds and one of the porches of the apartment blocks.



The Roundtable brought stakeholders face to face so they could learn from each other and explore ways in which to collaborate. These different actors expressed their need to share information, learn through community initiatives and transfer experiences and insights across communities.

- In 16 of 21 settlements, residents have a system for monitoring cleanliness.
- Lighting of 17 porches was repaired.
- A group of residents collected donations from the community to clean the water spring.
- The children who participated in the improvement of the settlement received presents at the beginning of the school year.
- The story of Zonalnyi and its communities was broadcast on television.

Series of Dialogue Workshops with Different Stakeholders

From July 2001 until this writing, ICIWF has held 10 inter-regional seminars on local policy and women's agendas in different towns. One of the key objectives of these seminars has been to initiate

interactions among different stakeholders who have the potential to become partners in the exercise of local governance.

Since the ICIWF has developed a good relationship with the Ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry for Construction (Gosstroy), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Administration), the organization regularly transfers information from the federal level to the local level and vice versa. It has the ability to create forums in which grassroots organizations' concerns can be conveyed to the national level.

Roundtable in Saratov, October 2002

A three-day seminar was organised in Saratov in October 2002. It brought together grassroots women's organizations, local self-governance committees, law enforcement officials and local authorities. Ten female leaders of TSGCs including Zonalnyi and Solnechnyi were invited to share their experiences on working with authorities to improve their neighbourhoods. 200 magazines and articles were distributed. They discussed the activities of these leaders during the last year including problems and how communities had tried to address these. Workshop participants exchanged experiences on how they had organised residents around the improvement of the community and how they had built alliances between the TSGCs and the schools. Participants were also involved in a training session on developing communication and teamwork skills. They closed the seminar by discussing and adopting a programme of action.

Learning from Local to Local Dialogues

ICIWF found that the dialogue process initiated in Solnechnyi was somewhat disappointing. In Solnechnyi, the habitual belief that everything depends on municipal and federal rule is still quite strong and does not encourage citizens to take on responsibility. Introducing other groups and individuals to this community via seminars

One of the key problems faced by communities in the context of Local to Local Dialogues was that communities lacked the experience of problem solving. Women who were part of these multi-stakeholder processes agreed on the need to test out their ideas through demonstration projects. They recognized the need to understand opportunities created through decentralization and how women could use them.



or learning exchanges helps to demonstrate self-help approaches to problem solving. For example, ICIWF involved ecologist Lyuba Derevyagina, an active member and president of the Self Governing Committee of Zonalnyi.

Another seminar brought together government departments, social workers and law enforcement departments to discuss crime prevention and safety of adolescents and women. As a result, a crisis center may be established in the city to address the problem of women and adolescent safety.

At present, the administration of some regions is ready to cooperate with women NGOs, take their experience into consideration and involve them in the development of new municipal programmes. The seminars helped women to see that the administration in some regions is ready to collaborate with civil society groups—they clearly see civil society as having a role in decision-making, planning and problem solving. One of the women from ICIWF remarked, “it is required that public organizations, including women’s organizations that have already accumulated experience in practical work, should actively participate in the development of local communities and improvement of life standards.”

The Local to Local Dialogues thus served as an ideal starting point for community based organizations to demonstrate how communities can work with local authorities.

The Zonalnyi experience brought to the multi-stakeholder learning forum a demonstration of how citizens can effectively mobilize under the leadership of the TSGC to take initiative and use their resources to maintain existing facilities and contribute to their neighborhoods. In addition, it demonstrated how the community’s success enabled them to pressure the government to address problems in the settlement.



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Women recognize the need to experiment with innovative forms of engagement with authorities in order to bring about good governance. As stated by CISCOSA, "the need and desire to create new paths for citizen participation was clearly demonstrated by citizens throughout the country during 2001 and 2002."

ARGENTINA

Creating Common Agendas to Protect the Environment³

National Context

The Argentinean Government has adopted a neo-liberal model of development following which increasingly basic services are being privatised. The collapse of the economy means that the Government has little money to pay for services, prices are rising and large numbers of people are unemployed. The middle classes, whose incomes have been acutely affected by the economic crisis, have been active in civil society initiatives for the first time. There are high levels of corruption in the country, which have increased because of the economic crisis. Citizens, particularly those from low and middle income groups, are finding that their interests are not being addressed by the government. There is a very limited role for citizens in decision-making on public policies.

Centre of Services and Exchange for the Southern Cone, Argentina (CISCOSA)

The Local to Local Dialogues in Argentina were led by CISCOSA. The key actors were communities from Santa Maria de Punilla, Bialet Masse and Cosquin, the three cities that share the resources of the Cosquin River. The Local to Local Dialogues were used to build capacities of four community-based organizations on the use of the river resources:

- The Inter Community River Commission or the Cosquin River Commission comprising citizens from the three cities created the River Plan in the absence of a clear plan from the Government;
- Family Community Market, created in 2001 to strengthen the micro-enterprises of family based artisans in the Valley;
- The Council of Neighbourhood Centres, a federation of community based organizations; and
- The Women's Council, created through a municipal ordinance.

Local to Local Dialogues in Argentina

The Cosquin River and its surroundings are a major resource for the communities settled in three cities that share the Cosquin River waters. The pristine river waters have not only provided a water source for the settlements but have also drawn tourists from all over the country. In recent years, the pollution of river water and the banks of the river have been steadily worsening because of garbage and sewage disposal



The Local to Local Dialogues took place in the city of Cosquin with a population of approximately 20,000.

³ This case study draws on the Local to Local Dialogue reports written by Georgia Marman, Documenter.



into the river. This impacts the living conditions of citizens as well as the livelihoods of many who depend on tourism.

The situation in the Punilla Valley where the Local to Local Dialogues were carried out is marked by a state of recession. There is a crisis at the Municipal level that has created a lack of municipal funds, which means that municipal services are often being neglected. The communities of Santa Maria de Punilla, Biale Masse and Cosquin, who live around the Cosquin River, have thus had to face environmental degradation as well as the lack of municipal services, both of which have an adverse affect on their quality of life.



The Women's Day Workshop provided the starting point for these two groups of women to come together around issues impacting them and to find ways to collaborate.

While a process of decentralization has taken place, this has not been accompanied by adequate devolution of powers and resources to strengthen local government or citizen's participation. The national government has failed to develop policies that promote devolution of powers. But side-by-side the Punilla Valley has also seen the mobilisation of communities and efforts to take action to address the problems of the Punilla Valley. The state however has a restricted understanding of citizen's participation that is confined to elections.

A series of workshops and meetings were organised in which groups worked towards understanding and analysing their situation, looking at options for action, building consensus within and across organizations and planning actions for the future.

Mobilising the Community to Take Action on Cosquin River

The series of workshops and supplementary activities detailed below improved the visibility of the work of the organizations in the communities who participated in the dialogues.

Milestones
March 2002

The Municipal Women's Council of Cosquin organised a Women's Day Workshop in which 80 women who were part of the Council of Neighbourhood Centres discussed the role of women in decision-making.

CISCSA began work on a communication strategy that focused on the role of the Council of Neighbourhood Centres (CNCs) to communities.

This meeting between women in Cosquin's Municipal Women's Council and women from the Council of Neighbourhood Centers also represents an inside-outside alliance in which women from communities can begin collaboration with women who are part of local authorities.



Collaboration between the two represents a win-win situation because women from the Neighborhood Centers will have their concerns taken up in the Municipality while the women in the Municipal Women's Council gain by creating a good support base or constituency.

The Family Community Market organised the Workshop on Women and Micro-enterprise to discuss how to link families, collective enterprise and women's role in families and communities.

May 2002

A Communications Planning Workshop was held for generating awareness on environmental problems and the River Directive Plan.

June 2002

Various Cosquin organizations exchanged dialogue on health, employment, poverty, women's concerns, environment and planning for sustainable use of resources leading to an articulation of local initiatives.

The River Intercommunity Group organised a marathon to raise awareness about the river resources. 130 people participated from the three cities.

July 2002

The River Intercommunity Group presented the River Plan and Sustainable Local Development Plan at a meeting with primary and secondary school teachers.

The Women's Council of Cosquin developed a plan for cleaning the city. In collaboration with the municipality, they organised for garbage collection, flower planting and street lighting in the downtown area.

The Family Community Market held a second meeting with entrepreneurs at the National Plaza for Folklore, a facility lent to them by the Municipal Folklore Commission in order help increase the visibility of Cosquin's family based entrepreneurs.



The Second Entrepreneur Meeting

The workshop series represents a process of mobilizing communities affected by the pollution of the natural resource base. The workshops are also a space in which communities can collectively analyze and articulate their problems and collectively develop solutions to these problems.

August 2002

CISCSA organised a workshop on marketing with a focus on how to reduce the burden of women.

September 2002

There was an evaluation with all participating organizations to allow space for sharing successes and obstacles, a discussion of the direction of their future together. In particular, problems in communicating with local authorities were identified.

The First Regional Public Conference towards Sustainable Development was held in Punilla Valley. The Cosquin River Intercommunity Group initiated this in order to share



experiences in the region on water management, waste disposal, contamination, sustainable tourism, sexual and reproductive health and shared economic problems.

November 2002

The Regional Meeting of Municipal Women's Council was held.

The Communication Strategy

Participants recognized the need to have a communications strategy to keep citizens informed of the major challenges as well as the actions taken by the River Intercommunity Group, the Council of Neighbourhood Centres and the Family Community Market to address these.

CISCSA's team invested in this communication strategy. In order to function effectively CNC required good understanding of community issues. In short, this was a way to articulate the problem clearly, both in terms of expressing the issues and connecting different actors. The Communication Strategy had three objectives:

1. To enhance community awareness on the environment and the need to use natural resources in a sustainable manner;
2. To stimulate citizen's participation on solutions to environmental, economic and infrastructure problems; and
3. To serve as a foundation for involving women living in Cosquin in municipal decision-making and the work of local organizations that are working on their behalf.

In July, The Women's Council proactively created its own plan for a cleaner and better-maintained Cosquin. Their campaign included addressing garbage collection, planting flowers, and a public lighting system for downtown. This plan was finally implemented when the municipality co-operated by offering labour in the campaign. The Municipality saw that such a campaign would benefit tourism in the city. However, the municipal involvement has remained at the level of providing a small amount of resources. There has been no attempt by the municipality to partner with citizens on this. The communities' actions thus drew the attention of local authorities, demonstrating to authorities the fact that communities are worthy collaborators.

Recognition in global and national forums often gets the attention of local authorities.

Having worked for several months without any signs of recognition or co-operation from the municipality, Claudia Peirano on her return from the International Conference on Women in Local Government and Decision-Making received a letter from the Deliberating Council of the Municipality of Cosquin congratulating her for her participation in this.

The initiatives sought to bring other key constituents to support efforts around sustainable use of resources, such as teachers, and sensitize local organizations on the role and leadership of women. Organizations began to see the need to collaborate. They began

Local and National Authorities who have no experience collaborating with citizen's groups are always wary of investing in collaborations. In the beginning, the investments authorities make are usually small. It is only when citizen's groups demonstrate their expertise that authorities are ready to increase their stakes in a partnership.

Given the diversity of interests among the various groups with a stake in development and the interplay between interests and power building, internal agreements for action to address common needs is the first step towards strengthening capacities for effective participation.



Insights from the collaboration across community-based organizations include the need for a new kind of leadership and new ways of engaging with government to advance women's economic and social interests.

creating a consensus on how to proceed with the internal strengthening of the organization and strategies through their efforts to communicate, organise and plan together. Women emerged as a core of active leaders across the collaborating organizations.

Alliances among women in different organizations created a support network, which can collectively strategize to address women's concerns. What emerged from this series of events was recognition of the need to work together to create stronger links among the local authorities, communities and women's organization. The Municipality and government need to see women's participation in decision-making and planning as part of the definition of women's political participation. In other words, expanding their definition of political participation to include women's participation in decision-making and planning.

While it has been difficult to negotiate or collaborate with local authorities because the local authorities resisted all efforts to be drawn into a dialogue with civil society, the Communication Strategy and other advocacy efforts of the community-based organizations have resulted in innovative partnerships across civil society organizations.



TANZANIA

Face to Face with Procedures and Policies⁴

National Context

Tanzania is one of the African countries in which government has been making a conscious effort to establish democratic institutions and strengthen women's status. While much still remains to be done, especially in linking existing national gender-sensitive and equitable legislation to local political decision-making and action, some milestones have been achieved and women are gaining ground in a number of critical areas including legislation relating to education, marriage and family status as well as private property. Tanzania had a centrally planned economy that is currently undergoing decentralisation. Local communities, however, are uninformed about local government, legal and administrative policies and procedures.

Over the past five years, women of Tanzania have been organising for improved rights to land. As a result new legislation was enacted in 1999 and the opportunity now exists for strengthening women's access and ownership rights in urban and rural land. In the urban areas, however, the situation of low-income women is still precarious. This is perhaps not so much due to a lack of appropriate legislation but rather because so many women living in economic poverty also suffer from a desperate lack of information which could inform and consolidate political action.

Women Advancement Trust (WAT)

In the capital city of Dar es Salaam, the Local to Local Dialogues were facilitated by WAT, in collaboration with two urban grassroots groups at the level of the Ward (the smallest urban administrative unit in the municipality). The role of WAT has been to facilitate the groups by opening up political space for them by brokering meetings with local ward and municipal leaders and other key decision makers. WAT also works to provide women links to sources of legal literacy on women's land and housing opportunities.

Urban Grassroots Groups

The grassroots groups who participated in the Local to Local Dialogues are the Mshikamano Housing Group (MHG) and the Mpambano Women's Group (MWG). Both MHG and MWG used their interactions with local authorities to develop action plans.

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Women's capacities to dialogue with local authorities were upgraded by WAT.

Through Local to Local Dialogues women's groups:

1. Learned about the advantages of acquiring legal status for community-based organizations and procedures for going about it;
2. Acquired information on regulations governing the operation of local savings and credit organizations; and
3. Explored working with local authorities.

⁴ This case study draws on the Local to Local Dialogue reports written by Lucy Tesha Merere, Project Documenter.



Group Members

The Mshikamano Housing Group (MHG)

MHG was established in 1996 with ten members of whom seven were women. The group was established with the aim of acquiring affordable shelter on a self-help basis. Currently, MHG comprises 15 members of whom 11 are women. The group is located in Mtoni kwa Azizi Ali in Mtoni Ward, Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam. They acquired un-surveyed land (i.e., untitled land of undetermined acreage) in accordance with government procedures for the purpose of building residential houses. After the group had the land surveyed, local squatters invaded the land and took it over so that the women could not develop the plots and proceed with constructing their

houses. The women were able to avert a major confrontation with encroachers by going to local authorities.

The efforts of the Mshikamano Housing Group and the Mpambano Women's Group in Kampala, Tanzania provide insights into ways in which grassroots women's groups can invest in a range of strategies to gain the support of the state. Women have to invest in accessing information, understanding legislation, understanding government structures and approaching the relevant authorities.

WAT helped to create conditions for dialogue by introducing the group to the local authorities such as ward leaders, local councillors, the Community Development Officer and the Municipal Director in order that the women's group could begin to dialogue with the local authorities of Temeke district to reclaim their land.

Local to Local Dialogues with MHG in Tanzania

Over a period of four months, the MHG made several visits to the local authorities and invested in building their own understanding of legislation regarding land tenure in order to gain the support of the authorities in reclaiming their land. In addition, they began to learn how to interact with the government.

Milestones in the MHG Dialogue Process

May 2002

The WAT Chairperson together with two other members approached the Mtoni Ward leader, and their local councillor to inform them about their group and invite them for an introductory meeting with the group. The local councillors accepted the invitation and at the meeting they were informed about the group's problems regarding land. The local councillor explained the procedure for filing a complaint to the Temeke Municipal Council. He advised the group to write a letter to the Temeke Municipal Director requesting an appointment. The local authority advised them to send the letter to the Municipal Director, with copies to the Mayor of Temeke, Mtoni Ward Councillor and the officer who is in charge of Department of Urban Planning and Statistics who normally deals with Land, Urban Planning and Community Development. The letter was prepared and sent.

The group then had a session with two women lawyers who are both members of the Tanzania Women Lawyers Association, who shared information on the legal status regarding dispute settlements in accordance with Land Acts of 1999.

June 2002

Three members of MHG, including the Chairperson of the group, followed-up the reply from the Temeke Municipal Director regarding their request to meet with him and members of the Town Planning Committee.



MHG found out that the Municipal Director appointed a technical team to scrutinise the source of the problem for the group and requested the team to submit recommendations to him for possible solutions.

For six weeks the MHG members did regular follow-up with the municipal authorities and the technical team to find out if any progress had been made. The response was that the technical team was still investigating the issue.

July 2002

The group followed-up again on 4 July 2002 to get a decision, but the group was told to come back on 10 July 2002. On 10 July 2002, the group was at the Land Department office in Temeke Municipal Council early in the morning for the appointment. However, the answer was the same: the technical team was still working on their problem. The one official from land department promised them that by 25th July 2002 they would have the report ready regarding their problem.

Finally, the technical team submitted their recommendation late July and had internal session with the Municipal Director where their local councillor attended the session.

2 August, 2002

The Land Officer told them that the technical team together with Temeke Municipal Director has agreed that the Municipal Council should bear the cost of re-surveying their plot, which was encroached upon by the local community. The Municipal Director told them that the work should start immediately. The group was told to report back to the Municipal Office on the 15 August 2002 to hear other directives, but on the return date they did not find anybody at the office.

19 August 2002

The Mshikamano Housing group has been following-up on the government permit for valuation of the invaded plot from the Land Department of the Temeke Municipal Council.

The Chairperson of the group visited the Land department on 5 September 2002. She went with two other representatives of the group who volunteered to make follow-up of valuation process. The municipal officials said that there was a need to develop a strategy on how to convince the local leaders from Buza, the invaded area, to meet with its local people who invaded the plot.

27 September 2003

When the group representatives visited the Executive Secretary of Buza they were informed that there would be further delays in the re-evaluation because the funds from the Municipality had not been authorised.

The women learned how to best operate within the system of governance by working directly with local authorities.

Local authorities and technical experts often control all of the information, leaving communities in the dark.

There was an attempt to present the problem to the Municipal Director in order to gain the support of a senior member of the local authority. In this way the women were working to seize opportunities to ally with powerful actors.

Grassroots women find it easier to make their voices heard in a dialogue when they are not alone.



In order to build lasting relationships with authorities women's groups have to be patient and persevering. Women's groups will often find that they have to visit officials many times before they are able to get a response. Sometimes delays mean that authorities are not sure how to solve the problem. This could be an opportunity for women to present solutions.

3 October 2002

The group phoned the Executive Secretary of the area, Buza, and reminded him of his agreed assignment. He requested the group to give him one more week so that he could have a discussion with the encroachers and plan a meeting between the encroachers and the Mshikamano leaders. Even after the seven-day period, the Executive Secretary of Buza failed to fulfil his promise.

11 October 2002

Disappointed, three representatives of Mshikamano decided to go back to the head of Land department in Temeke Municipal Council to update him and they were told that he would look into the issue.

28 October, 2002

The group visited the executive Secretary of Buza to see if there was any progress and he said he was busy with other government directives from Temeke Municipal Council and promised that he would work on it in the second week of November 2002 with the staff who assisted in some of the provisions/clauses of their by-laws.

The Mpambano Women's Group (MWG)

MWG was informally established in 1999 by grassroots women as part of the wider women's efforts in eradicating poverty at family level. The group is situated at Sinza 'A' Ward, Kijitonyama suburb, in Kinondoni Municipal Council, in Dar es Salaam. The group

was established by 25 women members with the aim of empowering women to eradicate poverty at the community level. Most of these women belong to low-income communities and earn money by selling street foods or poultry. One of the group's objectives is to assist women in increasing their incomes. The MWG has set up *tontines* or revolving credit funds to assist women financially during burials, weddings and traditional festivals.

Local to Local Dialogues with MWG in Tanzania

MWG used the Local to Local Dialogue process to undertake research and prepare the documents required for acquiring legal status for their group. The group is currently negotiating with their local authorities and lawyers to ensure that their organization is

properly registered under Tanzanian laws. It is also necessary to have legal status to qualify for loans under the Women Special Fund (which is managed by the local authority) and from other financial institutions that are funding community groups through loans and grants.



Local Authorities Responding to Community Priorities



Milestones in the MWG Dialogue Process

August 2002

One day in the middle of August, the Mpambano Women's Group leader, Mwamini Kaganda with five other group members, were passing through a small broken bridge in their neighbourhood. They stopped and looked at the bridge and decided that it was dangerous for people who used the bridge at night. It was also dangerous for children. The group agreed to contribute 1,000 shillings each to have the bridge repaired. It took two days for all the members to collect the money and two more days to renovate it using a building technician. The local authorities were surprised by the initiative taken by MWG.

Soon after, the group chairperson, Mwamini Kaganda, was selected by the city authorities to be the chairperson of the Social Services Committee in Sinza A Ward. "The news has encouraged us. We do believe that our social service needs such as water and roads would be taken into consideration now on," said an MWG group member.

All documents required for the registration of the group were presented to the Municipality. The group requested WAT to assist the group in its efforts to be registered with local authorities. The group was also eager to learn how the local groups are being involved in the socio-economic development such as micro-credit activities at the local level.

The group decided to organise a capacity building session with the facilitation of the Ward Leader, District Community Development Officer and Co-operative Officers. About 30 members from Mapambano Women Group confirmed their participation in the planned session.

September 2002

MWG continued with its efforts to communicate with offices of the local government, ward, division and district with regard to registration procedures. The draft constitution of the group was returned twice by the Kinondoni District Offices due to a lack of correct information or failure to follow the right channel or procedures for submitting the group's application letter.

On the issue of opening a Bank Account, the Kinondoni District Community Development Officer informed the secretary that the application for the account should be channelled through the local government secretary in their area and then sent to him. The MWG Secretary was still working on it.

The group was informed that the Minister for Community Development, Women and Children Affairs would visit the women groups in Sinza A Ward; the group had been among the first communities to be visited by the Minister. However, the visit was postponed till further notice. The group was disappointed by the cancellation of the visit at the last minute as they left all their family activities, mainly petty business (local food vending) when preparing to host the Minister.

The city authorities saw that the women's group had taken the initiative to handle a problem that affected the entire community. It was this that prompted the authorities to include the group leader on their social services committee. For the MWG, this means that they now have an ally in the Social Services Committee of Sinza A Ward who will be accountable to the needs of the women.

Women's groups are often at a disadvantage in their negotiations because they don't have all their paperwork in place. But with a little bit of help from professional partners and allies this is a barrier that can be easily overcome

In an effort to upgrade women's capacities, a session was organized with lawyers in order to enable women in the group to understand the procedures for land acquisition, transfer and compensation as far as land regulations and laws are concerned.



For women to utilize existing legal provisions that are already in existence at the local level, they have to work very hard in building their capacity in terms of information and partnerships that can help them to move through the enormous bureaucratic labyrinth.

What have the women’s groups accomplished so far?

Mpambano Women’s Group

The group is working with the local Community Development Officer and learning how to prepare its by-laws. The group has contacted its ward leader to register the objectives and goals of the organization.

Through the local-to-local dialogue methodology the group has acquired the information necessary for it to develop a structure, by-laws and capacity to seek information needed by the group.

This is no mean achievement for poor women who are usually excluded from critical information, access to decision makers and partnerships they need to solve simple everyday problems they face.

Mshikamano Housing Group

The Local to Local Dialogues created political space by linking the women’s group to relevant political and administrative officials with knowledge and authority to solve their land and housing problem; it also provided the women leaders with the relevant legal literacy and tools they needed to ask the key questions and pursue the matter legally. It is reported that the women are already feeling empowered and are working hard to pursue this matter.

While the process for both groups is not yet complete in terms of achieving the objective, the group has begun to understand that it takes research, information and

networking to achieve the simple goal of being formally recognized by the state in order to access state resources.



Women Celebrating



CZECH REPUBLIC

A Playground for Breznice

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National Context

The “velvet revolution” in 1989 enabled the development of the democratic establishment in the Czech Republic and created opportunities for the rapid growth of civil society. 2002 was the year of parliamentary and local elections. These elections were often given more attention by politicians than solving specific local problems. On the other hand, forcing politicians to make election promises was partly successful as a result of the campaigns.

Unfortunately, support of families does not fit with political priorities and the family is not a focal point of support for society either. With the year 2004 being established as the national “Family Year” hopefully more attention will be paid to families.

Mothers Centres

The Local to Local Dialogues in the Czech Republic were facilitated by the Network of Mother Centres in the Czech Republic, which passed the idea to member Mothers Centres. In the 1990s, mothers with small children were among the first to begin organising around their needs. This led to the rapid development of Czech Mothers Centres, which originated in Germany. Today, there are more than one hundred Mothers Centres across the Czech Republic. Since 2001, the umbrella organization, the Network of MC in CR, covers the interests of individual Mother Centres.

Mothers Centres are women’s organizations that bring together women who are interested in working on issues of families, children and access to public spaces. The Mothers Center in Breznice (as well as majority of other Mothers Centres) is mainly made up of women on maternity leave organising programmes for mothers and children. They have organised programmes to raise awareness on maternal and child health, as well as activities such as language courses, art, and drama. Also available is the daily open playroom created by the mothers. While local authorities have been slow to recognise the contribution of Mothers Centres, in May of 2003, Rut Kolinska, founding member of the Czech Republic Mothers Centres and a member of the International Mother Center Network (MINE), was named the “International Women of Europe” for her work, thereby giving greater political visibility to the Czech Mother Centres.

Local to Local Dialogues in the Czech Republic

Local to Local Dialogues started in three different Prague representative Mothers Centres—one in the capital, one in a big town and one in a small town in country area. The Network of Mothers Centres in the Czech Republic



Breznice, the home of the Czech Republic Local to Local Dialogues.



chose Breznice, a small town of 3,500 people, to demonstrate the dialogue process. The Mothers Centres already saw building alliances with local authorities as a vital part of their effort to create policies that support families and the women were happy to become involved in the Local to Local Dialogues. Together with the community at the Local to Local Dialogue planning meeting, the women found that “there is nothing for children” so the Mothers Center of Pampeliska, Breznice decided to find ways to collaborate with their local authorities to build a playground for the children of Breznice.

Milestones in the Dialogue Process

February 2002

After the meeting of Local to Local Co-ordinators in Prague, the Breznice Mothers Working Group was formed. It consisted of 5 members of the Mothers Center.

April 2002

The Breznice Mothers held their first meetings with the mayor and the town representatives, to present their proposals for building a safe modern children’s playground with the support of the local authorities and mapping of suitable places for children playground. A Joint Working Group was established in order to lead

this negotiation and decision-making process. The Joint Working Group consisted of 2 councillors, 2 mothers and an architect.

May 2002

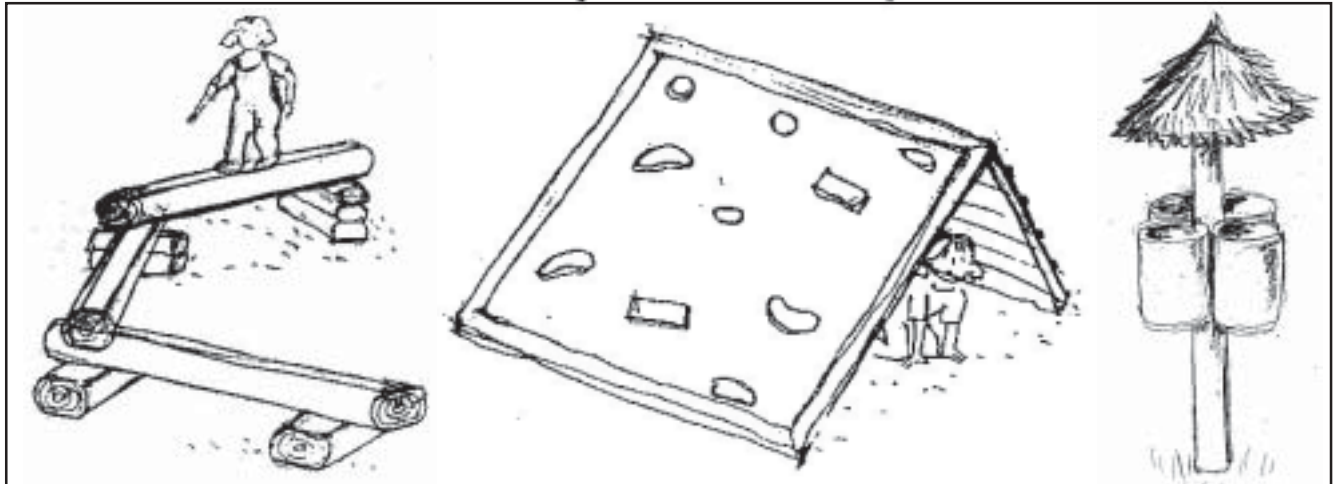
The Working Group team presented their project to the public with the help of the media. It was called “Playground for Breznice.” In partnership with the media the Mother Center also organised an art and literary competition for children to draw the attention of both political leaders and communities. The art and literary competitions were called “ My Dream Playground” and “What I would like to have in Breznice.” 120 works by children of all ages were collected, and displayed in a gala afternoon that concluded with the Mayor giving a speech supporting the project.



Mothers and children during one of the morning programmes.



Mothers and local authorities working together in the context of the Joint Working Group.



Children's suggestions from the art and literary competition for playground structures. The last drawing is a child's idea for separated waste disposal.

June 2002

By June, the Mothers Center opened the registered money collection for playground items, established a bank account number and put up donation boxes in shops.

September 2002

By September, over 5,000 Czech Crowns were already collected. In the same month the Working Group used ideas, which were expressed by children in their art and writing, to make an architectural drawing of the playground. They also secured financial support of 50,000 Czech Crowns from local authorities to start working on the new playground.

October 2002

In October 2002, the working group organised a benefit sports event: Castle Park March in co-operation with the Mother Center Pampeliska, the local sports club called Falcon and 140 participants. All proceeds from this event were matched by Wilde Ganzen Foundation and used for playground expenses. About 8,000 Czech crowns were collected from the benefit.

November 2002

Sublima Invest, a local timber and woodcraft factory, made an offer to prepare certain wooden items for the project under a contract signed by the Town Council.



Castle Park March participants raising money for playground expenses.

The Mothers Center received a grant of 50,000 Czech Crowns from the VIA Foundation for the restoring of an old park located near the Mothers Center and the Senior Home. This project includes a children's playground, recreation areas for seniors and plenty of space for multi-generational meetings. The project continues to count on close collaboration with local authorities.



The playground construction begins through volunteer work!

The local elections in November 2002 brought a new set of elected leaders and a new mayor to power. Sensing the need to establish their position as allies of the newly elected officials, the Mother Centres Working Group started a dialogue with the newly elected local authorities, fourteen days after the election. And while all parties declaimed support for local clubs and associations, 2 out of 6 parties taking part in the local elections in Breznice named Mothers Center Pampeliska in their programmes as a local association they were willing to support.

To Date

The realisation of the project brought many complications and surprises caused by the changes in elected officials which disrupted the negotiation process. A new architect was appointed with whom the women did not have experience negotiating. As a result, their ability to participate in the design of the new playground was limited. However, 70,000 Czech Crowns from local authorities did further support the project; a charity concert was held under the name of the town mayor and another benefit event supported by Wilde Ganzen Foundation was organised.

From this funding several unique play structures were created from natural products. In 2004, the mothers want to continue the local dialogues about expanding the project and about other projects.

Key Strategies

The Breznice Mother Centres identified four ways in which they gained from using the Local to Local Dialogue strategy:

1. **Gaining Visibility:** In a short time, Mothers

Center Pampeliska in Breznice has become a well known association not only among young families but also among the general public. It has become a partner for local authorities in decision-making in regards to the process of building the children's playground. In many ways, that specific project has wider connections and importance, including continued co-operation with the Senior House and revitalisation of a public park.

2. **Capacity Building:** Local to Local Dialogue enabled the mothers involved to enhance their negotiation skills, solve various problems and learn about local politics. Almost daily documentation helped in dealing with local authorities as well as in writing grant requests for assistance from various local foundations. The women learned to negotiate for resources from the City, the private sector and the non-benefit sector.



Between November and December 2002, the first steps in the actual construction of the children's playground were initiated.



3. **Mobilising the Support of the Community:** The women actually saw their aspirations of a playground being realised through their negotiations and efforts to raise resources. The playground is under construction. “We can be proud,” they conclude, “of the number of people who took part through the process from the first search for a suitable place, planning, results of art and literary competition, to practical realisation with a lot of volunteer work. The number of people supporting the project through charity events or money collection is also satisfying.”
4. **Expanding the Space for Participation:** The project that began as a children’s playground, will be expanded to be part of a wider park revitalisation project. The Mother Center Pampeliska in Breznice will use its new visibility and position to initiate action to solve other common problems mainly concerning children. Future projects being considered include safe roads for children to go to school, reconstruction of a public swimming pool and a new ecological programme.

Any alliance with local authorities creates high visibility for women’s organizations. It demonstrates to other citizens and institutions the value of collaborating with women’s organizations.



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The ideal relationship between grassroots women and the state would be one in which there is a continuous dialogue between local governments and grassroots women's organizations to ensure bottom-up demand driven planning processes that respond to the needs of women and their communities.

FOWODE states that this requires "grassroots women with the capacity to actively engage and inform their local authorities of their concerns during the budgeting and planning processes of local governments."

UGANDA

Supporting Local Authorities to Address Women's Priorities

National Context

Since 1973, the Government of Uganda has been working to rebuild its democracy. A critical element in the efforts of the state have been directed at creating democratic institutions that would encourage the participation of citizens in the policies and programmes of the Government. Uganda's decentralization policy was operationalised by the Local Government Act, 1997. This is intended to make local governments effective centres of local self-government, citizen's participation, local decision-making and development. Local governments in the city of Kampala are the city council at the district level and the city division council at the sub-national level.

Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)

In Uganda, the Local to Local Dialogues were facilitated by FOWODE. Their activities are focused on research, training and influencing policy and legislation from a gender perspective. Public dialogues, issue briefs and workshops are used to share information, build consensus and advocate for gender equity. FOWODE has been involved in lobbying for the Land and Local Government Acts. They were also involved in lobbying for affirmative action and other gender sensitive constitutional provisions.

FOWODE has worked with female legislators and their allies in parliament and in 25 districts in Uganda since 1995. Its activities have ranged from preparing them for elections to providing them with skills for effectiveness in their legislatures and delivering constituency services. Furthermore, FOWODE has also supported elected officials to undertake gender analysis of policies and programmes, including understanding budgets from a gender perspective so as to enable them to advocate for equitable distribution of resources between women and men, girls and boys and other marginalized groups.

Local to Local Dialogues in Uganda

The Local to Local Dialogues were carried out in Kawempe Division of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Kawempe division, situated in the north of Kampala City, has 22 parishes including the one where Makerere University (the highest center of learning in the country) is located. In addition, it is in this division that the main referral hospital of Uganda, Mulago Hospital, is located. The land use pattern in Kawempe Division varies, with a mixture of high, medium and low-density residential areas, small to medium scale commercial areas, small-scale to medium scale industrial areas, institutional land use and small-scale agricultural activities. Kawempe Division is one of the units of local government in Uganda. It has 46 elected members or councillors and of these 20 are women. The political head of the Division is the Chairperson.



Initial meetings were held between FOWODE staff and the Chairperson of the Kawempe Division. This was in order to introduce the idea of the Local to Local Dialogues and find out whether councillors would be interested in participating in such a process. The Chairperson of the Council assured FOWODE of the Council's support. This was followed by a meeting with women councillors of the Division which was organised to introduce the Local to Local Dialogues.

It was clear in the introductions that elected women councillors also held other leadership positions on the executive committee of the division council, self-help community initiatives and in the lower local administrative units: some were leaders of community based organizations and others were members of village local councils, local health committees and social services committees.

The division officer for welfare stated that more support from women's organizations was needed to help officers improve service provision. She noted that the female technical staff in local government were "gender-sensitive," but did not have the skills necessary to advocate within their institutions to make them more responsive to women's needs. She believed that there was a need to equip women in the public service with the necessary skills and knowledge to change the government structures that they are part of.

The women councillors wanted FOWODE to work with them not only in the planning and designing of initiatives but to continue to partner with them in the implementation stage.

The women councillors of Kawempe were given two weeks to identify women's groups from their parishes with whom they would like to work. The leaders of these groups would be supported by FOWODE to articulate their priorities and look for solutions to their problems.

Advocacy Workshop

In November 2002, FOWODE organised a dialogue workshop for the grassroots women leaders and the women councillors. The purpose of the workshop was to equip grassroots women leaders with the skills and knowledge in advocacy and lobbying and to lay strategies to dialogue with councillors and other decision makers.

Language can often be a barrier to grassroots women's participation. Encouraging ready translation between languages of the government and the local communities is a good way to facilitate grassroots women's participation.

The chairperson of Kawempe Division Hajji Nasser Kibirige Takuba opened the meeting acknowledging the efforts of women to organise around the needs of communities and urged the women present to share the information and skills from their workshop with other leaders and community members who were not present. The workshop was conducted in Luganda with translation into English to encourage the participation of women who did not speak English.

The same elected women being a part of many sectors of government means that the same women are in positions to influence and impact policies and programmes at village, district and division levels.

The women councillors request for support in both the planning and implementation of programmes indicates that they are ready to collaborate with civil society actors in order to better serve their constituencies.

The chairperson's request to share information and skills with community leaders and other members of the community reflects a concern with creating a broad base of information and knowledge at the community level.

Language can often be a barrier to grassroots women's participation. Ensuring translation between languages of the government and the local communities is a good way to facilitate grassroots women's participation.



Grassroots women present at the workshop not only saw this as an opportunity to get information and advocacy skills but also wanted to develop links between their community based organizations and NGOs such as FOWODE as a means to create an alliance with an organization that could help to create new institutional mechanisms to dialogue with the government.



Women Listening and Taking Notes at the Workshop.

What happened at the workshop?

A session on **gender and power relations** focused on women's access and control over resources as well as women's participation in decision-making. The session sharpened participants' understanding of the concept of gender. Grassroots women found that their understanding of gender was closely linked to their experiences of discrimination and the different social roles ascribed to

men and women. Women have a keen sense that men are given more power over women.

The session on advocacy and lobbying was about representing issues of women to policy makers and decision makers in order to influence institutions. "Advocacy is an important tool that can be used to help women to gain recognition, respect, protection and advancement of women's rights," the women were told.

Women were helped when they saw that advocacy is not something alien to them. They have been advocating their whole lives. Much of it is intuitive. The facilitator used this example – when children want something they understand that their father as the head of the family will be the one to support or disapprove. However, they go through their mother instead of going directly to their father.

Step-by-Step Guide to Advocacy for Grassroots Women's Groups

- **Identifying priorities**
As the first step towards preparing for a dialogue with local authorities or national governments, women were asked to identify a clear issue that people need to address. Women were urged to focus on priorities that were common to all women rather than be guided by political affiliations.
- **Survey to upgrade information base**
Women were asked to conduct a simple survey in the community to ascertain the gravity of the problem and the facts around it. This equips women's group to understand the problem clearly, get all the information right and articulate the problem. The survey process also helps to start communicating with the larger community and to find leaders who will support the work of women's groups. The survey should be the basis of the advocacy.

The roles of women within a society, usually assigned by men, often dictate the terms of women's participation within governance. Realizing this enables women to more aptly alter the structures of power as they work to engage in planning and decision-making processes.

FOWODE emphasizes the need for the grassroots women's groups to build alliances with their elected leaders.



- **Identifying and lobbying influential allies**
In order to build strategic alliances, women were asked to identify people in the community who have power and can be targeted in the advocacy effort. The workshop participants listed councillors at different levels and religious leaders.
- **Identifying clear roles for different participants**
Resource persons at the workshop emphasised the need to establish clear roles and responsibilities for each actor involved in collaborative efforts.
- **Expanding the scale of operations**
Building coalitions and support for the advocacy issue is critical for the success of a project, because the more people that support the issue, the more pressure will be put on decision makers to take action. Talking with individuals and groups whenever the opportunity arises is a necessary first-step in this process.



Guiding Women through Advocacy

Priorities for Action Identified by the Group

Workshop participants identified their priority issues by geographical areas and made a plan on how to proceed.

The Central Group identified domestic violence as their key issue and identified women council leaders, councillors, religious and opinion leaders, members of parliament, women on the executive committee of the local councils, local councils and police as actors whose support they would seek to address the problem. Following the workshop, they organised a series of meetings with their women councillors to work on a structured questionnaire to collect more information on the problem.



Identifying Area Priorities

The North Group also identified domestic violence as their issue. They decided to survey the problem, organise a meeting of women leaders from the communities, use radio programmes to discuss the problem and send a delegation to talk about the problem of domestic violence in the Division Council.



Planning for Community Surveys and Other Future Action

The third group, the South Group, decided to address the problem of adolescent sexual behaviour. The group designed a questionnaire through which they could identify some of the causes for the problem.

All the groups decided to use the Mama FM, a women's radio station, to discuss the problems of adolescent sexual behaviour and violence against women.



From the above activities it is clear that grassroots women's group have set an agenda for their elected women representatives at the Division Council. They would like to see policies and programmes enacted that can contribute to solving the problems.

What Women Said They Learned from the Advocacy Workshop

- Identifying a clear issue.
- Presentation of an issue to local and central governments.
- A better understanding of the concept of gender.
- Dialogue with officials and elected leaders are good ways to transfer information from government to communities and from communities to government.
- It is important to collaborate with other community-based organizations in order to strengthen their knowledge and experience base and to share ideas on how to address local and national authorities.

Analyzing the budget and then lobbying for resource allocations in areas that grassroots women consider important is one of the ways in which women can make local authorities accountable

The women councillors recognize the value of working with the women's groups in identifying priority issues for the communities. Most of them mentioned that they would probably not be in a position to enter into policy dialogue about the issues identified by the women if they had not been in this workshop that connected them to members of women's groups.

ANNUAL BUDGETS: A Site for Dialogue

In Uganda, the Local Government budgeting process begins in November and December. During this period the districts of Uganda are expected to hold budget conferences where a number of stakeholders including the policy makers, i.e., local council officials from the village to the district levels, technocrats, NGOs and community based organizations. At the budget conference, the communities are expected to state their priorities. Following the conference, the councillors are given another opportunity to consult communities. After this, recommendations are made and debates take place in different sectoral committees – health, education, public works and production, gender, youth and elderly where technical staff from those sectors advise, set priorities and allocate funds to the priorities identified.

It is mainly at the sectoral committee level that women councillors can play a vital role in influencing the inclusion of the community proposals into the budget. A lot of lobbying takes place here and it is hoped that the women councillors who attended the workshop will use their training in advocacy and lobbying. Failure to lobby at the sectoral meetings means that they will have to do it when the whole council is debating the draft budget estimates at which stage incorporating more requests is difficult.

Gaining the Support of Influential Allies

The Division Chairperson collaborated on the planning and this will be an added advantage to women as they lobby women councillors to incorporate grassroots women's concerns into the forthcoming financial budgets

Women councillors promised the women's groups that they would invite them to attend council meetings. The Local Government Act allows the public to attend council meetings as observers, but this requires the councillor to inform her constituents about the schedule of the council meetings and also to mobilize them to attend. Sometimes it may require provisions of transport to attend the meetings.

Two Ways Grassroots Women Identify Success

1. Plans and budgets that reflect women's concerns.
2. Regular ongoing dialogue between women and authorities.



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Kenya Local to Local Dialogue, GROOTS Kenya

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

(Available through Stated Organizations)

Huairou Commission Publications

1. "Inviting Partners to Partner: Creating a Partnership Learning Model and Code of Conduct." Jacqueline Leavitt. Huairou Commission, 2000.
2. "Huairou Book on Governance."
3. "Engendering Governance and Development: Grass-roots Women's Best Practices." Edited by Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monica Jaeckel. Huairou Commission, 2001.
4. "Advancing Governance through Peer Learning and Networking: Lessons learned from Grassroots Women." Monika Jaeckel.

GROOTS International Publications

1. "GROOTS Book." Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel.
2. "Pamphlet on Governance and Peer Learning." Monika Jaeckel.
3. "Neighbourhood Women Source Book."

CISCSA Publications

These and other publications are available at www.redmujer.org.ar.

1. "Ciudades para varones y mujeres. Herramientas para la acción" [Cities for men and women. Tools for action] Editor: Ana Falú
Authors: Rosario Aguirre, Carlos Larrea, Ma. Victoria Heikel, Patricia Provoste, Liliana Rainero, Olga Segovia, Alejandra Valdés.
CISCSA - UNIFEM - LAC Women and Habitat Network, 2002.
2. "Ciudad y Vida Cotidiana. Asimetrías en el uso del tiempo y del espacio" [City and Everyday Life. Asymmetries in the use of space and time]
Edited by Ana Falú, Patricia Morey y Liliana Rainero.
Córdoba, Argentina, 2002.
3. "Guía para la Formulación y Ejecución de Políticas Municipales dirigidas a Mujeres" [Guidelines for Women on the Formulation and Implementation of Municipal Policies] Red Mujer y Hábitat - LAC [LAC Women and Habitat Network]
UNIFEM - Brazil and Southern Cone. Cuaderno de Trabajo Nro. 72, Serie: Cuadernos de Trabajo. 2nd Edition CISCSA (Centro de Intercambios y Servicios Cono Sur Argentina) 1st Edition PGU (Urban Management Programme) - Quito, Ecuador.



Mayo 2000. Córdoba, Argentina. Noviembre 2002.

4. CD ROM: Gobiernos Locales, Políticas para Mujeres [Local Governments, Policies for Women]
Produced by CISCSA - Red Mujer y Hábitat LAC [LAC Women and Habitat Network]; with the support of UNIFEM, UMP, REPEM, IULA Argentina, Unidad Temática Género y Municipio Red de Mercociudades [Gender Thematic Unit, Mercocities Network] Córdoba - Argentina. 1st Edition: September 1999.

FOWODE Publications

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2. "A Gender Analysis of the Agriculture Sector Policy and Budget." FOWODE, July 2000.
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1. "Women Builders: Breaking Barriers in Earthquake-Torn Villages." Max Martin. Books for Change: India, 2003.

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the framework of Local Agenda 21 Guide to good practice: Africa/Asia/Europe/Latin America (soon to arrive) Within the framework of the NEDA financed Local Agenda 21 Charters Programme (1997-2000), 1999/2000 Available in English for €14 from the IULA World Secretariat. The one for Latin America will be available in Spanish and Portuguese.

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1. Urban Links, the quarterly current awareness service.
2. Action for Better Cities (ABC) Information Series:
 - Transportation
 - Water
 - Corruption
 - Women in the Informal Economy
 - Disaster Management
 - Asset Management
 - Solid Waste
3. Action for Better Cities – Tools and Methodologies for Good Urban Governance. June 2000
4. Generating Good urban Governance – The TUGI Report Cards Users' Manual. December 2003.



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Launched in 1999, UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign for Urban Governance aims to contribute to the eradication of urban poverty through improved urban governance. A key objective of the Campaign is to build capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good urban governance, characterised by the principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security. A wide range of tools and training materials have been developed, field-tested and adapted for application of these principles in various contexts. Some are aimed at effecting systemic change, while other are designed to prepare individual players to enhance their roles in promoting good urban governance.

Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots' Women's Perspective on Good Governance is a joint publication of UN-HABITAT and the Huairou Commission. Produced as part of the Urban Governance Toolkit Series of the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, this publication addresses ways in which grassroots women can reconfigure power relationships to advance their interests and thereby transform the practice of governance. The six Local to Local Dialogues described in this publication are illustrative of innovative inclusive decision-making processes. They chronicle the experiences and efforts of each of the women's groups to identify priorities and negotiate with local authorities and in some cases other government authorities. The strategies laid out herein are drawn from experiences of grassroots women's organizations in these countries, and can be used to effectively address the challenge of giving grassroots women a greater voice in decision-making.



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