

## **Partnerships and the role of cities / municipalities**

### **Plenary III**

*Panelists:* Edson Sardano [E.S.]  
Myriam Garcés [M.G.]  
Elisabeth Arnold [E.A.]

*Synthesis prepared by: Maria Nengeh Mensah*  
*Translation: Katherine Oginsky*

#### **Question/Comment No. 1**

[?]: Mr. Sardano's presentation is very refreshing. Participation, partnership, and dialogue between local authorities and women are all essential. However civil employees often change... I would like to know what mechanisms ensure the sustainability of dialogue between partners? How do you encourage building collaborative links between partners that will endure?

#### **Reactions No. 1**

[E.A.]: It is necessary to repeat the same message over and over in order for it to get through. It takes time to change mentalities and structures. It is also necessary to find local advocates and spokespeople, therefore: (1) **elect women**, (2) **press for equal access to employment for both women and men in the political sphere**, and (3) **locate funding for such initiatives**.

[M.G.]: **We must create autonomous organizations that will not be politically manipulated.** At this level, NGOs play a fundamental role. If we incorporate women into existing mechanisms and create local surveillance mechanisms to watch and ensure that politicians live up to their commitments to women's issues, women will truly become citizens. **We must work to improve the quality of women's citizenship so that women will become true citizens with all the inherent and equal rights of citizens.**

[E.S.]: In Brazil, much of the population is feminine, black, and poor. Our elected officials, however, are wealthy white men. This discrepancy can not be overlooked.

### **Question/Comment No. 2**

[?]: Women must act to increase the participation and representation of female citizens in decision-making. When women represent and speak for the interests of their fellow female citizens, women's diverse personal needs in the domestic sphere are translated and represented at the public and political levels. Can we go further beyond this and now start to talk about the possible changes that can be made to unequal power relations between women and men? What has been done in Ottawa (Canada)?

### **Reaction No. 2**

[E.A.]: Consultations have rarely really taken women's concerns into consideration. A goal of our research was to increase the participation of diverse women - as representatives of a truly representative female participation - beginning with discussions on the barriers that women meet when they try to access and use municipal services. We quickly realized that women need to be educated on the services that exist in their community and what area of government they are under or replace. Women have learned even more from each other on how to engage and discuss their concerns with the city. This process is ongoing and continuous.

### **Question/Comment No. 3**

[Martinique]: I believe that one solution would be to establish recognition of women's rights as citizens. As citizens, women have the right to safety, to use public space, transport, etc. Women make up half of the population - their rights as citizens have to be acknowledged and advocated.

### **Reactions No. 3**

[M.G.]: We must also ask ourselves what will motivate women to become active. If it is safety, then we must act on this and organize our efforts, create committees... in short, we must mobilize. This is most efficient when women themselves have identified the key problems that they face. If women wish that men be involved in safety efforts, then that is what should be done. We must also strengthen the process of municipal decentralization. In summary, we must take into account the creative ideas of women. For example, a sort of community alarm system has been created where every house has two security alarms. This way, women can also alert the community if they are victims of violence.

[E.A.]: Yes. Women must be involved in the things and decisions that affect us the most. This is the first step. The next step is to have elected female officials, what will infuse change into organizational culture - and that is much more difficult.

### **Question/Comment No. 4**

[UN-Habitat]: I would like to congratulate Mr. Sardano for his charismatic leadership. We know that safety is largely in the hands of the police. Police culture can harbour chauvinist values that are shared by both male and female police officers alike. This makes it clear that involving women in safety efforts is not sufficient in itself. How can we train male and female police in such a way as to encourage a revolution of mentality within police institutions, cultures, and families?

### **Reactions No. 4**

[E.S.]: You know that homosexual and black activists say that their worst enemies are military police. Women say this as well. Personally, I had to change my conception, my way of thinking. I went to live with them in their communities. Living with others is the best way to begin to change mentalities: social interaction, visiting, going to live within a group in order to get to know them, their human and their personal social status. Police training can sometimes dehumanize. These police must be given a dose of reality.

[M.G.]: Security is too often a question of repression. Police are repressive and chauvinist. **We must address these gaps by training community police, involving new recruits, and having this training done by women.**

#### **Question/Comment No. 5**

[San Salvador]: What recommendations for action can we make to involve all municipal services in the application and delivery of egalitarian policies? Municipal police can contribute to responding to women's demands however civil police do not have a lot of public confidence... after the war... the rapes... What can we do so that the needs of women and local organizations will be considered at the municipal level?

#### **Question/Comment No. 6**

[South Africa]: In Durban, we completely revised our policies and consulted the population in order to know what measures women wanted to see taken locally. We identified programs for women that aimed to reduce their level of poverty. These projects were piloted by women themselves.

#### **Reactions No. 6**

[E.A.]: The challenge remains to elect women who will represent women's interests and for us to support them once they are elected. Women themselves must change their mentalities. In order for a policy to be accepted, politicians must be held accountable and obligated to implement it. It is therefore not only necessary to ensure female presence in discussions, but also to pose questions to politicians publicly with the help of the media. Politicians should be required to respond to these questions in public. Therefore: (1) **help women**, (2) **elect women**, (3) **elect women who share our same values and concerns**, (4) **support women who are elected in order to keep them in place**, and (5) **support not only female officials but also those who are responsible for those mandates within municipal administrations (civil workers).**

[M.G.]: Presence at the municipal level is essential. Women must ensure follow-up on budgetary decisions. This is the role of our women's committee. However impunity and corruption are also part of the problem - this is what causes laws to be ignored. We must be watchful for cases of corruption.

[E.S.]: Society holds chauvinist values and the police are always a little behind society... Changing this macho culture would encourage change to police structure and institutional culture. For example, we should not continue to emphasize only the victim, but rather focus more on the aggressor.