Abstract
This research focuses on the different ways donors and NGOs are seeking to strengthen indigenous organizations to more actively participate within the new "democratic" and "decentralized" institutional structures recently established as part of state reforms in many Latin America countries; specifically Bolivia. Research is based on as series of qualitative case studies examining interactions between NGOs, municipal governments, and indigenous organizations.
1. Introduction and Purpose

This paper will explore how indigenous organizations in Bolivia are responding to changing institutional frameworks brought on by democratization and decentralization. It will do so taking into account the efforts of international donors and NGOs to influence these changes within the context of ‘democratic development’, or democracy assistance. While the scope of the research looks more broadly at donor and NGO strategies aimed at deepening democracy and strengthening civil society, for the purposes of this paper I will focus particularly on indigenous organizations. The material presented here must be considered very preliminary, given the degree to which the research has advanced so far. Fieldwork is far from complete, and any evidences presented here are only partial.

The paper is organized in the following way. First, I briefly present an overview of the evolution of indigenous organizations and their relationship to the state and development in Latin America, drawing on the current literature. I then describe the current policy reforms in Bolivia, discussing the ways in which these are transforming configurations of power and the fortunes of different social actors. Thirdly, some of the issues regarding the current wave of democracy in Latin America are discussed, and I illustrate the emerging emphasis and importance of democracy assistance programs as part of the menu of international aid efforts, briefly accounting the role of different agencies and strategies within the Bolivian context. I then examine some of the ways in which these programs are affecting indigenous organizations in Bolivia, including the ways in which indigenous organizations themselves are responding to and perceiving such efforts.

In the conclusion, I argue that strengthening the capacity of indigenous organizations to more actively engage and influence both political society and the state is essential to their achievement of broader goals. If indeed indigenous organizations have moved from “protest to proposal” or to “productivity”, it would seem that they need to be able to balance all three with effective “political” participation at different levels. This political participation can take a number of different shapes and forms within the current institutional framework in Bolivia. Indigenous organizations must be able to enter the political arena both at the national and more importantly the local level, effectively crafting and articulating proposals concerning development and rights, influencing the planning and implementation processes and more effectively utilize existing laws in their best interests. Further, once in office, appointed to some position in public administration, or as a member of a representative indigenous organization, indigenous representatives must be able to execute their responsibilities with some degree of effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness. While these processes of engagement and interaction with development agencies and the state invariably involve transformations in indigenous culture, social structure and leadership practices, the alternatives are even less desirable. Rather, many indigenous organizations are recognizing the need to take issues of political participation and engagement with the state more seriously, struggling to make the more positive institutional environment work to their advantage. Equally important is the commitment of donors and NGOs to engage in a process of dialogue with indigenous organizations, so that they can provide the kinds of support that will best help these organizations achieve their own objectives while at the same time strengthening a more equitable and participatory democratic system. Democracy promoters and indigenous organizations might find in each other unlikely partners in their quest for lasting reform.

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1 I wish to express my thanks to the Tinker Foundation and the Inter-American Foundation for helping to support different stages of this research. I carried out short-term field research in 1997, and I am currently about one third of the way through a 14 month fieldwork stay. I also worked in Bolivia in 1993-1994.


2. **The Development of Indigenous Organizations in Latin America**

Indigenous organizations in Latin America have been increasingly important to both democratization and to development. Stemming from a variety of origins and events, these organizations have gradually come to interact with the state and with development organizations more and more frequently.

Firstly, recent encroachments onto resource rich areas have forced indigenous peoples to fight for what little resources remain, which has led to increased internal organization and the need to engage with state, private and civil actors. This has often dovetailed with international environmental interests to grant indigenous groups powerful alliances and additional organizational resources in the short run. These alliances are very common in the lowland tropical areas of South America, and often involve indigenous peoples as protectors or administrators of protected areas.

Activities by indigenous groups at the international level have led to the “internationalization” of indigenous rights, through aegis of agencies such as at the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, in which frameworks of support for indigenous claims in many nation-states have been created. In addition, many Latin American nations have adopted some degree of recognition of indigenous peoples in their national constitutions and have formulated special laws concerning cultural rights, territory, and education. These have often been translated into special indigenous policies and institutionalized into branches of the central government. One of the reasons for both this internationalization of rights and the environmental alliances has been the increase in the amount of cultural capital which indigenous peoples and organizations have been able to leverage, granted the ‘modern’ world’s enchantment with indigenous peoples and their causes. Images of indigenous peoples as “noble savages” and “ecological saviors” have often provided certain kinds of opportunities which indigenous peoples have been able to utilize. The ultimate repercussions of such images are often of mixed benefit, and are having serious implications for the construction of culture and identity.

The slow but steady numbers of indigenous peoples receiving access to education and training has also increased the capacity of these organizations to act, particularly on the part of younger generations that have accessed primary, secondary and at times university education. Direct capacity building and training efforts by international donors and NGOs have also contributed the increased organizational abilities of indigenous organizations. These programs provide funds for organizational infrastructure, and for a variety of developmental and political ends. Some programs tend to emphasize a particular development objective, such as health, agriculture and micro-enterprise development, while others focus on organizational development per se. There are also a great number of programs that have been developed as a result of the alliance between environmental groups and indigenous organizations which aim to train them in resource

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4 For the purposes of this paper, indigenous organizations refer primarily to those organizations composed of or directly representing indigenous peoples. In the case of Bolivia, this involves the indigenous federations (such as CIDOB, CPIB), tribal and community level organizations, and the rural union structure (CSUTCB).


9 See accompany papers in this panel, especially Hutchins (2000).
management and increasingly, the administration of the autonomous territories being granted to them. Finally, a much more limited number of programs are directly concerned with promoting indigenous rights, the recognition of indigenous law, and the political participation of indigenous groups.

These capacity building efforts have involved increasing engagement of indigenous communities, leaders and organizations with NGOs, donors and the state. These encounters always bring with them dynamics similar to any cross-cultural and cross-power situation, where some concepts and persons gain in their power and others lose through a process of negotiating meaning and power. The nuances of these relationships, and how they affect indigenous organizations, are many which cannot be explored here. However, it is worth considering that these efforts are both beneficial and harmful in different ways. Without outside interventions, indigenous peoples might stand less of a chance of confronting the powerful corporations and states that often seek to exploit them or their resources.

One of the key issues confronting the indigenous movement (as well as other social movements in Latin America) is how to respond to democratization and neo-liberal policies. Groups which had been previously united around removing dictatorial and military regimes and basic human rights have been struggling to adjust to the new situation of de jure increases in rights through their enfranchisement in a democratic state, and the de facto erosion of those rights under both the maintenance of an elite based social structure and a neo-liberal economic system. These groups are attempting to shift their efforts towards the more complex tasks demanded of them under new democratic regimes, such as engaging the state within a new legal framework, demanding the rights entitled to them and enforcing laws, managing programs and projects for their constituents, and engaging in political participation. It would appear that these organizations face a number of complex problems in making these transitions, problems that may prevent them from effectively taking advantage of their newly won position as citizens of a democracy. However, it is important to note that many social organizations, including indigenous ones, have also been engaged in cultural strengthening, education projects, and development previous to the transition to democracy or the implementation of new liberal reforms. How are these organizations affected by the changes as well? Have they been able to make the shifts? Why or why not?

One would suspect that the answers to these questions would not be totally independent of contextual factors. Different social, economic, political and institutional situations will influence how these groups can engage the state. For example, in some countries where indigenous peoples form a majority or large element of the population (as in Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Mexico), direct political participation is certainly more of a meaningful challenge. Where state power has been more decentralized indigenous organizations might more readily influence local decisions. The presence and influence of international interests and environmental concerns will also affect the responses of indigenous organizations. In order to understand how the particular institutional arrangements in Bolivia affect the response of indigenous organizations we need to explore this context in more detail.

3. The Changing Institutional and Political Environment in Bolivia

Given that the majority of those present are familiar with Latin America in general and Bolivia in particular, I will not go into extensive detail concerning the political changes and policy reforms there. It will be sufficient to highlight a number of the major processes, and to comment on

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the most important reforms undertaken by the government of Sanchez de Lozada (M N R 1993-1997) and how they are faring under the current government of General Hugo Banzer (A D N 1997-2001). While the policies under discussion are current in Bolivia, it is worth noting that they typify the kinds of institutional changes occurring in other Latin American countries under the general rubric of the “new policy agenda”.

In 1994, the “Decentralization Law”, and the "Popular Participation Law" (El Ley de Participación Popular- No. 1551, hereafter LPP) were passed and implemented by the new government of Gonzalo de Lozada as part of several sweeping reforms, which also included the Educational Reform and the Privatization Law. Even under a system of “free and fair” elections in existence since 1982, Bolivia remained highly centralized, with most all the decisions being made in the La Paz and little state presence in the rural areas. The more traditional Decentralization Law aimed to transfer state functions from the national ministries in La Paz to the departmental level governments, while the Popular Participation Law was a more innovative attempt to devolve power to 311 (now 314) municipal governments, and to establish a direct means of popular participation in policy formulation and public (development) administration. In addition, other laws of great importance to indigenous peoples were the Forestry Law and the new Land Law.

The Popular Participation Law and Indigenous Organizations

The implications of this law for local democracy, development and indigenous peoples merits more detailed explanation. In its initial article, the law states:

The present law recognizes, promotes, and consolidates the process of popular participation, incorporating indigenous communities, peasants, and urban groups in the political and economic life of the country” (LPP Article 1, 1993).

Besides for creating and revitalizing the 311 municipal governments, the law provided a means through which many indigenous community groups were to become legally recognized as the lowest unit of state participation, through their registration as Base Territorial Organizations (OTBs). This granted them a direct and formal way to engage with the state at the local level, while at the same time granting them a certain amount of autonomy at the community level to choose their own leaders and apply their own traditional standards. Further, the law explicitly recognized certain cultural and ethnic rights to autonomy, and made provisions for the re-drawing of municipal lines to fit ethnic groupings, the creation of special ‘indigenous’ districts within municipalities, and the possibilities of cross-municipalities groupings in the case of ethnic groups which transverse many different municipal boundaries. The extent to which these special clauses have been applied in different cases has been of mixed success. The also provided for the application of the “participatory planning process”, which engages these OTBs in a process of defining the needs of the municipality, and working with the municipal government to develop a 5 year strategic plan upon which municipal expenditures were to be based. Finally, the law created a new structure which aimed to give social control over the municipal governments, the Comites de Vigilancia (CV), which were elected by the OTBs in a each municipality. These CVs had the responsibility to convene the participatory planning process, approve the strategic plan along with the municipal council, and monitor the implementation and functioning of the municipal government. This body had the power to request information, review projects, and begin proceedings to remove corrupt officials or withhold municipal funds.

These reforms had at least two important implications for indigenous and other popular organizations. Firstly, it extended democratic instances of the state through the creation of municipal governments throughout the country into areas that if previously counting with any state presence at all, were controlled as fiefdoms by departmental governors, the regional development.

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12 This includes decentralization, democratization, privatization, and a general slimming down of the state.
corporations, and national ministries. These municipal governments were bestowed with important responsibilities and funds, and were to be elected by popular vote every 4 years along the lines of a traditional democratic system. This effectively moved a democratic instance of the state much closer to many rural and indigenous areas than had previously been the case. It also opened up a way for more diversity and autonomy in development strategies at the local level. It is interesting to note that, while many critics of neo-liberal policies see decentralization or other state reforms as leading to abrogation of state responsibility or to a dependence on NGOs for service delivery, to some extent decentralization in Bolivia has meant the arrival of government orientated towards service delivery, and in many cases the displacement of NGOs in certain areas.

Secondly, the changes were more profound than establishing mere elected local government. The LPP created a process and a structure for more direct participation by local groups (as opposed to individuals) in the elaboration and implementation of 5 year development plans, as well as a mechanism for the continued oversight and monitoring of municipal government expenditures by a citizen’s committee.13 These measures present increased possibilities for the direct input of local communities, linking the formal political system to the system of public administration and development and giving citizens a direct connection to this latter process. This meant that indigenous organizations and people would have a first hand chance to more directly influence development options and processes, if they could make the system work for them.

Initially, the reforms met with resistance from all sectors, but the MNR party used its majority in the government and the overwhelming support of international donors to advance the reforms as quickly as possible.14 The regional development corporations that had previously directed the development activities of the central government were dissolved, and power to manage education, health and other tasks was shared with both departmental and municipal level governments. Over 15,000 community level and representative organizations were legally recognized as OTBs, and municipal governments were elected and the appropriate funds were transferred. Once registered, these OTBs were enabled to engage in the “participatory planning process” with their municipal government in choosing policies and allocating of resources; and through electing members to the Comite de Vigilancia, which aimed to oversee that the municipal government executed these plans properly and in accordance with the peoples’ will. While still not complete, in essence these reforms did disseminate state power from the center to the periphery, altering the state and political landscape in a major way, and presenting a challenge to other social actors to adjust to this new framework. Also, the MNR government, working closely with international donors such as the Dutch and the Danes, created the Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs (Secretario Nacional de Etnias, Genero y Asuntos Agrarios) to oversee the concerns of indigenous peoples and link these concerns into the wider institutional reforms such as LPP and the Educational Reform.

Under the current Banzer administration (ADN) that assumed control in 1997, the reforms have suffered from lack of institutional support from the top. While many feared that Popular

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13 This particular mechanism of group participation in the planning of municipal strategies and projects is worth mentioning, as it responds to the critique by indigenous peoples and scholars that democracy is too individual based and does not allow for group participation. By design or default, the LPP has recognized the legality of traditional ‘local authorities’ and the communities that they represent in the format of the OTB; and then provided a process through which these OTBs participate in planning processes and select members to oversee government activity. In addition, this allows for multiple instances of participation, beyond merely voting every four years for municipal authorities. Both processes remain important.

14 Radical indigenous-campesino groups in the tropical Cochamba region initially refused to have anything to do with the law, labeling it the "ley maldito". After its initial implementation, the arrival of resources, and the taking of power by many of their leaders in municipalities of the region, they have now reverted to its staunch supporters claiming that they will not allow for its modification or removal by any government (Vargas 1998).
Participation and Decentralization Laws would be completely undone, the accumulated inertia and the insistence of international donors has forced the government to continue them, albeit half-heartedly. In part this confusion has been caused by the fact that ADN was forced to enter into a pact with four other parties to achieve a large enough majority to rule. Dissention and conflict between these parties has led to the constant bickering concerning important government positions and policies. For example, the positions of Popular Participation and the Secretariat of Indigenous Affairs have been shifted to lower level positions within other ministries and has been accompanied by the constant changing of the directors and personnel of these programs.

4. The Evolution of Indigenous Organizations in Bolivia

Briefly, indigenous organizations in Bolivia can be divided into the historically more active and much larger groups in the Andean highlands and the more recently composed and less populous groups from the lowland areas. Since the 1952 revolution highland groups had been more aligned with a class-based identity as small peasants, in which Marxist (and Maoist) doctrine was effectively spread and adapted for many years. With the breakdown of democratic rule and the weakening of the “peasant-military” pact, the 1970’s saw a resurgence of more ethnic identities in the political sphere. Primarily focused on the memory of the Tupaj Katari uprising in 1781, and fed by peasant (Indian) disenchantment with the state and the emergence of urban intellectuals, the Katarista movement was born (Albo 1987). Initially the movement emphasized cultural revalorization and a return of cultural identity as a unifying political force, and worked through the establishment of a number of cultural centers and radio programs in La Paz and El Alto.

In 1979, a coordinating body which fused various elements of the Katarista movement with the rural union structure of peasants was formed under the name Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB). The rural ‘union’ structure imposed by the '52 revolution was built upon the recognition of the indigenous community leaders and traditional patterns of decision-making, creating a unique synthesis of state/indigenous union. This body has coordinated indigenous interactions with the state over the last several decades, primarily serving to mobilize protests against government policies, seeking to improve the lot of the indigenous highland peasants, and backing (or creating) different political parties. They also proposed an alternative agrarian reform law in the 1980’s, advocated for the formation of peasant cooperatives, vindicated cultural identity through radio programming and education, and have sought more autonomy and at least ‘co-coordination’ of government ministries and programs. While this is the main national level indigenous organization, it is important to recall that there also exist other regional and local sub-organizations part of the CSUTCB, as well as a host of cooperatives, small business associations in urban areas, cultural centers, radio stations and NGOs that are run by or inspired by indigenous people.

During this period there have been a large number of development NGOs that have worked with indigenous communities, mostly emphasizing economic development and service delivery. Two NGOs that have played an important role in working with indigenous organizations in the highlands since the 1994 reforms are the Fundacion Qullana and the Programa de Apoyo a la Democracia Municipal (PADEM).

While emerging more recently and lacking the structure provided by the rural union system, lowland indigenous organizations have been steadily growing in influence over the past 28 years as well. Beginning with the slow raising of consciousness brought on by increased interaction with the

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15 For example, the location of the Popular Participation unit has been changed three times, and there have been three different directors, none of which has done much.
16 For example, the ‘gremiales’ of merchants and artisans are often composed of indigenous peoples, and espouse certain political and cultural goals that would identify them as indigenous organizations. NGOs of educated indigenous peoples, such as KechuaAymara, and the Fundacion Qullana (which will be discussed in more detail later on), have also been growing in number.
state and the outside world mostly a result of the large colonization programs and expanding economic development from the late 1950s, these previously marginalized and independent groups developed stronger organizations and came together in response to these changes. Initially led by the Guarani, and adapted by other major indigenous groups in Santa Cruz, indigenous councils and meetings congealed with the formation of the Central Indigena del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB) in 1982 (whose name has now been changed to Confederacion de Pueblos Indigenas de Bolivia, with the abbreviation remaining the same). Other indigenous groups in the lowlands entered under the umbrella structure of CIDOB in subsequent years, most important among them being the Central de los Pueblos Indigenas del Beni (CPIB). During these years, the movement matured through a series of successive congresses, increasingly articulating its agenda and demands. Their primary focus has been first and foremost on land and territory, control of natural resources, legal recognition and development issues. They achieved national recognition when the CPIB led a march of indigenous peoples from the Beni to La Paz for dignity and territory, achieving the formal recognition of numerous territories through the Presidential decree of Jaime Paz Zamora in 1990. Since this time they have been shifting their activities towards management of these territories and other protected areas, development projects, and legal negotiation with the state on behalf of the interests of indigenous peoples. After the reforms in 1994, indigenous organizations grappled with municipal governments and the difficulties of political participation, with varied success. Several NGOs have been integrally involved in working with lowland organizations often providing support for institutional development, projects and channeling funds from international donors. The most important among these were the NGO Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indigena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB) for CIDOB and the Centro de Investigaciones y Documentacion para el Desarrollo del Beni (CIDDEBENI) for CPIB. A third NGO of emerging importance to lowland indigenous organizations that has taken a distinctive approach is the Centro de Estudios Juridicos y Sociales (CEJIS).

6. Democracy and Democracy Assistance in Latin America

Granted the influence of these NGOs and other international donor supported programs, how do they go about supporting transitions, consolidations and the deepening of democracy? Without attempting any broad coverage of the field of democratization in Latin America, very few studies have been carried out concerning the actual ways in which Western democracies attempt to strengthen and develop democracy in other nations.\(^\text{17}\) Most academic work on democratization within the field of political science stresses understanding breakdowns, transitions, consolidation or the pre-conditions of democracy, saying little about the policies and practices carried out by other states and donors which can influence these processes.\(^\text{18}\) Many theorists focus on institutional elements, such as legislatures, presidential versus parliamentary systems, parties, and politicians from a rational choice approach, largely borrowed from the study of politics in the U.S.\(^\text{19}\) There has recently been some growing interest in the role of NGOs and social movements in ‘democratic development’, but this is often more focused upon general role of many different kinds of NGOs on the political system, and does not examine the direct intention of democratic states to develop

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\(^\text{17}\) See Carothers (1999) for the only real overview.


democracies. Fewer works concentrate on the underlying questions of expanding access to power, wealth, and influence which any real effort to achieve a democratic state must tackle. Linked to this, the concept of political culture receives little credence vis a vis the institutional and more formal elements of democracy, partly due to its supposed ‘disaccreditation’ and partly because it is more difficult to study, understand, or change. However, it now seems clear that, creating institutional democratic systems in and of itself is not guaranteed to improve conditions of conflict, inequality or exploitation faced by the majority of the people of Latin America. Many democratic systems, while theoretically (and practically) better than dictatorships or military governments, are falling far short of their promise to enfranchise the marginalized, improve inequality of rights or wealth, or enhance development. It would seem that “minimalist” democracy is also ‘minimalist’ in its potential to establish more just social and economic relationships for the majority of citizens.

International development aid has dedicated increasing attention to the area of democracy promotion and consolidation. Indeed, this has been the fastest growing area of development aid in the last 10 years, with the USA alone giving over 700 million through different agencies. Multi-lateral agencies, such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (if not involved in ‘democracy’ support per se) are also involved in the newfound emphasis on “institutional development” or “rule of law” as an integral part of development aid. These agencies claim a “non-political” approach, which focuses on “rationalization” of government agencies, decentralization, and rule of law support, with some limited attention to the incorporation of civil society into policy dialogues. Bi-lateral democracy assistance programs emphasize stabilizing and verifying “free and fair” elections, building democratic institutions, political party reform, establishing the rule of law, and supporting civil society. In most discourses, these elements are more consistent with the political implications for a state desiring to implement free-market economic policies in the neo-liberal age than with any philosophical or theoretical stance on democratic political systems. This can be explained somewhat by the attempts to theoretically divorce the political system from state administration (something which was necessary to justify support to many authoritarian states in the past). That said there would seem little question for the need to reform government structures, diminish the high levels of corruption, achieve some minimal standards of efficiency, accountability and responsiveness, and to generally improve the capacity of governments in most developing countries. It must also not be assumed out of hand that local elites and corruption in government have not been some of the major factors in the ineffectiveness of development programs and the continued exploitation of marginalized populations, and that rendering the state more accountable and efficient is in their own best interests.

20 The best overview of this is Julie Fisher’s Non-Governments: NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World, (1997), see also John Clark, Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations, (1990) and MacDonald (1997) for an in depth case study of the role of NGOs.
23 In the past these agencies have pretended to maintain ‘apolitical’ stances, and preferred not to be involved in institutional reforms. Increasingly, it has become more apparent that development of any sort will remain elusive unless ‘good government’ is established. In most agencies, this refers to the establishment of the neo-liberal state, with emphasis on anti-corruption, rule of law, and government efficiency. Issues of real participation or equality remain more elusive.
In Bolivia, international donors have been very instrumental in the process of policy and institutional reform, particularly the improvement of the justice system, decentralization, and the Popular Participation Law. Different donors have taken on different responsibilities, with the World Bank and the IDB providing most of the funds for large ticket items at the national level, such as support for privatization, the education reform, and the reform of different ministries. USAID has emphasized administration of justice, particularly related to the elaboration of the new Penal Code and judicial strengthening, and strengthening new municipal governments. The Germans have been particularly focused on national legislatures, and departmental level governments, while smaller donors such as the Dutch have also provided support to departmental governments, and together with the Danes, indigenous peoples.

In a country like Bolivia, where one of the main democracy ‘problems’ (in aid lingo) is the “systematic exclusion of the indigenous majority”, improving “citizen support for democracy” has everything to do with indigenous organizations and their interaction with the state. Seeking for a way to ‘include’ this majority must genuinely be seen as the rationale behind many of the reforms, despite their shortcomings. However, given this systematic exclusion, it is interesting to note that most aid responses have to do with improving state institutions, rather than improving the capacity of marginalized groups to participate. This brings us back to the central questions of this paper. While others have focused on the interactions of indigenous organizations with state institutions or development agencies in general, this paper looks more specifically at the implications of democratic reforms and democracy aid for indigenous organizations. What kinds of programs are directed at indigenous organizations, and what is the rationale behind them? What is the response and plans of indigenous organizations to these reforms and the programs that accompany them?

7. Democracy Assistance Programs in Bolivia: Contrasting Approaches

In actuality, democracy aid orientated to indigenous organizations is sparse and only now beginning to emerge. While many other kind of programs, particularly ones involving environmental conservation and agricultural development, have been implemented by a number of different donors, the real question of acceding and accessing political power has been slower to emerge, even within the progressive institutional context of Bolivia. Numerous programs exist for “community based natural resource management” concurrent with the focus on resource management by indigenous peoples. Under these programs, indigenous peoples and organizations are given training as protectors of the environment, or their traditional knowledge is accessed and put to use in the name of sustainable development (see papers by Wilson, Hutchins and Roper, this panel). While potentially beneficial, these kinds of programs may overlook the need to create indigenous capacity for self-management, which includes the ability to interact with the political and administrative infrastructure. The ‘strengthening of indigenous organizations’ has been the goal of a number of programs, primarily those carried out by the NGOs addressed below, but these too were often carried out more as part of the process of preparing indigenous organizations to more effectively manage territories and resources or to implement development programs, than to engage the national and local political context.

USAID remains one of the largest and most active donors in the area of democracy assistance around the world, for obvious reasons. They have implemented a great number of projects in different areas, many of which are mentioned above. There has been a general trend to shift from more institutional approaches to more local and civil society related ones. The general USAID strategy to support civil society is one that emphasizes support to NGOs to be consistent

advocates for policy reforms with the state.\textsuperscript{25} In Bolivia, USAID’s main democracy objective is “to increase citizen support for the democratic system”.\textsuperscript{26} It aims to do this through three sub-programs: 1) administration of justice; 2) support to legislatures from the new single-member districts; and 3) local government and citizen participation initiatives, the Democratic Development and Citizen Participation Project (DDCP). These three programs are carried out by American subcontractors, who execute the programs on AID’s behalf. In addition to working with local governments, the DDCP program had over US $2 million to support NGOs to carry out smaller projects, such as strengthening and training CVs, forming mancomunidades and municipal government associations, political education for youth, and others. However, USAID’s main efforts remain focused on state institutions, primarily from the belief in the need to create state capacity to respond and facilitate transparency and accountability. They have targeted women more so than indigenous peoples, and have yet to add a major civil society component to their democracy program.\textsuperscript{27} As such, their support to improving access by indigenous peoples has been indirect, with improvements in the legal system and the administration of local governments potential aiding them as it would other citizens. US funded NGOs, such as CARE, CRS, SAVE, and PLAN are also very active in Bolivia and have been evolving different strategies of working with the new intuitional structure and changing needs of target groups.

The Germans

The Germans, through the German Development Agency (GTZ) and the Stiftungs have also provided considerable support to the area of democracy and institutional promotion.\textsuperscript{28} GTZ has also been primarily concerned with strengthening state institutions in their administrative and planning functions, particularly at the national and departmental levels. The Stiftung have been much more focused on support to political parties, political party reform, and the support of the new single-member district representatives in the national legislature. Nevertheless, these remain important issues for the access to political power by indigenous peoples in several important ways. The Stiftung were active in pushing through the political party reform law which had been before the legislature for more than a decade.\textsuperscript{29} Among other things, this law made it mandatory for the parties to have 30% of their candidates to be women, called for democratizing the parties’ internal structure, and making it easier for the formation of new political parties, all moves which are potentially favorable to indigenous peoples. Secondly, there have been efforts to open channels between parties and civil society, in order to transform parties into their theoretical purpose of channeling interests versus their traditional role of being the property of a few elites. The Stiftung have also been very active in working with the media, to increase coverage of voting patterns and political processes at the national level, so that citizens might be more aware of how their supposed representatives are acting. The GTZ has placed its emphasis on strengthening state institutions, placing particular emphasis on planning methodologies and land use at the departmental government level, which

\textsuperscript{25} See Gary Hansen Constituencies for Reform: Strategic Approaches for Donor-supported Civic Advocacy Programs (1996).
\textsuperscript{26} USAID Bolivia Results Review and Resource Request 1996-2001.
\textsuperscript{27} See Richard Oulahan and Adam Behrendt, Civil Society Assessment and Strategy Recommendations, Washington, D.C. World Learning (1999).
\textsuperscript{28} These are foundations which represent different political parties in Germany, which have a long record of working with counterpart political parties in developing countries around the world. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung are the two largest ones in operation in Bolivia.
\textsuperscript{29} Interviews with Tomas Mans, Director Friedrich Ebert ILDIS (La Paz, September 1999).
many currently cite as being the weakest in terms of both capacity and accountability. Therefore, while not directed specifically at indigenous peoples, particularly the programs of the Stiftungs, provide the kinds of reforms necessary for indigenous peoples to more effectively utilize the institutional reforms to their own benefit.

**The Danish Embassy and Danida**

While being a more recent arrival in the international development community in Bolivia, the Danes have been particularly focused on the needs of indigenous peoples, both in the highland area of Potosi and the tropical lowlands. Starting in 1994 they provided a great deal of support as a pilot effort to a program called Apoyo a los Pueblos Indígenas (API), which operated under the Secretary of Indigenous and Gender Affairs. One of the goals of this program was to facilitate the access of indigenous peoples to the opportunities provided for under the LPP. This included supporting some of the indigenous organizations with training on the LPP, working on the creation of indigenous districts within municipalities, and the eventual possibility of creating indigenous municipalities. The program also emphasized assisting lowland indigenous peoples with land and territory claims. These trends have continued, with the program being administered from its new location under the Vice-Ministry for Indigenous Affairs and Original Peoples (VMAI) created by the Banzer regime. What is important to note about this program is its choice to operate primarily through government institutions, as opposed to providing direct assistance to indigenous organizations or through the aegis of NGOs. Such a decision intends to strengthen governmental capacity to work with indigenous peoples, but brings with it many complications. The issues of political will (or lack thereof) became very apparent to the Danish, and the program has suffered numerous setbacks from intentional inefficiency. However, it is also notable that without Danish support, it is highly unlikely that the government would have provided any programs or structured orientated to indigenous peoples and their issues, as almost all of the funding for the program emanates with the donor. The Dutch development assistance (HIVOS/SNV) has also been active in funding NGOs that work with indigenous organizations.

**Approaches utilized by National NGOs**

While receiving funding from international donors, the national NGOs with an identity more rooted in the social movements and Bolivian society, often view the ‘problems’ and solutions of creating better democracy in a different light. Since the definition of the problem often dictates the choice of strategy applied, this often implies that national NGOs may carry out different kinds of programs. To get a better feel for how some of the different national NGOs are approaching the problem, I will compare several of them below.

**Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indigena del Oriente Boliviano - APCOB**

APCOB has worked with the indigenous organizations of Santa Cruz since 1983. This NGO appears to be more closely linked with foreign donors and staff than having its origins with a social movement or grassroots coalition within Bolivia. Its primary goal was the strengthening of lowland indigenous organizations, including the national federation, CIDOB. However, throughout their trajectory of accompanying indigenous organizations, this objective has given way to the kinds

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30 Interviews with Reinhard von Brunn and Hans Peterson, GTZ. (La Paz, September, 1999). These departmental governments are still appointed from the national level, but are supposed to provide an important link between the national government and the municipal governments.

31 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, DANIDA, Estrategias para la Cooperacion Danesa con la Republica de Bolivia (1997) and personal interviews with Jon Nielsen, Danish Mission Sub-chief. (La Paz, September 1999).
of programs for which they have been able to access funds. Many of these included supporting indigenous organizations to map territories, prepare land use management and sustainable forestry management plans, gender programs, and productive activities. They have also done some more basic training and capacity building with community level leaders and young people, as well as having a television show to educate the larger public concerning indigenous peoples and their culture. Receiving most of their support from the Dutch and other European donors, APCOB has also provided a linkage through which anthropologists and other researchers have been able to access and interact with indigenous organizations, and carried out many different kinds of studies and research itself.

CIDOB has reacted in different ways to the work of the NGOs. During the indigenous congresses of 1989 and 1990, indigenous leaders expressed a desire for more autonomy and to be ‘free’ of the intervention of APCOB and other NGOs which often supervised, managed funds, and promoted certain kinds of program with donors and the state. They felt that this restricted their autonomy and their ability to carry out their own projects with their own people. Since that time, CIDOB did move forward in distancing itself from these NGOs, while at the same time facing severe problems related to internal management and administration of funds. The organization’s attitude has often put off many donors, and limited the willingness of these organizations to work with indigenous organizations as a whole. CIDOB has more recently been able to achieve some more internal stability in terms of representativeness of member organizations, but real linkages with their communities at the base level remain problematic. Several new initiatives aim to open lines of communication and information between the different levels of the organization and the communities, to overcome suspicion and jealousy within the organization. APCOB continues to work with CIDOB, but in a more distant fashion, and is more heavily involved with some of the regional organizations, and was a major interlocutor in the massive World Bank project for the Eastern Lowlands, which has largely gone awry.

The Centro de Estudios Juridicos e Investigacion Social - CEJIS

CEJIS is an NGO that has been providing legal services to campesino (upland indigenous) and indigenous communities and organizations, as well as engaging in advocacy work at the national level for over 20 years. At present, they are more focused on lowland areas, with their main office in Santa Cruz and projects and programs in the Beni as well. CEJIS has been very active in providing support to indigenous organizations in specific areas, such as reclaiming land and titling indigenous territories, modifying and proposing alternative bills to the national legislature on forestry, biodiversity and water. They utilize a full range of legal measures and advocacy, publishing articles and petitions in the press, and having their own journal in which they publish research and articles concerning legal issues. They have been very active in publicizing the violence related to attacks by ranchers and land owners on indigenous peoples attempting to claim one of the territories granted to them in Monte Verde. In this case, government authorities in collusion with local elite

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32 Personal interview with Graciela Salgado APCOB (Santa Cruz, June 1997).
34 One director of a large, US run international NGO intimated that, while having a conviction that it is important to work with indigenous organizations, “it is so hard to work with these organizations. They perceive that the same requirements that we utilize with all our grantees should not apply to them, and utilize justifications concerning colonialism and discrimination to attempt to bow out of such requirements.” She explained that capacity building efforts were also often perceived as threatening to indigenous organizations, when it came to accounting and managing funds.
interests, have delayed the process of land titling while at the same time removing as much of the lumber and often burning what they cannot take in a flagrant violation of law and decency. A ctive with mega projects like the Petroleum gasduct being built through many indigenous territories and the case of mining companies in the highlands, they also help to take on multinational corporations. In cases like this and others, CEJIS also sues the government (hacer denuncias) where they are able to obtain evidence of government wrongdoing and the indigenous organizations so desire. On a more grassroots level, their programs in the Beni have been involved in basic legal education, somewhat modeled after the ‘barefoot lawyers’ concept, and have worked with popular radio stations in the promotion of information concerning the new laws and elections. Most of their support comes from the Dutch and other European donors.

What is important to note is that, as an NGO they have taken a very different approach from other more traditional development NGOs. They have specialized in the are of law and advocacy, attempting to facilitate empowerment of indigenous peoples and campesinos at local, regional and national levels, converting themselves into valuable allies vis a vis powerful corporations, landowners and the state. Such efforts have not made them popular with these groups, and they are often painted as ‘radicals’, ‘leftists’ and anti-capitalist. However, this mode of operations has allowed them to develop a very different relationship with indigenous organizations, in that they provide support and professional assistance when and where such organizations need it.

Fundacion Quallana and Highland Indigenous Communities

In the highland regions around La Paz and the Valley of Cochabamba, another sort of NGO has been striving to make an impact. The Fundacion Quallana, started in 1993, is an NGO based on the cultural principles of Quechuas and Aymaras, founded and administered by educated indigenous people, and dedicated to the empowerment of their people. While their main objective is to “eliminate poverty by creating wealth” their focus is on education, and liberating the mind.

After the reforms in 1993, they claim that the government’s efforts at training and spreading the information and capacity concerning the new laws had been very spotty and poor. Their director, Cancio Lopez, stated that “in previous generations it was the state itself that prevented our participation. Now it is our lack of capacity which has become the main factor”. The see that the people do not know the laws that may be in their own best interests, and that indigenous leaders in the communities often fall prey to manipulation by the parties and other powerful interests. Nevertheless, in the highlands the pure majority of indigenous peoples assures their election into many posts at the municipal level. The crux of Quallana’s program involves providing long term and systematic training for indigenous leaders, programs which have an academic backing. Through distance education, they offer degrees of “tecnico superior” in local governance in many rural areas, working with Universidad Nur of Santa Cruz. This is useful to build recognition among both their own communities and the external world of some formal preparation to serve in a municipal government, comite de vigilancia, or other government body. In addition, they feel that not only do the leaders need much more serious technical training, but many also lacked a basic high school education and the ability to write clearly or utilize math skills. Hence, the program also involves achievement of high school diplomas, which aims to combine basic education with technical training. Finally, their program looks to combine traditional culture with Western knowledge, to enable them to develop principles of community democracy and decision making as part of their efforts.

At present, they are working with 367 indigenous leaders from 52 different municipalities, 69 of which are women. Over 90% of these postulated for some political office with a variety of

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37 Personal interview with Cancio Lopez (La Paz, October 1999).
political parties in the past elections. Many of them are already recognized leaders in their communities, but the Foundation ensures that many younger people also participate, as well as the women who have been particularly active. This approach looks to directly strengthen the capacity of indigenous leaders and community members to be able to make the current system work to their advantage. Given the increasing importance of municipal governments in development, this increased capacity is one way of assuring additional self-management and participation by indigenous peoples, not only in the election of officials, but also in the administration and management of the municipality the in the participation of the communities in the planning process.

7. Indigenous Organizations, New Institutional Arrangements and Democracy Promotion

What can we learn concerning democratic assistance from the experience of indigenous organizations and the new institutional framework in Bolivia over the last number of years? As regional or national organizations, they have struggled for a forum through which to directly have a say in national politics. These groups had advocated for a national council of indigenous organizations, including the CSUTCB, CIDOB and others, to interact with the legislature and the ministries in the promotion of indigenous policies and control of existing laws, which has yet to be effectively realized. In the 1997 elections, a number of “indigenous-campesino” delegates were elected to the national legislature, but their very small numbers and refusal to participate in the larger system has mediated against their effectiveness. The CONDEPA party in La Paz, primarily the populist party of the urban ‘cholos’ did achieve some success in that region, but lost credibility with their decision to enter the ruling political ‘mega-coalition’ between the AND, MIR, UCS, and the NFR. The party has also been racked by internal disputes over succession, policy and corruption, and recently withdrew from the mega-coalition.

The Experience of Municipal Elections of 1995 and the Participatory Planning Process

Nevertheless, the municipal elections in 1995 provided unprecedented access and presence by indigenous peoples in the political life of the country. Of the 1624 municipal council members elected, 464 were indigenous-campesinos, or 28.6% of the total. However, there was great variation across departments, with Oruro totaling a high of 62% indigenous concejales but only 8% in the Beni and a surprising low of 13% in La Paz. Nearly all of the elected members had done so through allegiances to one or another of the larger existing parties, with only the fairly new MBL and the tiny M RTK (Katarista) party actively seeking indigenous participation and a more indigenous political agenda. Where strong indigenous-campesino organizations were in place they were often able to enter the political arena through postulating a candidate list through the framework of an existing but defunct small party, to influence the local instance of a major national party to “nominate” a representative from their organization. In other cases the lists were entirely formulated by the party, sometimes including an indigenous-campesino member and other times not. Once in power, how did things proceed? Did indigenous-campesino members of the municipal government cross their party affiliations to better represent the interests of their ‘people’? Were indigenous-campesino members able to effectively administer the government?

In regards to developments since the elections in 1995, granted the fact that many indigenous or campesino representatives were elected, it proved difficult for these members to effectively

38 CONDEPA was a populist movement that coalesced around the person of a media mogul, Carlos Palenque, in the city of La Paz, who utilized radio and television to link with popular causes, mostly those of the ‘cholos’, the Aymara urban merchants in La Paz and in the rapidly growing city of El Alto.
40 Either rural union structures, productive associations, and particularly ‘colonizer’ organizations of highland peasants in the lowlands.
contribute to municipal governance and programs for several reasons: the general overall lack of capacity at the municipal level, given the newness of these institutions; the lack of trained human resources; conflicts between parties and personal conflicts between concejales; domination of the process by the mayor without consultation with the council or other municipal elements and a lack of autonomy due to the influence of departmental and national governments or other powerful interests within the municipality (such as landowners, cattle ranchers and forestry concessions). In a study carried out in 80 different municipalities where campesino-indigena representatives were voted in, these representatives identified four major problems: 53% felt that they had too little preparation for their new role, 34% named internal and party conflicts, 27% stated that they felt marginalized as indigenous representatives, and 21% felt that they lacked sufficient resources to be more effective. Under lack of preparation, explanations ran the gamut from mayors who had only a primary school education, little knowledge of the laws and legislation, and falling prey to the influences of other actors for their lack of political experience. Especially in the more heterogenous lowland areas, outright discrimination and marginalization of elected indigenous people by whites and elites was a severe problem. In some cases elected consejales were marginalized within the council, and in others were prevented from holding any positions of influence.

On the question of the more direct participation of indigenous peoples through their involvement as OTBs in the municipal planning process, both successes and challenges have been encountered. Overall, regardless of the difficulties experienced, there has been a much higher level of participation and influence over development and investment decisions by community groups and OTBs than ever before. While many municipalities did not effectively carry this process out, and others have failed to stick the plans once they are made, it has raised the level of awareness that the communities do have a voice. The Comités de Vigilancia have been by and far the weakest element of the system so far. Members often lacked the capacity to carry out their functions, the lacked resources, and often were coopted by more powerful interests as a result of the first two problems. Much more work remains to be done, but again, the concept of having a legal mechanism through which civil society and indigenous organizations can oversee and monitor the activities of the government has been producing a change in consciousness.

In terms of their ability to directly participate in the electoral process, indigenous organizations cite a number of restrictions, some institutional, some social, and some cultural. There are several constraints that emanate from institutional problems. There remain difficulties in the registration of many illiterate or isolated indigenous peoples. Those who lack a ‘carnet de identidad’ cannot vote, and there have numerous problems in obtaining these documents, both structural and cultural. Secondly, the party structures and the list system which remains in place for the political parties results in the virtual appointment from national levels to local levels the candidates that each party will postulate, many whom are unknown to local communities. Indigenous community members that have entered into this system have done so through the budding recognition by parties of the potential vote of indigenous peoples, or to having indigenous individuals sworn in as party militants. In this case, it remains the party discipline which dictates the policies which are generally followed. In addition, formal pacts and negotiations between CIDOB and different parties have not been honored, usually due to the fact that once elections are over there is means to assure that parties follow through on their promises. In many cases, local authorities have historically been co-opted by the political parties, and this has increasingly been the case, both with potential candidates for office as well as for members of the CVs (the citizens

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41 Ojatas en el Poder Local: Cuatro Anos Despues (1999).
42 "I taught him how to read, and now he is a council member?" (ibid).
44 "los convenios con partidos politicos no resulto" Marcial Fabricano, 2000.
committees). Parties are often attempting to buy or influence the votes and support of these people, presenting a serious challenge to any real representation.

More cultural and social obstacles also exist. The lack of knowledge concerning the law and politics in general remains a major factor. The general lack of education in most indigenous areas, especially on lowland Bolivia, also prevents better understanding of issues and the participation of local people. Indigenous leaders at CIDOB are quick to admit that, at the present time the historical relationships of clientelism are still those that dominate the political scene in their communities. They are unable to create a collective block of votes, even to support openly indigenous candidates, if these candidates do not have the money and resources to provide the kinds of gifts and benefits that others do. Indigenous organizations have also been overtaken by so many other issues, such as environmental management and the implementation of development projects that they have failed to develop a more coherent strategy for engaging with the new reforms.

A deeper question of political culture also remains a challenge for both mestizo Bolivians and indigenous peoples alike. Even with the extension of the political franchise, and the arrival of the state at the decentralized and local level, many of the expectations remain paternalistic. In the minds of many Bolivians, the concept of the rights of democracy are more fully developed than those of the responsibilities. That is, many believe that they have the right to vote and choose representatives, and to participate in identifying needs and priorities for the administration, but then expect that the state should somehow fulfill these obligations alone. Regardless of the levels of corruption and inefficiency previously discussed, the state lacks the resources and the know how to resolve such problems alone. A culture of state paternalism in some ways seems contradictory given the fiercely independent nature of lowland indigenous peoples and the long tradition of governance and shared responsibly existing in the highlands. It can be better understood granted that most citizens have yet to feel a part of the polity, and do not perceive themselves to be in a mutual relationship between state and public. It is true that vis a vis other identities they do see themselves as “Bolivian”, but they simply do not have even the basic trust or respect for the state which is fundamental to the evolution of a democratic political system which could contribute more effectively to a process of equitable development.

For example, in recent surveys, only 33% of Bolivians “totally support” the democratic system, with 35% either not supporting or weakly supporting. The institutions gaining most public trust are the media, followed in close second by the Catholic Church. The Neighborhood Committees, the Military and the Unions, are all listed before the institutions of the government, and 69% believe that “the disappearance of political parties would not be detrimental to the democracy”. When speaking of who best represents citizens interests, once again the Church surpasses others by far, followed again by the neighborhood associations, mayors, and then all the others, with political parties occupying last place! When it comes to how people perceive politics, the number one item is corruption (43%), followed by “struggle for power” (13%) and only then “service to the country” (12%). These figures demonstrate the emerging nature of the trust between citizens and state, and the problems that this represents.

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45 Marcial Fabricano stated “We need to start preparing now for the elections in 5 years time, instead of waiting until the last moment to prepare ourselves”.

46 In many recent surveys, trust in state institutions and particularly in political parties is at an all time low. This is explained in some cases by the rapidly rising expectations of people given the nature of the very positive reforms, and restoration of trust and the concurrent overcoming of relationships of historical conflict between state and society can only be expected to be a gradual process. See the surveys by Mitchell Seligson “The Political Culture of Democracy in Bolivia: 1998.” (La Paz: USAID, December) and Corte Nacional Electoral, “Encuesta Sobre Democracia y Valores Democraticos” (June 1999).

Finally, the question of capacity is central to the ability of indigenous peoples to both enter the political process and exercise public office once attained. According to the above surveys, most citizens lack a basic understanding of the democratic system and its functions. Worse yet, most public and elected officials also lack such knowledge. CIDOB has recognized this, and is currently attempting to create a structure within the organization to provide support to member organizations and communities through education, training and preparation. This unit would be able to assist them in both preparation for national elections, to mobilize and educate for municipal elections, and more importantly, to be able to participate more effectively in the participatory planning processes as OTBs and members of CVs.

A Comparative Case: Cochabamba and Campesino-Indigenous Organizations

In one of the few more positive cases, in the department of Cochabamba, areas inhabited by Quechua colonizers and coca producers had a more successful experience which may shed some light on arguments for more organized political participation under the current institutional context. Due to the constant conflicts resulting from the operations of government anti-coca production efforts, these groups had an already existing tightly organized community structure, part of the rural unions composing the CSUTCB. Building on a semi-regional organization that they had been developing for more political participation (La Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos), they were able to ‘borrow’ the legal permission of a now defunct party, the Izquierda Unida (IU), and win a majority in 10 different municipalities in the region. After their ‘political’ victory, they expected that national groups, opposing parties and interest groups would attempt to cause difficulties or defraud their candidates, they were especially cautious about the ‘correct’ implementation of the law and in the use of funds. They contracted NGOs and consultants to assist with many elements of the participatory planning process, project design and financial management. Being part of the rural union structure with a long history of organizations and link to their bases also enabled them to more effectively utilize the participatory planning process to design a plan with their people that responded to their interests. A hightened modification also found municipal governments there working in close collusion with the federacion campesina that jointly approved projects and programs and served as another means of input by local citizens. It would appear that the higher levels of local organizations and solidarity in these areas permitted the potential of decentralization and popular participation to be more fully realized. These factors remain to be explored in future research.

In the most recent municipal elections in December of 1999, indigenous organizations were once again slow to fully engage the political process and continued to lack a coherent approach. However, they did have more success in placing indigenous candidates on party lists, posting over 85 candidates for numerous different political parties in the lowland areas alone. While elections have now been held, as of this writing the data regarding the number of indigenous concejales and mayors has yet to be released. Reports indicate that, even in some cases where numerous indigenous candidates were elected from within a winning party, pacts are formed by other parties that may exclude them or prevent an indigenous mayor from taking power. This process also remains to be analyzed as part of the future research.

Perspectives for the Future: CIDOB

Marcial Fabricano, the current vice-president and the past president of CIDOB, is acutely aware of the need for indigenous people and their organizations to engage more in political processes. He himself ran for national office (vice-president) in the 1997 elections, under an alliance with the MBL party, which failed to achieve much support. It proved difficult to achieve a unified

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48 Indigenas al Municipio. 1999, Diciembre. Oyenud, No. 6, 16.
block of indigenous votes that can be called in to back a particular indigenous political party or candidate. This caused a crisis in the thinking of indigenous leaders at CIDOB, who today are not thinking of developing their own political parties. Rather, they do see the possibilities of winning local power, but only if they are able to more effectively form pacts with existing parties and transform the law to allow for independents. The process of forming indigenous districts and municipalities is also one which they wish to pursue more forcefully, although they recognize that this kind of autonomy is not necessarily a lasting solution, and is based on more separatist, rather than pluralistic, tendencies. Their main strategy now is to focus on the development of capacity, through the establishment of a technical team in politics and public policy/local administration. This team will provide technical support to the capitanias and the communities.

8. Concluding Comments

As mentioned at the outset given the current stage of the research only tentative conclusions might be drawn. Over the next number of months I hope to be able to analyze in more detail a number of specific cases where different donor and NGO supported programs have labored to “make democracy work” within the new institutional context, to borrow from Robert Putnam’s now classic work on regional governments in Italy. These case studies will generate a much more detailed understanding of the different ways in which programs offered by donors and NGOs are affecting the development of democratic local governance and the ability of civil society organizations to take advantage of positive institutional frameworks.

Nevertheless, what can be concluded based upon this brief examination of indigenous organizations and democracy assistance programs? Firstly, it would appear that innovative state reforms, such as decentralization in the case of Bolivia, can provide a means through which indigenous and other marginalized populations can accede to local power. However, these institutional reforms often fail to achieve their potential due to a number of factors. The state itself may fail to implement such reforms, as has been the case under the Banzer regime. Also, from an analysis, in some cases indigenous organizations have been able to make the new state structures work for them, overcoming obstacles such as the interests of local elites and power and economic power structures. In others, indigenous organizations as yet lack the organizational capacity to more effectively confront the entrenched political and economic interests, regardless of the favorable institutional environment. Part of the difference between these experiences would appear to be the relative levels of capacity and the involvement of NGOs and other donor supported programs. Indigenous organizations are faced with the increasingly complex tasks of making effective proposals, entering into complicated legal battles, self-management, and political participation, and in many cases are finding that a lack of capacity, as well as a lack of unity, is hampers them from doing these things effectively. The transition from organizations of protest to organizations of development and self-management is proving to be a difficult one.

What does this mean for donors and NGOs? In Bolivia, there exist what might be termed a very favorable ‘enabling environment’ in terms of institutional structures and legal frameworks that would seem to favor the wide enfranchisement of the majority of the poor and indigenous populations. Granted that such arrangements are certainly not perfect, they would seem very progressive vis a vis those in other counties of Latin America. Such a condition would seem to call for a major focus on developing the capacity of organizations and individuals to more fully take advantage of these new opportunities. When it comes to indigenous organizations, donors seem more interested in providing funds for environmental management, conservation, and ‘cultural’ projects like traditional crafts. If the above argument is accepted, it means increasingly focusing international aid and NGO programs on capacity building, emphasizing capacities such as advocacy, coalition building, leadership, mediation, negotiation, management, political processes, and legal education at both the individual and the organizational levels. For example, NGOs might
shift their emphasis to roles such as that played in Bolivia by CEJIS through providing legal services and advocacy and Fundacion Qullana’s long term capacity building program, strategies that further the goals and objectives of the indigenous organizations with which they work, as true partners in a process. These measures will contribute to the continued transformation of indigenous organizations to represent the interests of their people and to contribute to their development. Such measures will at the same time assist donors and NGOs contribute to the development of democratic governance.
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