

Local Governments Need To Work Harder For Women

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UN-INSTRAW, Progreso, Volens, the Dominican National Council for State Reform (CONARE), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) and the Friederich Ebert Stiftung (FES), organized a two-day Seminar on Gender Equality and Local Development, November 21st to 22nd 2007 in Santo Domingo, D.R.



With the aim of strengthening the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in local political and development agendas, the conference brought together women municipal leaders from Central America and the Dominican Republic to share their experiences on municipal management from a gender perspective.

Participants exchanged views and experiences on topics such as municipal budgeting and planning, the formulation of public policy with a gender perspective, the establishment of municipal offices for women's and gender issues, and women's political participation at the local level.

“With the objective to create a network of municipal women, participants from Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala and El Salvador, signed today a regional agreement”, pointed out Carolina Taborga, Social Affairs Officer of UN-INSTRAW. “This agreement is essential to strengthen the dialogue among key women stakeholders and to work together, in order to build more democratic societies”, she continued.

Participants at the meeting issued a declaration calling on municipal leaders to do more to recognize and address women's needs, views and priorities at the local level, and to involve more women in local decision-making and planning processes. The Declaration also highlighted the importance of strengthening alliances between municipal women in order to carry forward the dialogue initiated at the UN-INSTRAW Seminar and establish a common Regional Agenda on Gender Equality.

“It's essential that associations of municipal women be able to share experiences at the regional level so that we can learn from the advances made in other countries,” stated Elvia Villalobos, Mayor of San Isidro de Heredia in

Costa Rica. “This seminar has opened a space to strengthen the dialogue among women municipal leaders, international organizations, donors and the State,” she continued.

“The meeting was interesting because we realized that we are facing the same difficulties and in order to overcome them, we have to join our force. In the future, there will be several meetings to continue this network and to identify our objectives in the medium and long term”, said Carmen Rivera, President of the Association of Municipal Women of Honduras (ANAMMH).

UN-INSTRAW works to support women in politics and stresses the importance of achieving gender parity in political representation. With a world average of just 17.4% of women parliamentary representatives at the national level, and significantly less at the municipal level in Latin America, achieving gender parity is still a significant challenge for governments worldwide.

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