

Gender mainstreaming or just more male-streaming?

Experiences of popular participation in Bolivia

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The Law of Popular Participation (LPP) in Bolivia can be seen as the first significant attempt by policy makers in the region to mainstream gender into a national development initiative. The LPP seeks to devolve power and resources from the national to the local level. It is the first Bolivian law to be explicitly couched in gendered terms, and aims to increase the prominence of women in local political and development spheres. However, as I suggest in this article, in some respects the LPP has actually had the effect of displacing women from the very site of their traditional forms of political activism, at community level. As greater status, power, and resources have been devolved to politics at this level, men have become more prominent in this previously neglected, 'feminised' sphere. The article argues that, to some extent, the goal of mainstreaming gender into national development via the LPP was missed. Reasons include a lack of effective and systematic gendered analysis of the structural barriers to women's participation, and the failure to support gender mainstreaming, and women's participation, through capacity building at all levels.

The term 'gender mainstreaming' has become common parlance in development policy documents in recent years. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a critical forum at which a commitment to integrating a gender perspective in all forms of development and political processes was drawn up in the Platform for Action (PfA) (United Nations 2001). This commitment to an integration of a gendered perspective at all levels subsequently became labelled *gender mainstreaming*. It has become a major global strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives and the promotion of gender equality in all areas of social development (Neimanis 2003).

However, much more work still needs to be done to translate the policy rhetoric into grounded reality. Indeed, unless gender mainstreaming is genuinely translated from rhetoric to reality, there is a danger that it

becomes little more than fashionable semantics co-opted by politicians and policy makers, and that women will actually lose out in the longer term. When terminology becomes accepted at a policy level without the corresponding implementation and structural transformation, it can serve to blunt demands, in this case women's demands, for change. It can also elicit responses along the lines of, 'we've done that, it's been dealt with, you no longer have legitimate grounds for complaint'.

With this in mind, this article provides a critical analysis of an attempt to mainstream gender into a potentially radical political reform that has been rolled out across Bolivia since the mid-1990s. The LPP — also known as the People's Participation Law, or Law 1551 — has attracted significant international attention and is generally heralded as a groundbreaking force for enhanced citizenship, democratisation, and much-

needed community development. Indeed, over the past decade there has been a tangible sense of both increased empowerment and of greater enfranchisement into regional and national political processes among local actors (Imparato and Ruster 2003; Byron and Zolezzi 2003; Booth and Piron 2004).

Nevertheless, in all the excitement that the LPP has generated about people's participation, far less attention has been paid to the actual gendered dynamics of the law. As I suggest here, the LPP fell short of its potential to effectively mainstream gender into the political processes, for two key reasons. First, there was a lack of attention paid to gendered analyses of both practical and strategic¹ barriers to women's participation at the policy level. Second, there was a failure to provide adequate and systematic capacity building to facilitate women's participation at local and regional levels. As a result, rather than encouraging women's greater participation and decision making, the LPP has in some cases had the reverse effect of pushing women out of local spaces in which they were previously involved in community development. Moreover, as Lind (2002) states, since the popular participation measures were introduced, the percentage of women politicians and in some cases of women's organisational participation has actually decreased. In addition, she argues,

even when women's organizations participate in these new structures, they may gain visibility but they do not necessarily gain political or economic power. An unintended consequence of decentralization is that some women's organizations have lost out or been left without funding or support (Lind 2002, 242).

While there is some evidence that this may be a transitional phase, and one which women are contesting with the support of local and international NGOs, it is nevertheless important that generalised statements about the success of popular participation do not go unquestioned.

The 'beautiful dynamic' of popular participation?

The Bolivian LPP was implemented from 1994, and so precedes the Beijing Platform for Action, and the subsequent focus on gender mainstreaming. In this regard, the LPP could be seen as particularly forward-thinking, in that it is a law that was written with an explicit intent to integrate gender awareness and gender equality into the political process.

Lauded as the most important and successful of a series of reforms initiated in the late 1990s, the LPP instituted democratic municipal government on a nationwide basis for the first time (Booth and Piron 2004). In its own words, it sets out to:

secure improvements in the quality of life of Bolivian women and men, with a more just distribution and better administration of public resources. To strengthen the political and economic instruments necessary in order to perfect representative democracy, facilitating citizens' participation and guaranteeing equality of opportunity in terms of representation of women and men (Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular 1994, 2).

The LPP created new layers of locally elected municipal government, and devolved 20 per cent of national tax revenue to the local level for participatory community development. It divided the country into over 300 new municipalities, each with its own locally elected leadership, within which local organising committees — known as Territorial Base Organisations (OTBs, also referred to as Area-Based Community Organisations or ABCOs) — were established. The OTBs in each community tend to be pre-existing socio-territorial organisations such as neighbourhood committees (*juntas vecinales*), and *ayllus*,² or other forms of indigenous territorial organisations officially recognised by the municipal government as representative of a given community or area. These local committees are responsible for producing the annual community

development plans (the *Plan Annual Operativo* or PAO) and acting as the interface between local and municipal governance. The municipal government should then use its allotted tax revenue to fund the development initiatives set out in the community's plan.³

Although remaining rather vague as to the specific composition of the community committees, all paragraphs in the law indicate that both men and women should be considered eligible and equal participants. Proponents of the LPP argue that these features give the law a progressive thrust in the area of gender relations.⁴ It is also believed that, since popular participation is centrally concerned with improving local social services — areas in which women in both urban and rural areas are normally more concerned than men — the implementation of the law has provided a favourable context for the development and increased visibility of women's public roles at the local level.⁵

The real significance of the LPP is that it does provide a genuinely legal basis for women's political participation in local and regional governance. Rather than simply relying on normative entitlements, Bolivian women have explicit legislative entitlement through the LPP to participation in structural decision-making processes.

The impact of the LPP

To some extent, the LPP has provided avenues for the increased participation and visibility of women in decision-making processes at both community and municipal levels. Several positive examples exist of the ways in which women are moving into the spaces created by the law, and beginning to exploit its possibilities.

Under the LPP, municipal plans are expected to include 'women's concerns'.⁶ In an attempt to give substance to this provision, the Gender Affairs Sub-Secretariat within the Ministry of Human Development decided in 1995 to target 12

urban and 12 rural municipalities for specific short-term interventions to promote gender awareness in the planning processes. The Sub-Secretariat worked on assessments of gender needs, trained women's rights promoters, and developed Legal Advice Centres in the urban areas. One of the selected municipalities, Entre Rios, in the southern Department of Tarija, is offered here as a good example of what can be achieved when the LPP is applied under favourable conditions. According to the former head of the Gender Affairs Sub-Secretariat, the LPP implementation in Entre Rios has created a 'beautiful dynamic'⁷ in which many traditional relationships of ethnic and gender oppression have come to be questioned seriously for the first time (Booth *et al.* 1996). In Entre Rios, the favourable conditions include a strong local Guaraní⁸ women's organisation, a powerful indigenous people's organisation, and well-trained facilitators from the Gender and Rural Sub-Secretariats, which work together with local NGOs. The non-governmental Legal Services Network in Entre Rios was used to publicise the opportunities available under the LPP, while also carrying out work on human rights issues.

A second positive example comes from Cochabamba city, the third largest urban centre in the country. Here, there is a markedly greater participation of women in the OTBs than one finds in rural regions. According to municipal government figures, approximately 20 to 30 per cent of the OTB leadership is female, compared with, for example, less than one per cent in rural areas within the Cochabamba Department as a whole.⁹ This can largely be accounted for by the presence of both a relatively powerful Women's Civic Committee,¹⁰ and several NGOs working specifically towards the promotion of women's rights within the city itself. These women's organisations have lobbied the municipal government to promote the introduction of 'Gender Secretaries' within the OTBs. Their remit is to raise issues of gendered equality of

opportunity at the community level, and encourage women's greater participation in the decision-making processes of the LPP. This is a positive step towards gender mainstreaming, with this role accounting for the majority of the percentage of women in leadership positions in the OTBs.

Overall, these examples indicate that, with the right kinds of intervention, popular participation has the potential to act as a catalyst for positive transformations in gender relations. Having said this, there are still challenges. For example, there is still a long way to go before the Gender Secretaries make a significant impression. I found, for example, that this new leadership role is accorded little real importance within the OTBs themselves — possibly the reason why no men have stood for election to this position — and that the role of Gender Secretary remains vague or unheard of in the minds of the community members.¹¹ Furthermore, the LPP has not had a positive impact for all women, even in areas in which good work is now being done, and in many areas this work is lacking altogether.

In the following section, I highlight some of the gendered dynamics of the LPP and its implementation at the local level. Then, moving from the particular to the more general, I focus on some of the flaws in the gendered dimensions of the LPP at the point of inception.

Barriers to gender mainstreaming: urban women's experiences

Structural inequalities and constraints arising from differences in women's and men's gender roles and expectations create both practical and strategic barriers to effective gender mainstreaming in development processes. The following examples are based on ethnographic research conducted in urban and peri-urban neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Cochabamba city in 1997. They illustrate the ways in which the

drafters of the LPP required greater understanding of the structural barriers preventing women from taking advantage of the opportunities for participation provided by the Law.

Lack of time

The first structural barrier is lack of time. On a practical level, women have less time than men to participate in political processes. Their multiple roles and responsibilities for reproductive and productive work lead to their being differentially time-poor. As a result, women felt they had little or no time to spare to become involved in the LPP, regardless of their commitment to doing so. Women's additional roles as community managers, including their roles within women's community groups such as the *clubes de madres* or mothers' clubs,¹² tended to be overlooked. These roles were not perceived, by either men or women, as 'political' and so were accorded little social status. As Moser states:

The fact that men are more likely to be involved in community politics means that the participation of local women as community managers is frequently either invisible or not valued. However, there is also a negative side to women's participation. While their participation is often crucial for project success, this is based on the assumption that women have 'free time' [...] When women fail to participate, it is not women who are the problem [...]. It is a lack of gender-awareness of planners about the different roles of men and women in society and the fact that women have to balance their time allocation in terms of three roles (Moser 1993, 103).

Gendered equality of participation may be written into the text of the LPP, but, unless this participation is practically and strategically facilitated, women's involvement is made particularly difficult. For example, for women to find the time to participate, they first have to perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as having 'free time' for such purposes. This time is a strategic gender need, in Moser's terms (1993).

In addition, the meetings have to be held at times that fit into women's daily routines: a practical gender need (Moser 1993). The following extracts are from interviews with women who live and work in the resource-poor neighbourhoods of Barrio Colquiri and Ville Sebastián Pagador.

Lourdes¹³ is Quechua, originally from a mining family on the Altiplano, but has lived in Barrio Colquiri for over ten years. She is a nurse by training but now spends her time looking after her four children, plus two from her husband's previous marriage. She continues to provide unofficial health care within the community. Her husband is a car mechanic in a small garage near the centre of Cochabamba. Lourdes has been going to the neighbourhood *club de madres* for approximately three years and is now treasurer of the group:

'I know about the junta vecinal but I don't participate. I don't have time to go to the meetings. [...] There are more men in the juntas vecinales because women are more inhibited, they inhibit themselves and they don't go to the meetings. They have to cook, wash, so many things to do in the house, whereas men dedicate themselves to their work outside, come home at about 5 or 6 pm and then they can go to the meetings, whereas women stay at home watching the kids. But it seems to me it doesn't have to be like that. We also have to participate. Little by little women will participate more'
(Barrio Colquiri, March 1997).

Lidia is the President of the *club de madres* in Ville Sebastián Pagador and a juice seller in the neighbourhood market. She does not participate in the *junta vecinal*, and has little knowledge of the LPP. Her daily routine again exemplifies the time-poverty that many women experience. In spite of this, Lidia was the person who initially established and runs the neighbourhood *club de madres*:

'I leave the house to sell at 7am until 2pm. Before 7am I prepare the juices to sell. I wash clothes, clean the house, then I come to sell. I wake at

5.30am. At 2pm I wash the clothes, clean the house, then I return here to sell again at 4pm until night. At night I go home to cook dinner or sometimes we eat here in the market. I go to bed at 10pm. I have three sons [...] we are six in all. My husband works as a seller in the centre of town so he doesn't have time to work in the house [...] I haven't participated in the junta vecinal. [The President] doesn't tell us when there are meetings unless it's very important. Those of my neighbourhood, we know almost nothing. We have heard about the Law [LPP] but I don't know very well what it is. They say it is going to be good for us but I didn't find out a lot about it. I haven't heard of the PAO [Plan Annual Operativo]. I haven't participated in anything like that' (Ville Sebastián Pagador, June 1997).

These interview extracts illustrate the ways in which the gender division of labour, and women's and men's different uses and concepts of time, affect women's participation in community politics, and hence the LPP. They also illustrate the ways in which genuine gender mainstreaming necessitates a will to address barriers arising from such differential socio-cultural expectations of gender roles and the lived realities of women's lives.

Ideological barriers to women in politics

What is also clear is that women, despite their time-poverty, are actively involved in 'community' organising — thus termed as opposed to the men's 'political' organising. On an ideological level, the political sphere is perceived as a male domain. Women's community organising is something that both the men and women in the neighbourhoods overlook — or rather, do not apportion significant value to — despite that fact that the work of the women's community groups is frequently both implicitly and explicitly political.

An understanding of the power dynamics and experiences of individuals and groups at both intra- and inter-household levels is crucial if the rhetoric of

gender mainstreaming is to be realised. Furthermore, as exemplified by the LPP, planning and policy that is implemented without adequate understanding of such grassroots dynamics can fail to impact positively on key actors in a given target group, and, importantly, fail to understand the reasons for such problems.

Popular participation: missed opportunities for gender mainstreaming?

A critique of many 'women in development' (WID) approaches to development is that they have 'tagged women on' to an existing development process. This lack of a rigorous gender analysis often reinforces or even extends gender inequalities for women. While the LPP was intended to formalise women's political equality of participation through legislative reform — to give them *de jure* political status — it largely ignored the pre-existing structures which deprived women of *de facto* political power in the first place. Consequently, it has failed to address the fact that women are not necessarily in a position to take full advantage of the opportunities for political enfranchisement provided through this law.

The failure to mainstream a gendered perspective throughout the process of planning and implementing the law has had a number of negative repercussions. Most noticeably, what has occurred is that community organisation has become a political arena within which there is, for the first time, a genuine opportunity to control significant resources. There is also an opportunity to recognise and enjoy direct structural relationships with municipal government, and national political parties. In other words, community-level development and grassroots social organisation is now being accorded much greater importance. It has become an arena in which local leaders can make their mark, potentially able to use this space as a stepping stone towards

greater political ambitions. As a result, women now have to compete with men for spaces that were previously relatively ignored because, 'now there is money in these local spaces men are taking more interest and so women are fighting not to get pushed out'.¹⁴

At these local levels, men always tended to be more visibly in control of decision making, through their acknowledged leaderships of indigenous, union, or neighbourhood organisations such as the *ayllus*, *sindicatos campesinos*¹⁵ or *juntas vecinales*. Whilst such organisations were ostensibly responsible for lobbying for infrastructural local development, such as improvements in water supplies or roads, prior to the introduction of the LPP their efficacy was limited. This was due to their relative lack of resources, and to the lack of status accorded to these 'feminised' local spaces at the macro political level.

Women, on the other hand, were — and are — frequently the pro-active but largely invisible organisers and facilitators of development and change at a community level. This may be via formal membership of social groups such as *clubes de madres*, in which women work together to, for example, improve family nutrition, provide informal welfare and health care, and create community spaces such as playgrounds and gardens. It may alternatively be through the organisation of informal local networks, developing invisible safety nets amongst resource-poor families in the absence of a welfare state.¹⁶ Since the 1980s there has been a rise of neo-liberal reforms in Bolivia, a subsequent pulling back of the State, and a continued economic crisis. This all means that the work of such socio-functional groups — both the formal and informal networks of predominantly women who engage in this often largely invisible productive, reproductive, and community management work — has become under-recognised. At the same time, as Lind (2002) argues, this work is fundamental to the

national social structure. Women's community organisations play a critical part in the socio-economic development of the local arena, but have attracted little acknowledgment of their roles at either the local or national political levels.

The introduction of the LPP provided an ideal opportunity for this (gendered) development work of women at community level to become more formally recognised and resourced. This was not, however, the immediate effect. Instead, what were traditionally defined as female/feminised spaces — as a result of their association with the private/domestic/local spheres — are now, through greater political power and resources, becoming an increasingly contested environment.

As mentioned above, for a community to become part of the popular participation process they first need to register an OTB. One aspect of the Law is that these OTBs should be territorial organisations rather than functional. This raised an immediate gendered bias in terms of who controlled the LPP at the local level. In Bolivia, there tend to exist certain types of community organisation, and these tend to have a marked gendered dimension.

On the one hand, there are neighbourhood committees (*juntas vecinales*), indigenous groups (e.g. *ayllus*), and union groups (e.g. *sindicatos campesinos*). These groups are perceived to be territorial, pertaining to a given area or community, and are seen as the more official representatives of a given community. On the other hand there are organisations formed around a particular social function or interest, into which *clubes de madres* are placed. Whilst almost invariably pertaining to a given area or community, these groups are not formally regarded as territorial. It almost goes without saying that the former are overwhelmingly male-dominated and the latter female-dominated.

Thus, as it was written into the LPP that only territorial groups could be registered as OTBs, this automatically excluded female-

dominated community groups. Furthermore, by according new powers and status (via registration as OTBs) to the already male-dominated territorial community organisations, the LPP in some cases led to an increased polarisation of gender roles and powers at these levels. In other words, rather than a valorisation, increased visibility, and enhancement of women's roles at these levels, men were able to appropriate these new, more powerful positions. In doing this they further consigned the 'remnants' of community organising and decision making to women, with a concomitant reduction in their relative status.

In this respect, several criticisms could be raised with regard to the lack of explicit mechanisms written into the LPP, both to guard against the male domination of these political spaces, and to promote equality of opportunity in representation of women and men. Other than the language of gender mainstreaming and recognition of women within the legislation itself, the Law did not provide any special mechanisms or incentives for changing gender relations in a positive direction. It could be argued that, whatever the existing radical potential of the LPP, important opportunities were missed to make it more directly powerful as a strategy to encourage the increased enfranchisement of women into community and municipal leadership roles.

There were three broad thrusts to the argument against more directly and tangibly targeting women in the LPP legislation.¹⁷ First, at the time it was claimed that setting quotas for the participation of women in the OTBs would generate an unhelpful backlash against an already controversially radical reform. A declaration of principle, on the other hand, would provide a basis for a local movement with sufficient support to move ahead in an effective way. However, we have since seen the establishment of the 'Law of Quotas' in 1997, which does specifically set quotas for women as candidates in national political parties (Booth, Clisby, and Widmark 1997). This

suggests that, political will allowing, the LPP could also have included certain targets within its own legislation.

A second argument for the lack of specific targets for women's participation being named was that higher rates of illiteracy and lower levels of education among women presented serious obstacles to women's leadership participation that could not be legislated away.¹⁸ Issues of illiteracy and a lack of formal training do pose problems when establishing new forms of governance and leadership, and women are statistically over-represented in illiteracy tables. However, I would suggest that these problems are by no means gender-specific, and do not constitute sufficient cause not to specifically target women as potential community leaders.

Indeed the same standard does not seem to apply to male leaders. In Independencia in the High Andes, for example, a Quechua male counsellor was elected to the new municipal government. He spoke almost no Spanish (the official language of politics, in which all legislation is written), and had very little formal education, literacy, or training in leadership skills.¹⁹ There was no serious suggestion that only well-educated, Spanish-speaking men should be allowed to stand for municipal government. Any such suggestion would have been met with widespread outrage from the majority indigenous, rural communities across the country. Illiterate women are inherently no less capable of leadership than illiterate men, and the way forward is to provide essential capacity building for all candidates, regardless of gender.

A third issue which most directly discriminates against women's participation in the LPP is that of the definition and recognition of the OTBs. As discussed above, the problem for the overwhelming majority of women's organisations throughout Bolivia was that they were not deemed to qualify officially as OTBs, because they were classed as neither territorial nor as representing the whole population of a

given *barrio*. It was claimed that this problem stems from an objective reality of gender relations in Bolivia, rather than from any insensitivity to gender issues on the part of the legislative team.²⁰ This 'objective reality' is that indigenous Andean traditions of domestic consultation are based on the concept of complementary gender roles: the public/private spatial dichotomy. This, it is argued, leads to less purely patriarchal patterns of decision making than appears at first sight (Taipinquiri 1996; Harris 2000).

I find this fundamental premise flawed. However, for the purposes of this critique, even if we accept that the distinction between female-dominated functional groups and male-dominated territorial groups is a technically legitimate argument, it remains problematic. In reality, community-based women's groups, although not officially precluding membership by women from different communities, do tend to be overwhelmingly territorial in as much as they pertain to a given neighbourhood. It would be a relatively simple matter to make these organisations officially territorial and, as such, qualify as OTBs on these grounds. An argument against this was that, whether territorial or sectoral, women's community organisations do not represent both men and women in a given neighbourhood in the same way as *juntas vecinales* officially do. This is despite the fact that *juntas vecinales* tend to be overwhelmingly male-dominated organisations.²¹ There is an important and wider issue here: it appears to be more acceptable for all-male or predominantly male committees to purport to represent the whole than it is for female-dominated groups to do so.

The evolution of gender mainstreaming in popular participation

So, to return to the question posed in the title: is the LPP an example of effective gender mainstreaming or not? On the one

hand, the three arguments against more directly targeting women (discussed in the previous section) demonstrate the ways in which, despite the rhetoric, the LPP reflects deeper, insidious gender biases operating within society. We have seen how the LPP can actually serve to reinscribe unequal gender relations through a series of biases and assumptions written into the Law. The LPP talked about gender mainstreaming, but did not ensure that this actually occurred by providing adequate capacity building in a comprehensive and sustainable way. It shied away from positive-action measures, failed to incorporate an analysis of women's and men's gender roles, and made assumptions about women's capabilities and their forms of community organising that discriminated against women from the outset. Thus, despite the laudable intentions of the LPP, not enough was done at the crucial stage of implementation to facilitate the equality of participation and decision making that it claimed to advocate.

This is not to say that the LPP has not begun to break down the gendered barriers to women's formal participation; indeed, in some cases, women have managed to exert greater leverage. More broadly, the Law has generated a momentum of enhanced citizenship and participation which 'is acknowledged as something irreversible' (José Barriga, Vice Minister for Popular Participation and Municipal Strengthening, cited in *Imparato and Ruster 2003*, 326). Despite its flawed beginnings, it does seem that something of a groundswell of action around capacity building, including some work on gender issues, is occurring across the country. As more and more people become aware of their rights under the LPP, increasing numbers of local actors are calling for these rights to be realised. As Verónica Cutipa, a community group leader in Cochabamba, points out, 'while before the Law we knew nothing, we have learned something, at least to complain, to demand the rights that are ours by law' (cited in *Imparato and Ruster 2003*, 326).

The LPP process has received support from a range of international government and non-government agencies, and in some areas across the country there are now several local and international NGOs working to build upon the gendered dimensions of the Law.²² One of the NGOs being supported is the Instituto Femenina de Fomento y Formación Integral (IFFI), a regional NGO working in Cochabamba to promote women's rights and provide training for women. It has been running a series of workshops to raise awareness among women of their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities available under the Law. In Ville Sebastián Pagador, for example, IFFI helped a group of women to present their demands for development initiatives to be included in the annual PAO. Their plans included a scheme for the construction of a community and training centre. The male leadership of the OTB said their plans were unrealistic because the zone had much more pressing priorities, such as water and sewerage systems, which would require all the LPP funds for the next few years. Undeterred, the women approached the Mayor directly and explained their plans and the situation. The Mayor eventually agreed to provide 50 per cent of the necessary funding for the project, if they were able to raise the other half. Examples such as this provide evidence of how, in some areas, women are moving into the spaces created by the LPP and beginning to exploit the possibilities of the Law. It is unlikely, for example, that without the LPP providing the institutional framework, the women from Ville Sebastián Pagador would have prepared a proposal which, although it did not make it through the official channels of the LPP, reached the level of municipal planning and became a future possibility.

However, the LPP failed to integrate appropriate capacity-building mechanisms into the legislation in an effective and systematic way. It has thus been left to both local and international NGOs to step into this gap in recent years in ways that provide a patchy and relatively *ad hoc* national picture.

Nevertheless, there are instances where the goal of gender mainstreaming in popular participation in Bolivia is closer to being realised. Although these instances do currently tend to be exceptions to the more general pattern, since women's participation in the political sphere at any level remains relatively limited, they nevertheless demonstrate the possibilities that have been opened up by the Law. What has also been demonstrated across the region is that, once aware of their rights under the LPP, women are keen to become involved in decision making. It is certainly not the case that, as I was told by several male community leaders, 'women simply don't want to participate'.²³

To mainstream gender concerns properly into popular participation is undoubtedly a long, slow process, which would call for major political and financial investment over many years. However, the experience thus far has generated some interesting dynamics. While the LPP has resulted in some women being pushed out of development processes at local levels, there have also been tangible advances for other women's groups. As Lind (2002, 246) notes, 'some women's NGOs that are sub-contracted by the state have [...] benefited to a large degree, in political as well as financial terms. Such is the case of IFFI in Cochabamba.' She goes on, however, to sound a warning note: 'This perceived power is not necessarily permanent, it depends on future political relationships and policies and IFFI may or may not retain this power.'

Lind is right to be cautious: as we have seen at macro-development levels, it is all too easy to provide a gendered discourse at the policy level, but with little concomitant 'engendering' of development processes. It seems clear that the LPP will not provide proponents of gender mainstreaming with a textbook example of success. However, there is significant energy and commitment among both women and men across Bolivia to use the Law as a tool to strengthen local-

level decision making, and within this, to promote greater opportunities for gender equality in participatory planning.

Notes

- 1 The distinction between practical and strategic gender interests or needs has become an important reference point in 'gender and development' (GAD) discourses. See particularly Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1993).
- 2 *Ayllus* are ancient forms of indigenous territorial organisation in the Andean region. *Ayllus* tend to be associated with the Aymara, one of the largest indigenous groups in the region and dominant on the Altiplano (Ticona *et al.* 1995; Taipinquiri 1996; Vasquez 1998). Bolivia is unique among its South American neighbours in that approximately 60 per cent of its population is indigenous, with the largest groups being Quechua (30 per cent) and Aymara (25 per cent) (UNICEF 1994; Freedomhouse 2004).
- 3 For a fuller explanation of the LPP, see Booth *et al.* 1996; Booth *et al.* 1997; Kohl 2003.
- 4 Taken from interviews with the Gender Affairs Secretariat between 1994 and 1997, and with Ivonne Farah, former Vice-Minister for Gender Affairs and Sonia Montaña, formerly Sub-Secretariat of Gender Affairs, Ministry of Human Development, La Paz, 1996.
- 5 Taken from interviews with the Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular and the Sub-Secretaría de Asuntos de Genero, La Paz, 1995–7.
- 6 Law No. 1551, Law of Popular Participation, Article 14, 20 April, 1994.
- 7 Taken from an interview with Sonia Montaña, La Paz, formerly Sub-Secretariat of Gender Affairs, Ministry of Human Development, La Paz, 1996.
- 8 The Guaraní are the third largest indigenous group in Bolivia, with a population of approximately 5,000

people concentrated in the eastern lowland Department of Chuquisaca. However their territorial boundaries spread across Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina and their total population is estimated at approximately 80,000 (Survival 2005). They have a distinct language and culture, and Guaraní was given official language status in Paraguay in 1992 in recognition of the fact that it has been the dominant lingua franca there for centuries (Wearne 1996).

- 9 Taken from interviews with Osvaldo Montañó, Director de Gestión Territorial, Municipal Government of Cochabamba, May 1997.
- 10 The Women's Civic Committee is a sub-committee of the municipal Civic Committee and is largely made up of prominent women in the city. The Committee is dominated by women of Mestizo and Spanish descent, with a higher socio-economic status than indigenous urban women. Those involved tend to be educated, professional women who are also often related to men within municipal politics. The Women's Civic Committee, while technically non-governmental, is perceived as being linked to local government and sees its role as that of lobbying for both women's issues and wider social concerns to be addressed within municipal government.
- 11 Taken from ethnographic research conducted in Cochabamba during 1996 and 1997.
- 12 *Clubes de madres*, or mothers' clubs, have a long history in Bolivia. They primarily serve as a grassroots social and welfare-based support network for women and their families across the nation. *Clubes de madres* can also have a political edge and engage in political protest, lobbying for socio-economic and political change. See, for example, Lind 2002.
- 13 Individual names have been changed.
- 14 Carmen Zabalaga, Co-ordinator of the Instituto Femenina de Fomento y Formación Integral (IFFI), March 1997, Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- 15 *Sindicatos campesinos*, or peasant unions, are largely male-dominated groups with significant power, particularly in rural areas.
- 16 Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with 63 per cent of Bolivians living below the poverty line, and 42 per cent (3.3 million) living in conditions of extreme poverty. The average annual income of poor people stands at \$290, with 70 per cent of the population living on less than \$2 a day (Republic of Bolivia 2001). Bolivia is an aid-dependent country in which, according to Nickson (2002, cited in Booth and Piron 2004), the scale of financial and institutional aid dependency is comparable to that of an average African 'heavily indebted poor' country. In 2000, net assistance to the country stood at 5.8 per cent of GNP (Booth and Piron 2004) and the budget deficit rose to 8.6 per cent in 2002, well above IMF limits (Byron and Zolezzi 2003). Wealth is concentrated in the hands of five per cent of the population, and levels of both poverty and unemployment have worsened in the past decade (*ibid.*).
- 17 Taken from interviews conducted with a range of Bolivian commentators, academics, and legislators between 1994 and 1997. See also Booth *et al.* 1996; Booth *et al.* 1997.
- 18 Taken from interviews with the LPP legislators, the Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular.
- 19 Taken from research conducted in Independencia in 1996.
- 20 Ruben Ardaya Salinas, Director de Fortalecimiento Municipal, Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular, La Paz, 1996.

- 21 According to the president of the National Confederation of Neighbourhood Associations (CONALJUVE), Juan José Díez de Medina, there is a mandatory 50 per cent female quota in its appointments. This has not, however, been translated into *de facto* participation in decision-making roles, and neighbourhood committees remain predominantly male-dominated.
- 22 Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Swiss, Canadian, and US agencies are supporting the LPP. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for example, approved 14 projects across the country between 1999 and 2003, worth \$725,000, through its Gender Equity Fund (GEF). The GEF strategy is to encourage the incorporation of policies and resources for gender equity, and in June 2000 CIDA established a gender equity programme in Cochabamba with six participating local NGOs.
- 23 Drawing on ethnographic research (1995–7), I found this tended to be the prevailing view of a range of male community leaders in across the country.

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