

The results of the meetings yielded quite concrete proposals for improved civil participation in social development at all levels, and relations between the BID and the civil society organizations. They prioritized support for education, basic and municipal services and support to small and medium industries. They proposed the creation of a Civil Society Consultative Council to work with the BID country representatives, and the establishment of pilot programs to build experience of collaboration and participation.

At the same time tensions -- between Washington and Mexico City officials of the BID, between the Ministries of Interior and Finance over who supervises NGOs, between government and civil society organizations -- bedeviled the consultation.

Nevertheless, both Mexican NGOs interviewed and participants at the March Latin American Regional Meeting of CIVICUS expressed considerable frustration at the lack of advance in the process in Mexico. As one NGO spokesperson put it, when the people from Washington come to Mexico a three-way conversation -- multilateral, Mexican government, NGO -- is possible, when they leave the conversation ends. When consultation results were presented to the BID after Guadalajara the Bank responded that they could move very little without more forward motion on the part of the Mexican government and little concrete follow-up has ensued.

CIVICUS, Synergos and the national partners plan to continue, deepen and broaden the process of consultation throughout Latin America. Whether advances can be expected in the Mexican theatre may depend on the extent of political change, although other initiatives, as indicated below, might assist in opening up the atmosphere.

*Citizen diplomacy: Making room for policy participation and lobbying*

While Mexican NGOs have developed competency and sophistication with regard to domestic development and multilateral economic policy issues, the Mexican state has not yet adapted adequately to engage this capacity. Direct links to the Executive power, the Presidency in particular, have served accepted power groups, and others have been largely left out.

As Carlos Heredia and Ricardo Hernández point out "the monolithic nature of the Mexican political party system has not allowed for domestic lobbying. Until very recently, it didn't make sense for NGOs to try to persuade legislators to vote in a certain way because the necessary conditions for lobbying to be effective are absent in Mexico. Principally, these are: a) the independence of the Legislative branch from the Executive branch (or the hegemonic power at the time: the military, drug traffickers, the U.S. Embassy); b) accountability, or the assumption of responsibilities by legislators with respect to their electorate; c) a state of law and order in which the law is obeyed, and if it isn't, there is an independent Judicial branch that can be called on." (Heredia and Hernandez, "Citizen..." p. 6)

To these conditions might be added the hostile attitude and inexperience, particularly of many in the Executive branch, to autonomous civil society organizations and their views. While a very limited initiative, several Mexican groups suggested modelling a different sort of behavior as a stimulus to change