

North. Accepting official support requires international cooperation agencies to achieve high standards of efficiency, causing them to impose a list of conditionalities that are onerous from the standpoint of Southern NGOs. These range from planning, monitoring, and evaluation requirements to insisting that local NGOs take on substantive issues, like the environment and women (M. Valderama 2001). Over time, it has become increasingly common for gender equity to be specified as a condition for the approval of grant requests. Lack of progress in this area can lead to cutting off support to local NGOs (HIVOS 1996, 1993-98; SNV 1993-98, 1998; NOVIB 1997).

The UN Decade conferences have also reinforced the use of international policy guidelines with regard to women. These are sometimes far-reaching. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, developed a cooperation and development framework for the 1990s that explicitly called for more equity for women at all levels, beginning with their autonomy in four arenas: physical (control of their own sexuality and reproduction); economic (equal access to and control over the means of production); political (the right to participate in decision making); and sociocultural (understood as the right to an independent identity and self-esteem) (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1992).

The WID approach taken by the North in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with concerns in the South about the feminization of poverty and the need to address it. But, as a more layered analysis of women's oppression uncovered root causes, and gender became the relevant framework for development interventions, the previous consensus weakened. Many mixed NGOs now see gender requirements as an "imposition" from the North. A growing resistance on the part of NGOs to having these conditions imposed on them is rapidly closing the opportunity for dialogue and consensus.

This tension is stronger in organizations that work with indigenous populations, because gender inequalities have come to be understood as cultural characteristics that ought to be respected (HIVOS 1993a,b). Generally, as they accept requests for funding, donor agencies use ambiguous language and sometimes run into contradictions as they try to balance their gender equity requirements with their own desire for self-determination and the cultural integrity of the indigenous. On the other hand, although some donors acknowledge the importance of preserving indigenous identity, culture, language, and access to land and other natural resources, stressing a multicultural approach, they are also aware that cultural arguments may violate women's human rights and contribute to maintaining women in a subordinate position. Considered static and immutable, culture

can become an instrument that perpetuates and legitimates gender inequalities (HIVOS 1993b, 1993; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1992).

Various male leaders and staff members of NGOs that operate in rural Andean areas think that changing gender relations is forcing Western ideas into the daily lives of Third World women. As the director of a southern Andean NGO declared in 2002, *International Cooperation is promoting an agenda that is designed for other contexts; they cause us to violate practices and structural relations in the societies where we work. Among the staff here there is resistance to the concept of gender; they only accept it because they fear they will lose the funding. And the head of an NGO in Cuzco was even firmer: It is a mistake to try to impose Western norms on our country. Reality shows that these things always backfire.*

If we stop to think about it, this resistance follows a gender double standard. Dozens of NGO development plans in the rural Andes have the goals of modernizing agricultural methods, improving livestock production, installing potable water systems, and integrating peasant producers into new markets along with other practices intended to make structural changes in the relationship between the countryside and the city. This "technological Westernization" is not considered offensive to local traditions—on the contrary, it is viewed as necessary.

But talking about changing gender relations is not like talking about improving the production of potatoes. Well-documented experience shows that greater sensitivity to the imbalance between men and women in access to power resources does not emerge from adequate reading matter on gender or impeccable project work plans that include a "focus on gender." Instead, the sensitivity to gender issues arises from the personal and daily life experiences and preconceptions of flesh and blood people who go into development work. The people who go into the field in rural areas are generally men, with technical backgrounds, born and raised in the Andes. Thus, as the head of a Cuzco NGO pointed out: *There is a problem in the team and in the institutional culture. Here everyone will tell you, "Yes, we are all concerned about women." But the perspective of those who carry out projects is that "gender" is just a phrase, not something they have internalized. The majority of our staff come from rural families. They may participate in discussions about the gender approach, but in their own lives they have a very clear idea about the roles of men and women. They can go through the motions of incorporating women in projects and strengthening women's roles and capacities, but in the way they see life, women already have a role, and it is to take care of children and the family, and so forth. These are cultural patterns that are very difficult to change.*

An expert in a Cuzco NGO confessed, in a way that graphically reinforces this

point, that his organization has difficulties carrying out activities to promote gender equity. Obviously, there are slip-ups in the community; it's human. And we make them ourselves. So many times in our conversations about our projects, we say, "But if I in my own house do these things, how can I go to the field and promote something else?"

A review of the institutional plans of the development organizations in which I did interviews in April 2000 suggests that they have adopted a gender discourse: they acknowledge the indicators that show the oppression of rural women: little or no schooling, health problems, and their contribution to production traditionally hidden as part of their reproductive role. But in almost all cases their efforts at "gender mainstreaming" result in activities directed toward women in their "feminine" roles, such as caring for small animals and household gardens. Despite the investments in economic and human resources made by donor agencies to improve the capacities of their counterpart NGOs to do gender assessments and build capacity, they often meet with passive if not overt resistance. As some of the experts I interviewed in Cuzco suggested: *For a long time, the word gender was like a label we put on what we were doing, which was working with women. We called this gender, and we included in our project papers what we had read about the topic. This approach was confirmed in an interview with a field expert: We tried in everything we did, in every project we designed, to introduce a gender approach. Then, when we analyzed it, we asked, "What is this gender focus?" It's not so easy. At times it meant highlighting the fact that women also participate in projects — but women always participate. Then, as it wasn't clear what gender really meant in practice, at times we just wrote it in the report.*

These comments illustrate a broader tension between the international development cooperation agencies and the local NGOs: the former insisting that they are pursuing "horizontal" relations with their counterparts, and the latter resisting attempts to impose conditions. Gender conditionality is sometimes supported by women staff members, but their concerns about what they see in the field do not get support from the top. The view that the gender focus is "just on paper" clearly distorts and depoliticizes the issue.

## CONCLUSIONS

When I wrote this essay, I was aware of a fourth tension that has not been articulated. This is "our" role, the position of us Latin American women who are simultaneously inside and outside development practice. We recognize the importance of donor agencies' contributions to the promotion of women's rights.

Yet, at the same time, we are also keenly aware that the policies and initiatives of such donors put at risk the autonomy of NGOs.

Something similar to being inside and outside simultaneously has also happened with regard to Andean women. The testimonies of the peasant women in the southern Andes who had to cope with the violence and destruction originated by the conflict between the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso and the Armed Forces during the 1980s show a determination that is far from passive. However, before and after the conflict, their options remained very limited outside the communal ambit. The need to broaden the horizons of Andean women presupposes not only access to material resources but also greater flexibility in how they are allowed to mark their identities, including their language, dress, and customs. But this would require a reassessment of the social construction of the "Andean community," which is very difficult to pursue while simultaneously supporting indigenous rights.

It is clear that there are unsolved conflicts in the lives of Andean peasant women, for example, their right to health care as it relates to the recognition of their traditions. One of the worst public health problems in Peru is the high level of maternal mortality and the limited institutional assistance available when women give birth. According to recent data, only 24 percent of births in rural areas receive professional attention, and in the rural Andean zones it is even less. There are many reasons for this, ranging from the distance between the community and the nearest health center, the cost of services, the depersonalized and even disparaging care that professionals give to these women, and the differences in environment. The Andean peasant woman gives birth in her home, in a dark and warm place, accompanied by her husband and her mother, who offer her herbs; birth is vertical or squatting; the umbilical cord is cut with a bit of pottery; there is the belief that during birth the body "opens" and is porous and one should not let the cold come in. The difference in using stainless steel to cut the cord and the requirements of gynecological beds, lights, and wall tile, as well as leaving the spouse and mother outside the delivery room, illustrate the conflict between the urgent need to provide Andean women access to the basic right to health care but also to the right to give birth in accord with their customs and in a family setting.

A national feminist organization is experimenting with a pilot project in several Andean provinces to provide "annexes" to health centers where women can come with their husbands and give birth in a vertical position but have a profes-

sional nearby in case there are complications. Why do we accept and celebrate this recognition of the value of tradition, but reject cultural practices like mock abduction, arranged marriage, and relying on communal justice in cases of domestic abuse? From what position can we "choose" what practices are to be accepted as "collective" rights and which violate the human rights of individuals if experts on Andean culture, anthropologists, and NGO staff working in these communities say that the notion of the individual does not exist in the Andean world?

Despite the current controversies about universality versus difference, I would argue that international norms of human rights, including the Convention Against all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), represent important values and are a necessary point of reference for the debate that must include the voices of indigenous women.

#### NOTES

1. Peru is a country with about 25 million inhabitants, 28 percent of whom are considered rural; a similar percentage identifies itself as indigenous or native. There are seventy-two distinct ethnic groups, of which seven live in the Andes and the other sixty-five in the Amazonian region, grouped in fourteen distinct language groups. The census is, however, not fully reliable because it stopped using a race/ethnicity categorization after the 1940 National Census, and constant internal migration from the Andes to the coast has "de-Indianized" the urban population (Fernández and Trigos 2007).
2. Some of the ideas discussed in this text are an updated version of an essay related to NGO perspectives on indigenous women, *El Mundo al Revés: Imágenes de la Mujer Indígena*, published by the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Buenos Aires. The investigation, which was the source of the publication, was carried out with a grant awarded in a regional competition for senior researchers on the topic, "Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Between Emancipation and Exclusion," sponsored by CLACSO-SIDA in 1999.
3. In an interview in March 2002, when I asked a group of women leaders of the Peasant Women's Federation in Huancavelica (southern Peruvian Andes) about the contrast between traditional and Western clothing, one peasant woman told me that if she stopped wearing her *pollera* (peasant skirt), in her community she would be called a *pitusa*, Peruvian slang for a woman who takes on upper-class airs, and she would be criticized.
4. In July 2001, in a group interview with peasant women in the community of Patatechua in Cuzco, at 4000 m (13,123 ft) above sea level, although their ages ranged from 22 to 50 years old, all confirmed that their parents had chosen their husbands. And if they didn't like the men their parents chose, they had to accept the choice anyway. These women were part of a group with whom an NGO was working that had as part of its working principles the empowerment of women and integration of a gender perspective. When the staff was asked about this contradiction between their principles and reality, they responded that "arranged marriages" were issues they could not interfere with.
5. In this context, efforts to educate people about the Law Against Family Violence are viewed with suspicion and even rejected by the men of highland communities. An NGO that operates

in the high Andes carried out training workshops for women which caused conflict between men and women, in the view of the men: *We have had problems. One group of women said that they now knew their rights; they wanted to separate and said that they did not like being beaten. We [the community leaders] suggested [to the NGO] that they work more harmoniously, because now our wives won't let us touch them. When women know their rights they think of themselves as untouchable.* (Interview by the author in the peasant community of Coahuahuarán, Huanta, Ayacucho, March 2002.)

6. The so-called peasant patrols are groups of rural men and women who fulfill security functions for their neighbors in the community. Founded on their own initiative, originally to control rustling, in the second half of the 1980s they played an important role in contending against Sendero Luminoso in the Andes.

7. "Pluriculturalidad y Violencia Familiar," *Diario El Comercio*, 20 October 2000.