Where Is the Sandinista Spirit?: Nicaraguan Women’s NGOs and the Return of Daniel Ortega

By Ji-Hyeun Kwon

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Abstract

When Daniel Ortega of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation lost the presidential election of 1990 to Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of the National Opposition Union, the autonomous women’s movement began and the number of non-governmental organizations rapidly increased in Nicaragua. After more than 15 years of neoliberals, moderate socialism came back with Ortega when he won the election of 2006. This research analyzes if any changes in the values, structures and functions of Nicaraguan women’s organizations have occurred since the reelection of Ortega. The core of the research is interviews with four local women’s NGOs: Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral Comunitario, Colectivo de Mujeres de Matagalpa, Grupo Venancia and Servicios Integrales para la Mujer. The case studies of these four women’s NGOs show that the Ortega administration has systematically harassed women’s non-governmental organizations by using explicit and implicit political tools.
Introduction

Daniel Ortega has been part of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front for National Liberation – FSLN) since its formation and underground movement in the 1960s (Vulliamy, 2001). Historically, the FSLN has had a strong tie with feminism as women’s participation played a significant role in the Sandinista Revolution, which overthrew the Somoza dictatorship. Anastasio Somoza and his sons were in power from 1936 to 1979, participating in brutal and corrupt activities such as embezzling foreign aid and using the National Guard to control those who opposed them (Hoyt, 1997).

Even though the exact number of women who participated in the Sandinista Revolution is unclear, the majority of scholars agree that women’s political participation increased during this time (Kampwirth, 2006). The movement toward the Left of the ideological spectrum and the dominant presence of women in the Sandinista Revolution improved gender equality and promoted women’s rights. For instance, the FSLN introduced the Law of Nurturing in 1982 to get men more involved with childrearing so that women could participate in the public sphere (Collinson, 1990). Also, the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE), an organization for Sandinista women, emerged in 1977 and formed a strong political bond with the FSLN. The primary objective of AMNLAE was “to organize and mobilize women in opposition to the abuses of the dictatorship” during the Revolution (Disney, 2008, p. 63). Because it was a Sandinista organization, AMNLAE prioritized the party’s interests over women’s interests and pursued policies related to women’s emancipation only if they met the party’s broader goals (Disney, 2008). Even though the FSLN was silent about certain women’s issues such as abortion rights (Molyneux, 2001), the party instigated a women’s
rights movement in Nicaragua by giving women an opportunity to be active in the public sphere during the Sandinista Revolution.

Another phenomenon that transpired after the revolution was the convergence of the goals of the Nicaraguan national government and Nicaraguan non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By collaborating on state-led programs such as the Food for Work Campaign and the National Literacy crusade, the national government and national NGOs\(^1\) both wanted to strengthen civil society, which is “the arena of organized political activity between the private sphere (the household and the firm) and the formal political institutions of governance (the parliament, political parties, the army, the judiciary, etc.)” (Macdonald, 1997, p. 3). This situation in Nicaragua was unique in that NGOs and national governments typically have opposed each other in other Latin American countries during the military and democratic transition periods (Ewig, 1999). In Nicaragua, however, the success of the mass-based movement caused the national government and national NGOs to help each other and to maintain a positive relationship. The national government created the Augusto C. Sandino Foundation to facilitate the flow of international aid to the Sandinista mass organizations (Macdonald, 1997). Also, twelve local NGOs formed the National Coordinator of Nicaraguan NGOs to guide the distribution of international NGO aid in accordance with the national government’s direction of economic policy (Macdonald, 1997).

Another reason why NGOs and the state had a peaceful relationship with the FSLN in the first few years after the Revolution was because NGOs did not threaten the power of the state. They merely functioned as “intermediaries capturing assistance from international agencies and channeling it to the Nicaraguan people” (Macdonald, 1997, p. 102). International organizations

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\(^1\) National NGOs indicate Nicaraguan NGOs. See Literature Review.
donated financial resources to Nicaragua because of the FSLN’s developmental philosophy and mass mobilization that made the Revolution successful (Macdonald, 1997). As mentioned above, the main mission of the National Coordination of Nicaraguan NGOs was to influence the direction of international aid to support the national government’s economic plans and priorities (Macdonald, 1997). With similar goals and an influx of funding from foreign countries, national NGOs maintained a positive interaction with the state immediately after the Revolution.

As the Contra war shifted the state’s focus to defense policy and the economy was decimated in the late 1980s, the tie between the national government and national NGOs weakened. The state cut spending from social services and promoted short-term projects at the local level; the NGOs’ ability to deliver services and reach out to the public was undermined (McDonald, 1997). Economic and political instability finally led to the fall of the FSLN when Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of the National Opposition Union Coalition (UNO) of fourteen parties won the election in 1990, promoting neoliberalism.

Under a non-Sandinista leadership that advocated for neoliberalism, the autonomous women’s movement emerged and there was an NGO boom. The defeat of the FSLN prompted the autonomous women’s movement because Sandinista women were free from any political party or government influences and could pursue projects that reflected what women wanted to do, not what the FSLN wanted to do. Consequently, AMNLAE lost power because it was a sub-entity of the FSLN. Feminists who were unsatisfied with the imbalanced power dynamic between AMNLAE and the FSLN could now establish autonomous women’s organizations or work with them. Therefore, the deterioration of the organization decentralized the Nicaraguan women’s movement while causing a NGO boom.
According to Gideon, NGOs tend to flourish under neoliberalism to fill up the gaps left by the government because neoliberal policies reduce the role of the government and support privatization (Gideon, 1998). The same trend happened in Nicaragua as the number of women’s NGOs increased after Chamorro came into power (Ewig, 1999). But, the Chamorro administration’s neoliberal policy negatively affected the socially and economically vulnerable sector of the Nicaraguan population because the role of the state in social services declined. The reduction of government support “affected food security, increased unemployment, threatened land tenure for poor rural and urban Nicaraguans, limited access to credit for small producers and cut state support for health care and education, among other issues” (Weber, 2006). Sandinista women participated in the autonomous women’s movement and created new NGOs, using the organizing skills that they obtained from the Revolution to address these social issues (Weber, 2006). In fact, the number of all types of civil society organizations, which include NGOs, increased from 114 in the 1980s to 1729 in 1997 (Borchgrevink, 2006; Disney, 2008). Envío Team reported that there were about one thousand NGOs in Nicaragua, and 300 of them were active (1997).

The combination of the autonomous women’s movement and the presence of experienced Sandinista political organizers led to the popularity of NGOs. Former employees of the Sandinista government created or joined NGOs not only to earn wages but also to continue carrying out what the Sandinista government had been doing (Disney, 2008). For example, Irma Ortega used to work for the Ministry of Agriculture and the FSLN party, but she decided to work for the Center for Rural and Social Promotion, Research and Development, an NGO, after losing her job in 1990 (Disney, 2008). The “NGO-ization” trend in Nicaragua indicates increasing professionalization and institutionalization of organizations (Alvarez, 1999). Similar to what
happened to Irma Ortega, female professionals who were familiar with the FSLN’s hierarchical structure founded or joined women’s organizations. Thus, women’s organizations became more structured and organized when they adopted the NGO status.

When Arnoldo Alemán of the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (Constitutional Liberal Party – PLC) succeeded Chamorro in 1996 as Nicaraguan president, his administration continued to implement neoliberal policies, but also attacked NGOs and targeted prominent figures in the NGO sector who were foreign-born and female (Kampwirth, 2003). The Alemán administration attacked the NGO sector in an attempt to strengthen its power by blaming NGOs for domestic problems. For example, the national government claimed that poverty continued to exist in Nicaragua because NGOs were inefficient and dishonest about monetary practices (Kampwirth, 2003).

Enrique Bolaños of the Alianza por la República (Alliance for the Republic) became the president of Nicaragua after Alemán. He continued with Chamorro’s and Alemán’s neoliberal policies, but distanced himself from Alemán’s hostile attitude against NGOs and even supported the accusation towards Alemán of corruption (Kampwirth, 2003).

After 16 years out of power, Ortega became president once again in 2006. While Ortega faced women’s organizations that were not affiliated with the FSLN, women’s NGOs faced a leader who was not as cooperative as he once was with the Nicaraguan women’s movement. If patriarchal cooperation described the relationship between women and the FSLN during Ortega’s first term, power struggles delineate the current relationship between Ortega and women’s NGOs problems. It is because Ortega wishes to maintain his power while women’s NGOs are frustrated with the disappearance of the Sandinista spirit that used to uphold women’s rights. This paper examines how the values, structures and functions of women’s NGOs have changed
since the reelection of Daniel Ortega to further explore the government-NGO relationship and
the women’s movement in Nicaragua.

**Literature Review**

The autonomous women’s movement, the NGO-ization of civil society, and the NGO
boom began after Daniel Ortega lost the election of 1990 in Nicaragua and a new leader with
different policy goals came into power. Therefore, identifying structural and functional
characteristics of women’s NGOs that emerged after the victory of Victoria Barrios de Chamorro
allows a further examination of how the values, structures and functions of women’s NGOs have
been transformed since the reelection of Ortega. The first section of the literature review defines
civil society and women’s NGOs. Then, it explains the values, structure and political role of
women’s NGOs before the reelection of Ortega by comparing and contrasting women’s NGOs to
AMNLAE. The last part of the literature review will further analyze the politics and policies of
the second Ortega administration to give readers a better political context about the criteria for
empirical analysis.

**Civil Society and Women’s NGOs**

Before proceeding to the timeline of women’s NGOs in Nicaragua, it is important to
define civil society, NGOs and women’s NGOs because of the complexity of the third sector.
The organizations that are not part of the public sector or the private sector belong to the third
sector (Anheier & List, 2005b). The third sector gained a nickname called “a loose baggy
monster” because of the vastness and complexity of these organizations and their roles in society
(Kendall & Knapp, 1995). Definitions of various organizations of the third sector get even more
complicated in an international context because the characteristics and roles of these organizations change depending on with the legal system, government and culture with which they interact (Anheier & List, 2005a). Therefore, this section explains what civil society and women’s NGOs mean in Nicaragua.

Civil Society

As mentioned previously, civil society is “the arena of organized political activity between the private sphere (the household and the firm) and the formal political institutions of governance (the parliament, political parties, the army, the judiciary, etc.)” (Macdonald, 1997, p. 3). Larry Diamond, a leading scholar in democracy studies, also describes civil society as “the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating (largely), self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules” (Diamond, 1996, p. 228). Thus, civil society is part of the third sector that functions separately from the private and public sectors because the participants of civil society are private citizens who organize political activities to influence the state’s agendas.

The primary political role that civil society typically plays is democratization. Civil society supports democratization in three ways (O'Toole, 2007). First of all, civil society creates space for citizens to participate in politics without relying on institutions such as government. Secondly, because citizens themselves voluntarily organize political activities, civil society promotes pluralism. Lastly, as citizens participate in political activities, they develop democratic attitudes because they learn and teach other citizens about political activism. Citizens’ active political involvement can influence legislative, judicial and party systems leading to changes in public opinion.
Women’s NGOs

This research specifically examines NGOs that are part of civil society. They are nonprofit organizations that “emphasize their democratic role in supporting civil society through popular participation and political empowerment” (O’Toole, 2007, p. 251). The headquarters location divides NGOs into two categories: international and national (Macdonald, 1997). International NGOs are nonprofit organizations based in developed countries. They can support national NGOs by either implementing their own projects or providing national NGOs with financial support so that the national NGOs themselves carry out their own projects. National NGOs are based in developing nations, and their principal function is to implement development projects for the people they serve. Their main financial sources are international NGOs, foreign governments or international organizations. Due to their interaction with foreign institutional bodies, national NGOs “serve intermediaries between beneficiaries and government, international NGOs and financial institutions” (Macdonald, 1997, p. 7). Unless specified otherwise, NGOs in this section signify national NGOs.

Out of all these types of NGOs, the subjects of this research are NGOs that address women’s issues. Sonia E. Alvarez, a professor of Latin American politics, asserts that feminist NGOs are unique in that they have a specific mission of altering gender power relations and consider themselves “as an integral part of a larger women’s movement that encompasses other feminists,” (Alvarez, 1999, p. 186). These “other feminists” may be affiliated with other types of organizations, may not belong to any organizations or may belong to other socioeconomic classes. In this study, the term “women’s NGOs” replaces “feminist NGOs” to widen the scope of the definition of feminism and to reflect the diversity within the women’s movement in Nicaragua. Therefore, women’s NGOs do not necessarily refer to NGOs that concentrate on
women’s empowerment as their main mission. NGOs can be women’s NGOs as long as women’s empowerment is one of their core values and goals.

**Values of Women’s NGOs Before the Reelection of Ortega**

Values are “central desires or beliefs regarding final states or desirable conducts that transcend specific situations, guide the choice and evaluation of our decisions and, therefore, of our conducts, becoming an integral part of our way of being and acting to the point of shaping our character” (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Values are important to an organization because they define the basic structure of the organization and shape the organization’s strategies (Argandoña, 2003). Therefore, by defining their values and actually using them to strategize, women’s NGOs separated themselves from AMNLAE.

**Women’s Rights vs. Party Loyalty**

The deterioration of AMNLAE after Ortega’s defeat in 1990 signified that Sandinista women could finally prioritize women’s rights over the mission of the FSLN. When the FSLN was in power, AMNLAE failed to function independently because the party emphasized the importance of revolutionary goals, which did not necessarily incorporate Manley’s perspective. For instance, the FSLN implemented a national draft that required “all men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four [to serve] two years in the regular armed service” (Metoyer, 2000, p. 27). Members of AMNLAE demanded that the draft include women. Even though women were actively involved with the Nicaragua Revolution, the FSLN disregarded AMNLAE’s request (Metoyer, 2000). The FSLN was also reluctant to discuss other topics that AMNLAE wanted to address such as abortion, divorce, and domestic violence (Disney, 2008; Ewig, 1999).
When the autonomous women’s movement allowed discontented female Sandinistas to advocate for women’s issues without the party’s influence, women’s NGOs began to pursue projects that specifically dealt with women’s issues. The Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia (Women’s Network Against Violence), which is composed of more than 150 national women’s NGOs, established an advocacy project at the national level to eliminate domestic violence. By collaborating with the Commission of Churches, the Commission of Communications, Women’s Police Stations and the Commission of Education and Youth, the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia was able to get religious leaders, mass media, law enforcement officials, and educators involved with the fight against violence (Metoyer, 2000).

Due to the political freedom that women’s NGOs gained from the political ideology shift, they were finally able to carry out specific projects in relation to women’s issues. Neither the main mission nor the core values of Sandinista women changed after leaving AMNLAE to join the autonomous women’s movement because AMNLAE also supported women’s rights. The problem was that AMNLAE could not voice its opinion because the FSLN considered revolutionary goals more important than women’s issues. Women’s NGOs found other ways to accomplish their mission of advancing women’s rights without a political institution as its ally. The fact that women’s NGOs succeeded in preventing any further intervention by the party, however, did not mean that they also accomplished the incorporation of women’s rights into the broader revolutionary goals. Sandinista women had to dissociate themselves from AMNLAE first to join the autonomous women’s movement. The division between party loyalists, who prioritized the FSLN’s goals, and women’s rights activists, who prioritized the women’s movement goals, still existed within the autonomous women’s movement.
Participatory Democracy

The picture on paper regarding participatory democracy did not match what was happening in reality. Participatory democracy advocates for mass participation in political decision-making, and the FSLN adopted this value as the building block of the party because that was how the Sandinista won the Revolution and gained political power (Disney, 2008). Nonetheless, the FSLN was still a party with a corporate structure that preferred a top-down decision-making approach (Disney, 2008). The Sandinista women who left AMNLAE and joined the autonomous women’s movement, however, criticized the top-down approach of the FSLN that undermined participatory democracy because these women respected class diversity and mass-based organizations (Babb, 2001). In practice, women’s NGOs also failed to embrace mass participation. The Comité Nacional Feminista (the National Feminist Committee - CNF), which more than twenty feminist collectives and networks comprised, dissolved after experiencing class differences and disagreements over feminist practice (Disney, 2008). There also was an internal power imbalance in the autonomous women’s movement as the NGOs with ample financial support were the leaders of the movement (Ewig, 1999). Therefore, the value of women’s NGOs with regard to participatory democracy did not change because Sandinista women upheld mass participation before the autonomous women’s movement. In fact, just like the FSLN and AMNLAE, women’s NGOs could not resolve the contradiction between ideology and practice.
Feminism

Women’s NGOs criticized AMNLAE and the FSLN because these two political entities’ framed “a class-based movement for socialism and a gender-based movement for feminism [as] an either-or choice” (Disney, 2008, p. 65). Sandinista women had to choose between party loyalty, which demanded their support for class problems, and feminism, which urged them to support women’s rights. Their definition of feminism, however, differed from that of Western nations. While American and European feminists focused on the equality/difference debates, Nicaraguan feminists endorsed unity feminism, which is “a belief that men and women need to work together to achieve the empowerment and development of each, and of the community as a whole” (Disney, 2008, p. 217). Even though unity feminism differed from the West’s equality/difference rhetoric, both types of feminism acknowledged the existence of gender inequality.

According to Jennifer Leigh Disney (2008), a political scientist, there were two factions in the Nicaraguan women’s movement depending on the women’s identification with feminism. Those women who did not identify with feminism argued that feminism ignored the needs of men and the larger needs of society, oppressed men, and failed to see women’s rights in the context of community development. The supporters of feminism recognized both the differences and similarities between the feminism of developing nations and of developed nations. While both types of feminism expressed the need for feminist organizing to fight against women’s oppression, the feminism of developing nations tends to take a holistic approach to women’s issues by combining women’s practical needs, such as production and economics, and social issues, such as reproduction and domestic violence. Nonetheless, women who did not identify
with feminism still supported the women’s movement, gender equality and women’s emancipation. Thus, feminism did not describe all women’s rights activists.

The exploration of feminism is important in discussing the values of women’s NGOs. Since not all women’s rights activists identified with feminism, it would be inappropriate to claim that they left AMNLAE to support feminism. We can, however, conclude that they left to support gender equality and women’s emancipation over the FSLN’s initiatives that neglected women’s rights, indicating the unwillingness of women’s NGOs to change their values regardless of political pressures. Nonetheless, women’s NGOs could not reconcile the FSLN’s revolutionary ideals with women’s emancipation. Nicaraguan feminists’ wish for the cooperation between men and women and non-feminist women’s rights activists’ commitment to the women’s movement without oppressing men also showed that participatory democracy was a core value of women’s NGOs regardless of the implementation of values in reality.

Structure of Women’s NGOs Before the Reelection of Ortega

Women’s NGOs structurally differentiated themselves from AMNLAE to reflect their values because they no longer had to obey the FSLN and because they could receive money from the international donor community. Women’s NGOs structures also showed that they operated differently from AMNLAE. Membership, funding and organizational models changed after the election of Chamorro.
Membership

The membership system changed because women’s NGOs did not require formal membership as AMNLAE did. AMNLAE was a political organization of women, which is “an organization with a particular political identity, often affiliated with a preexistence political organization, usually a political party, whose membership base is constituted by women, such as a party’s women’s league” (Disney, 2008, p. 89). On the other hand, women’s NGOs did not mandate women to obtain party membership if they wanted to be part of the organization (Ewig, 1999) – anybody could attend events hosted by women’s NGOs. The absence of a formal membership system demonstrated the effort of women’s NGOs to promote the participation of the masses. Party membership weakens citizenship and participatory democracy because the government talks to parties instead of citizens in a multiparty state. For instance, the political pact between the FSLN and the PLC placed party membership over citizenship because the political pact allowed the FSLN and the PLC to collaborate without considering citizens’ interests (Disney, 2008).

International Aid

The main factor that allowed women’s NGOs to not adopt a formal membership system was international assistance. Because women’s NGOs could acquire resources from the international donor community, which is composed of foreign governments and foundations, international organizations, and international feminist networks, they did not need a formal membership system (Disney, 2008; Ewig, 1999). For instance, Nicaraguan feminist leaders received international aid from private European foundations and European governments to establish autonomous women’s NGOs (Envío Team, 1997; Ewig, 1999). As shown in Figure 1,
the amount of foreign aid that Nicaragua received after the election of Chamorro had been higher than the amount during the Sandinista regime. The increase in international aid corresponded with the Chamorro government’s neoliberal policies that encouraged privatization and a cutback in government spending.

Figure 1^2

![Foreign Aid, Nicaragua 1985-2009](image)


The key reason why the Chamorro government succeeded in collecting more foreign aid was because of George Bush’s support that lifted the embargo imposed on the Sandinista government by Ronald Reagan in 1985 (Larson, 1993). The lift of the embargo allowed multilateral organizations such as the World Bank to provide Nicaragua with financial aid. The first year, the Chamorro administration enjoyed a sudden increase in foreign aid because it was immediately after the Contra war (Larson, 1993). The amount of U.S. aid fluctuated after the

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^2 The 2009 data are preliminary data. Thus, they are subject to revision.
first year depending on the political situation of Nicaragua. For example, in 1992, the George H.W. Bush administration was disappointed with the constant influence of the FSLN on the Chamorro government and suspended foreign aid for Nicaragua (LeoGrande, 1998). On the other hand, aid from Western Europe increased after 1991, increasing the project capacity of women’s NGOs as the type of monetary support that NGOs received from Western Europe was project specific (Larson, 1993).

As the amount of international aid increased, however, the dependence of women’s NGOs on international aid grew, jeopardizing their independent status. Older and bigger women’s NGOs such as the Centro de la Mujer IXCHEN and S.I. Mujer could generate their own incomes, but smaller women’s NGOs relied on foreign aid to the point of restricting their broader missions to one single issue. Some smaller women’s NGOs received single-issue grants to focus on reproductive rights and distribute contraceptives, but their broader missions encompassed other women’s issues in addition to reproductive rights (Ewig, 1999). Even though women’s NGOs were independent organizations, the international donor community modified their missions and caused a myopic interpretation of the women’s movement in Nicaragua. Their dependence on foreign aid also questioned whether or not women’s NGOs strengthened democracy. Women’s NGOs were accountable to their donors, not to the public (Weber, 2006). Therefore, international aid weakened democracy because it created a power imbalance between donors and recipients and reduced citizens’ role in civil society.
Organizational Model

In addition to the power imbalance caused by the dependency of women’s NGOs on international aid, the implementation of organizational models became a structural concern because organizational models would define the power system within the autonomous women’s movement. In 1992, at the National Conference, “Diverse but United,” the autonomous women’s movement experienced a schism as two factions of women’s NGOs emerged: the Puntos de Encuentro (Points of Encounter) and the Comité Nacional de Feministas (National Committee of Feminists – CNF). While the Puntos de Encuentro group wanted a horizontal, collectivist structure, the CNF favored a vertical structure. The Puntos de Encuentro group argued against the vertical structure because that was the structural characteristic of the FSLN and AMNLAE that many female Sandinistas criticized for undermining democracy (Disney, 2008). In contrast to the horizontal structure supporters, the CNF group emphasized that a vertical structure was necessary for the groups to interact with the government and traditional power structures as equals and that a horizontal structure would lead to inefficiency and chaos, where nobody was accountable to any constituency (Disney, 2008).

The debate on organizational models led to the creation of seven redes (networks): Economy and Environment, Violence, Sexuality, Health, Education, Social Communicators and Political Participation (Disney, 2008). Only the Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia (Network of Women Against Violence) survived because the network structure had three problems (Disney, 2008). First, because the Networks only met a few times a year, they were not efficient and powerful enough to induce change at the national level. Second, networking required efficient means of communication, which only NGOs in developed nations could afford. Lastly, nobody
could be held accountable for the projects that the Networks decided to execute because there was no explicit leadership.

Women’s NGOs were structurally different from AMNLAIE in that they did not require party membership, they received financial aid from foreign countries to support themselves and they implemented the horizontal organizational model that did not have explicit leadership. Although the autonomous women’s movement tried to be democratic, its reliance on foreign aid and the invisible power imbalance among women’s NGOs produced undemocratic results.

**Political Role of Women’s NGOs Before the Reelection of Ortega**

In Latin America, when governments reduced their sizes under neoliberalism in the 1980s and the 1990s, they cut funding from government subsidies and social services in health and education (Gideon, 1998). In Nicaragua, the Chamorro administration made structural adjustments to reflect its neoliberal value of less state intervention. Under the Lacayo Plan, the government cut government spending and implemented structural reforms such as privatization of state enterprises and trade liberalization between 1991 and 1996 (Metoyer, 2000). The implementation of neoliberal policies especially affected women because of their already vulnerable position in society and their participation in the unpaid labor force. More women than men had domestic responsibilities such as child rearing and household maintenance, and women also faced pregnancy complications (Metoyer, 2000). Due to neoliberalism, some women had to travel far to obtain water, ate less to better feed their children, and failed to maintain good maternal health; girls also encountered more discrimination in the education system (Metoyer, 2000). Since neoliberalism negatively affected women and opened up
opportunities for NGOs to substitute for the government, women’s NGOs performed three major functions in relation to civil society: service delivery, policy formulation, and democratization.

Service Delivery

As a result of privatization, governments transferred the responsibility of providing social services to private contractors and encouraged NGOs to participate in the competition for contract bids. NGOs became attractive as the potential deliverers of social services because NGOs were considered efficient, small-scale, cost-effective and easily managed (Bebbington, 1993). They could also promote neoliberal policies, reduce corruption, reinforce civil society and mobilize the grassroots movement (Bebbington, 1993). Neoliberals utilized the high levels of poverty to demonstrate that “state [-centered] development is not productive since it has resulted in inefficient resource allocation, and there is insufficient economic incentive for public sector management to remedy the situation” (Gideon, 1998, p. 305).

This contrast between the perception of the NGO sector and government played an important role in bringing in foreign aid. The international aid community saw Latin American governments as “inefficient, corrupt, clientelistic and over-bureaucratic” institutions (Gideon, 1998, p. 310). Thus, privatization assured the continuous influx of international donations as the donors felt safe about providing financial resources for service delivery to developing nations as the money would be spent by trustworthy NGOs. The introduction of international aid put less pressure on governments to use their own money to provide social services while encouraging women’s NGOs to supply social services to citizens.

In Nicaragua, women’s NGOs took the government’s role of health service provider under the leadership of Chamorro. Alternative women’s health centers emerged to “[establish]
places for women to go to receive material help in the areas of reproductive health, sexuality, legal issues and domestic violence and [to create] a new integrated way of thinking about these very issues” (Disney, 2008, p. 213). María Lourdes Bolaños, who was a former leader of AMNLAE and the FSLN, founded the Centro de Mujeres de IXCHEN (Women’s Center of IXCHEN – IXCHEN) to provide “services of sexual and reproductive health, attention to victims of domestic violence, language education and training around gender issues” (Disney, 2008, p. 214). IXCHEN not only took the health care provider role but also adopted the advocacy role of educating the public about gender issues. Additionally, women’s health centers run by women’s NGOs such as the Colectivo de Mujeres de Matagalpa (Women’s Collective of Matagalpa - CMM) provided direct services to communities. As this direct service model was successful, Marta Palacio, health minister under Chamorro, sent a team to the health centers run by CMM to learn about the organization’s health care model; CMM obtained an agreement to train midwives and distribute its publications at the state-run health centers (Ewig, 1999).

The Chamorro administration also formed partnerships with NGOs to facilitate their service delivery role. The Sistemas Locales de Atención Integral a la Salud (Local Systems for Comprehensive Health Care - SILAIS) is a quintessential example of the state-NGO cooperation. The purpose of the establishment of SILAIS by the state was “to evaluate the performance of local health systems” (Ewig, 1999, p. 88) and “to formulate national health strategy at the ministerial level, but implement it at regional and local levels according to the needs of local populations and their resources” (Ewig, 1999, p. 89). Casa Materna de Ocotal (Maternal House of Ocotal) was one of the health centers that worked with SILAIS and local hospitals to train nurses while the government health centers had to provide the birthing house and send a doctor to examine mothers who stayed at the organization’s health center. The Casa Materna de Ocotal
case illustrated that the state-NGO partnership not only existed at the national level, but also at local and regional levels. The participation of feminist NGOs in policy formulation balanced out the power dynamics between the state and NGOs at local and regional levels.

**Policy Formulation**

Women’s NGOs built a relationship with the government at a more profound level by participating in policy formulation. Unlike service delivery, policy formulation was not a new concept to Sandinista women. Through AMNLAE, Sandinista women from all classes actively participated in the process of shaping policy regarding “reproductive rights, the legal status of women and equal representation in political structures” (Vanden & Prevost, 1993). Under the leadership of Chamorro, however, women could shape national policy without the help of a political party because they had independent women’s organizations. Rather than merely delivering services to citizens that the government could not reach, women’s NGOs became part of the policymaking process, offering their expertise on gender issues and influencing the government’s gender policy. Under the leadership of Chamorro, women’s NGOs actively advised the government.

According to Ewig, the Chamorro administration strengthened the relationship between women’s NGOs and the government by including the representation of women’s NGOs in national policy formulation (1999). First, the government formed the Comisión Nacional de Lucha contra la Mortalidad Maternal (National Commission of Fight Against Maternal Mortality) because maternal mortality was a problem in Nicaragua. The commission had NGO representatives, allowing NGOs to influence public policy regarding women’s health issues. Second, the consultative board of the Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer (Nicaraguan Women’s
Institute - INIM) had NGO representation. The INIM served the purpose of including the gender component in Nicaraguan policy formulation. Thus, through the INIM, women’s NGOs contributed their perspective to the formulation of national gender policy. Lastly, women’s NGOs successfully pressured the government to formulate a new policy on maternal and child health. Before feminist NGOs put pressure on the government to reform maternal and child health policy, the government only focused on the reproductive aspects of women’s lives. After women’s NGOs participated in policy formulation, the direction of policy changed to an integral approach, which encompassed all types of women’s health issues in addition to the motherhood aspect.

**Democratization**

After Chamorro’s victory, the autonomous women’s movement impacted Nicaraguan society as a whole through democratization. Similar to the role of women’s NGOs in policy formulation, democratization was not a new concept either. There was, however, a symbolic and political difference in that women’s NGOs could democratize society on their own without relying on a political party. According to León Zamosc, a sociology professor, the main factor that revived democracy in Latin America in the past two decades was “the awakening or reawakening of civil society” (2006, p. 1). In Nicaragua, civil society reawakened democracy under neoliberalism because the Sandinista Revolution already established democracy even before the NGO boom in Latin America in the 1990s.

The Sandinista Revolution advocated for three types of democracy: political, participatory and economic (Hoyt, 1997). Political democracy was achieved after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship since periodic elections with universal suffrage had been established.
Participatory democracy was the most visible type of democracy as the Revolution was mass-based, including a high rate of participation of women. Since the FSLN believed in socialism, where everyone shared and owned wealth, economic democracy was attained. Even though the FSLN lost the election of 1990 and neoliberalism permeated Nicaraguan politics, the impact of the Sandinista Revolution cannot be ignored. Since the number of NGOs escalated in the 1990s due to neoliberalism, democratization should have been an easy goal to achieve.

In the post-revolutionary period, women’s NGOs expanded participatory democracy especially (Disney, 2008). Because other women’s organizations existed in addition to AMNLAE, women could go to multiple places to discuss gender issues. Also, women’s NGOs were more horizontal and encouraged more participation of citizens regardless of their party membership as shown before with the establishment of Networks of women’s NGOs and the availability of international aid.

Women’s NGOs made efforts to educate the public as well through media communication and training to increase citizens’ political participation. Puntos de Encuentro (Meeting Points) is a Nicaraguan NGO that achieved national outreach through the distribution of feminist magazines, La Boletina, transmitted radio programs targeting young people and created a TV program called Sexto Sentido for young people to educate the public about gender issues (Molyneux & Lazar, 2003). The organization also held capacity-building workshops for young people to strengthen Nicaraguan youth movements (Molyneux & Lazar, 2003).

*Arnoldo Alemán*

When Arnoldo Alemán succeeded Chamorro as Nicaraguan president, however, the political role of women’s NGOs diminished. The relationship between the Chamorro
administration and women’s NGOs was not perfect, but it was at least amiable because women’s NGOs could participate in the process of policy formulation and there were no explicit criticisms against them. After the inauguration of Arnoldo Alemán, however, feminist NGOs faced barriers because of the pact between Alemán and Ortega and the attacks against NGOs. Karen Kampwirth, a political science professor, argued that “both the pact and the attacks on the NGOs enhanced Alemán’s power by weakening organized groups that might have limited his ability to implement neoliberal policies” (2003, p. 136). In addition, Alemán allied himself with the Catholic Church and supported a traditional image of women as mothers and wives (Deonandan, 2004).

The 1996 pact between Alemán and Ortega threatened democracy in Nicaragua because it politicized various levels of government such as the Supreme Court and local electoral councils, changed election laws to favor the FSLN and allowed Alemán to conceal his corrupt activities easily (Hoyt, 2004). The pact was also a sign of the FSLN’s betrayal of many women’s NGOs established by Sandinista women because Alemán upheld conservative beliefs on gender. Therefore, due to the political pact, women’s NGOs lost space to articulate their voice, limiting their political role.

The Alemán administration’s affiliation with the Catholic Church undermined the political role of women’s NGOs in policy formulation because the traditional interpretation of gender endorsed by the Catholic Church restricted women’s role in politics. Both the Catholic Church and Alemán benefited from this alliance because Cardinal Obando y Bravo wanted to be a powerful figure, which the return of Ortega would prevent, and Alemán wanted the Catholic Church to reduce the criticisms of his corruption (Pérez-Baltodano, 2004). Espousing the religious stance on gender issues, the Alemán administration established the Ministry of the
Family, under which the INIM was subsumed (Babb, 2001). One of the Ministry’s responsibilities was monitoring all governmental and non-governmental organizations that worked with vulnerable sectors of the population such as children and women (Kampwirth, 2003). Thus, women’s NGOs could no longer give their input to the policymaking process.

The service delivery role of women’s NGOs encountered obstacles when Alemán censured the NGO sector and foreign-born NGO workers. He blamed NGOs for Nicaragua’s economic failure because NGO workers were “dishonest and interested only in helping themselves” (Kampwirth, 2003, p. 137). The Alemán administration proposed laws that would be known as “fiscal terrorism,” which gave the government the power to control NGOs’ funding and programming and tax their donations (Deonandan, 2004; Kampwirth, 2003), to regulate the NGO sector. After Hurricane Mitch caused thousands of deaths and millions of dollars in damage in 1998, the government’s criticisms against NGOs increased (Kampwirth, 2003). In response to the attacks, however, more than three hundred NGOs, associations and social movements formed Coordinadora Civil (Civil Coordinator) in 1998 to protect NGOs (Kampwirth, 2003). The formation of Coordinadora Civil did not stop Alemán from attacking NGOs. The government began targeting specific individuals who were foreign-born NGO workers. For example, Dr. Ana María Pizarro is an Argentine leader of SI Mujer, and the government accused her of performing illegal abortions and tried to eliminate the organization’s legal standing (Kampwirth, 2003). The Alemán administration also attacked Anna Quirós, who was a Mexican-born spokesperson of the Coordinadora Civil, for participating in Nicaraguan politics as a foreigner (Kampwirth, 2003). The Alemán administration’s attacks weakened the service delivery role of women’s NGOs because there was less funding available and more interventions in the activities of women’s NGOs.
The Return of Daniel Ortega

The pink tide swept across Latin America, and Daniel Ortega won the presidential election of 2006. The pink tide refers to the return of socialists in the 21st century after two decades of neoliberalism in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s (Fernandes, 2007; Spronk, 2008). The color “pink” indicates that the socialist leaders who returned were not strict or “red” on their ideology and were willing to negotiate with capitalism. With regard to neoliberalism’s economic liberalization, Ortega has not completely replaced neoliberal policies with socialist policies. He has negotiated terms with corporations and international organizations such as Unión Fenosa and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to receive more electricity and to obtain loans, but he also has publicly criticized Unión Fenosa and expressed his disappointment with the disclosure of his agreement with IMF (Nitlápan-Envío Team, 2007).

The increase in government spending on the social sector, which includes government expenses such as education and health, however, is reflective of the FSLN’s socialist ideology. According to the Banco Central de Nicaragua (Central Bank of Nicaragua), the national government’s social spending has increased from C$10678.2 million in 2001 to C$15161.1 million in 2008 (Banco Central de Nicaragua, 2007, 2009). The ideological shift from neoliberalism to “pink” socialism has expanded the government’s role in the social sector.

Also, the stance of the FSLN and Ortega on women’s issues has drastically changed. During Ortega’s first term, Sandinista women and the FSLN did not have an equal relationship, but their relationship was at least based on the recognition of and respect for women’s political participation during the Nicaraguan Revolution. On the contrary, the reelection of Ortega has severely weakened the relationship between women’s NGOs and the government due to the following political factors:
1) In 1998, Zoilamérica Narváez accused Ortega, her stepfather, of years of sexual abuse since she was eleven years old. While Ortega remained silent, Rosario Murrillo, Ortega’s wife and Narváez’s mother, publicly discredited Narváez’s claim against Ortega. Murrillo sought Cardinal Obandoy y Bravo for support, and to defend Ortega, depicted Narváez’s supporters as feminists who were against marriage and the traditional image of women (Babb, 2001). This highly publicized event even brought international criticisms against Ortega and the FSLN, disunited the women’s movement and “[brought] to the forefront of feminist debates the legacy of the revolution and the degree to which patriarchal power relations were perpetuated within the Sandinista revolutionary framework” (Disney, 2008, p. 47; Rogers, 2008b).

2) In 2006, Nicaragua became one of only three countries in the world to ban all types of abortion. The revised penal code on abortion “removes an article from the country’s penal code that permitted abortion for therapeutic reasons” (Replogle, 2007, p. 15). Therapeutic abortions signify “medically necessary abortions, that according to medical professionals, are required to save the life of the mother” (Disney, 2008, p. 216). The prohibition of therapeutic abortion was possible due to the FSLN’s support; yet FSLN congressmen unanimously voted for the revised penal code (Kampwirth, 2008). The unanimous vote by the FSLN was surprising in that the party had avoided explicitly addressing this topic during the Ortega’s first term (Collinson, 1990). The fact that the vote took place just a few days before the presidential election of 2006 and that the FSLN’s voting pattern was at odds with the party’s usual stance on abortion show that the FSLN made a political move to gain support from the Catholic and Evangelical communities for the 2006 presidential election (Kampwirth, 2008). The ban on
therapeutic abortion also divided the women’s movement due to disagreements about the language used for their campaigns against the revised penal code. While the Puntos de Encuentro faction wanted calm and positive messages, the other faction wanted to be more radical and assertive with the campaign (Kampwirth, 2008). The maternal mortality rate has increased since the introduction of the ban (Amnesty International, 2010).

3) In 2008, the Nicaraguan government attacked NGOs. The Ortega administration accused eight NGOs of money laundering and triangulation of illegal funds: the Centro de Investigación en Comunicación e Información (Center of Research for Communication and Information - CINCO), the Movement Autónomo de Mujeres (Autonomous Women’s Movement - MAM), the Coordinadora Civil, the Red de Nicaragüense de Comercio Comunitario. Grupo Venancia, la Red de Mujeres Municipalistas, Forum Syd (Sweden) and Oxfam UK (Envío Team, 2009; Rogers, 2008b). State prosecutors and police took files, computers and other documents from the organizations’ offices (Rogers, 2008b). In January 2009, the investigation stopped because the Office of Public Prosecutor General could not find any evidence regarding the accusations made by the Ortega administration (Envío Team, 2009).

4) In 2009, the Ortega administration proposed a manual governing international cooperation. The manual gives authority to the Ministerio de Gobernación (Ministry of Governance), Dirección General de Ingresos (General Revenues Department) and the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (Ministry of Foreign Relations) to oversee and regulate the relationship between local NGOs and the international donor community (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2010). After heavy criticism from NGOs,
the government claimed that the manual the NGOs saw was merely a copy of the preliminary version (Centro de Investigación en Comunicación e Información, 2009). NGOs had raised concerns about the manual because its implementation would have allowed the government to pursue another NGO investigation similar to what happened in 2008 to eight NGOs, but the government continues to advocate for this manual (Centro de Investigación en Comunicación e Información, 2009; International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2010).

5) Throughout Ortega’s second presidential term, both Ortega and Murrillo have been using anti-feminist and anti-NGO rhetoric against women’s NGOs. Ortega said that NGOs submit themselves to Europe and the United States, embrace capitalism and oligarchy and are composed of the upper classes (González, 2008). Rosario Murrillo stated that feminists are “oligarchs, counterrevolutionaries and well-paid agents of imperialism” (Mannen, 2008). Murillo even wrote a manifesto that called the feminism embraced by the current women’s movement “false feminism” because real feminism embraces traditional family values (Murillo, 2008).

Due to the defeat of the FSLN and the introduction of neoliberalism by the Chamorro administration, the autonomous women’s movement began in Nicaragua. The autonomous women’s movement was possible because Sandinista women no longer had to maintain their affiliation with the FSLN to promote women’s rights. Nicaragua also experienced an NGO boom because the international donor community took advantage of economic liberalization and invested in Nicaragua. Women with Sandinista spirit received international aid and formed women’s NGOs to address gender specific issues that that they could not freely pursue during the Sandinista regime. Even though women’s NGOs were no longer part of the FLSN, their
values such as gender equality and participatory democracy did not change. Women’s NGOs, however, experienced structural and functional changes, such as not needing a membership-based system to collect resources, and forming Networks. They also adopted the new role of providing services in addition to continuing their preexisting roles such as participating in policy formulation and democratizing Nicaraguan society. When Alemán became president, he used hostile rhetoric against NGOs and their foreign-born leaders to eliminate barriers that would impede him from implementing neoliberal policies and prevent him from hiding his corruption. Therefore, women’s NGOs saw their political role decrease under Alemán.

In 2006, Nicaragua experienced another ideological shift in political leadership from neoliberalism to “pink” socialism because Ortega was reelected. Organized women and Ortega, however, could not revive the previous relationship between Sandinista women and the FSLN. When he was out of power, Ortega made political moves that threatened the Nicaraguan women’s movement. His relationship with women’s NGOs continues to erode even after his presidential victory in 2006. The ideological shift in political leadership in 1990 and the strained relationship between the government and women’s NGOs under Alemán caused changes in the values, structures and functions of women’s organizations. Then, how have the values, structures and functions of women’s NGOs changed since the reelection of Daniel Ortega in 2006?

**Methodology**

This research focuses on Daniel Ortega’s second presidential term, which began in 2007 after he won the 2006 presidential election, for three reasons. First, Ortega’s return signifies an ideological shift in political leadership. The switch from neoliberalism to moderate socialism
could have changed the values, structures and functions of women’s organizations because neoliberalism created financial channels for women’s NGOs by liberalizing the Nicaraguan economy. Second, even though the autonomous or independent status of women’s NGOs was possible because of Ortega’s defeat in 1990, the Sandinista mass-based movement during the Nicaraguan Revolution started the Nicaraguan women’s movement. This historical connection between women and the FSLN could have affected women’s NGOs. Lastly, several political events noted in the previous section have drastically changed the relationship between Ortega and women’s NGOs since his electoral defeat in 1990. As animosity between the government and NGOs has been growing, women’s NGOs could have altered their values, structures and functions in response.

Four women’s NGOs in Nicaragua participated in the research: Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral Comunitario (Association for Integrated Community Development – ADIC), Colectivo de Mujeres de Matagalpa (Women’s Collective of Matagalpa – CMM), Grupo Venancia and Servicios Integrales para la Mujer (Integrated Services for Women – SI Mujer). The selection of these four organizations was based on the following criteria: 1) promoting women’s rights is one of their main goals; 2) they were founded before the reelection of Ortega; and, 3) they continue to exist today. The researcher created case studies to analyze the data collected from the interviews with these four organizations, their websites and other documents available about them. The interviews were transcribed to make analysis more effective. A brief description of each organization is included below:

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3 I conducted all of the interviews in Spanish. The IRB Office approved my research.

4 All the organizations except SI Mujer have websites.
ADIC: Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral Comunitario is an NGO based in Matagalpa, Nicaragua that was officially recognized in 1991. A group of doctors who worked for the Ministry of Health during the Revolution established the organization after the war was over because the poor did not receive enough attention from the government. ADIC’s mission is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of communities, by forming and strengthening community organizations that promote the active participation of children, adolescents, women, and men in the process of developing their community and preserving the environment. The organization implements community organizing, environmental and policy advocacy projects such as teaching women how to maintain family gardens, running campaigns on women’s human rights and negotiating with coffee producers to improve their social responsibility.

CMM: Colectivo de Mujeres de Matagalpa is a women’s NGO based in Matagalpa, Nicaragua that was founded in 1984 by a group of Sandinista women who saw the necessity of visualization and the incorporation of women’s rights into public policy. The organization gained legal standing in 1990. The main mission of the organization is defending human rights in Nicaragua, particularly reproductive and sexual health for women and children, by facilitating the practice of civic responsibility and by fostering social participation. There are three areas of projects: 1) education and communication; 2) community development organization and health; and, 3) human rights, citizen participation and policy advocacy. The organization carries out projects such as showing theatrical productions, arranging political campaigns on women’s health, AIDS and domestic violence and running a community library. CMM also owns Radio 5

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5 The primary goal of ADIC is community development not women’s rights, but promoting women’s rights is still one of their main objectives.
VOS, which is a local radio program promoting human rights, and Fundación María Cavallieri, which is a community center for people living in rural communities.

- Grupo Venancia: Grupo Venancia is a women’s NGO based in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Yeta Ramirez and Helen Dixon founded the organization in 1999 after Hurricane Mitch. The fundamental beliefs of the organization are popular feminist training and communication with women from the countryside and the city, whether or not they are organized. The main mission of the organization is to contribute to the development of women’s autonomy, to transform cultural values and to construct a more equal society, where diversity is recognized and everyone has equal rights. Some of their projects include holding cultural events such as concerts every Saturday, organizing educational campaigns on women’s rights and holding workshops on gender and citizenship.

- SI Mujer: Servicios Integrales para la Mujer is a women’s NGO based in Managua, Nicaragua that was founded in 1991 as a health center. The main objectives of the organization are providing health and education services to the people, developing activities for political action and speaking out for people’s human rights. Its work is divided into seven different themes: 1) politics of the development of the population’s health, 2) sexual and reproductive rights, 3) sexual and intrafamily violence prevention and services for the victims, 4) AIDS prevention and services for people with AIDS, 5) youth, 6) maternal mortality, and 7) abortion. In addition to its role as a health center, the organization runs education projects such as informing youths about their sexual and reproductive rights.

A representative from each organization answered interview questions regarding her organization’s values, structures and functions, which are the criteria for empirical analysis. The section on values is composed of two factors: definition of feminism and mission
statement/goals. After explaining each organization’s definition of feminism, the section will proceed to discuss the definition of feminism in relation to the organization’s mission statement/goals. The section on structure discusses funding sources, organizational model, network membership, membership system, accountability/transparency and the size of the organizations in terms of how many employees and projects they have. Each indicator explores the effects, positive or negative, that the reelection of Ortega has had on the organizations’ structures. The last part analyzes the organizations’ political role. This section will discuss how the organizations responded to the three political events that created a strained relationship between the organizations and the Ortega administration. These events are the Zoilamérica scandal, the prohibition of therapeutic abortion and the 2008 government raids. At the end, this section analyzes how the organizations’ roles in service delivery, policy formulation and democratization have changed due to the strained relationship.

**Empirical Analysis**

**Organizational Values**

**Feminism**

All these organizations embrace feminism as part of their identity, but there are subtle differences in how they define feminism. ADIC believes that feminism creates an equal relationship between men and women so that they can work together to change paternalistic roles, decrease violence, promote equality and advocate for equal access to better job sources, which leads to men and women getting paid equally and fairly. CMM accentuates the importance of feminism as a political approach, a way of life and a daily practice that people can utilize to fight against injustice and inequality. Grupo Venancia sees feminism as a tool that
people use to have more freedom and autonomy and to transform patriarchy and machismo into equality so that men and women can have equal relations. SI Mujer says that there is no feminist-o-meter that indicates if a woman is a feminist or not because past experiences shape her definition of feminism, but the organization argues that defending reproductive rights is the basic principle of feminism.

ADIC and Grupo Venancia explicitly embrace unity feminism because they claim that men and women need to work together to reach gender equality. CMM uses the word “people” instead of “women” and emphasizes the importance of the incorporation of feminism to everyday life. This indicates that the organization recognizes that both genders need to collaborate to achieve gender equality. SI Mujer does not mention the role of men in its definition of feminism, but the organization acknowledges the presence of women’s rights activists who do not identify with feminism. Therefore, unity feminism that emphasizes collaboration between women and men seems to be the dominant rhetoric among Nicaraguan women’s NGOs. It is possible that SI Mujer’s definition of feminism is more female-oriented because of its objectives as a health center for women. SI Mujer’s definition also shows that associating the women’s movement with feminism is inappropriate because there are still women’s right activists that support gender equality and women’s emancipation but do not identify with feminism. Despite these subtle differences, all the organizations’ definition of feminism show that they are dedicated to improving women’s status in Nicaraguan society and to achieving gender equality.
Mission

Each organization’s definition of feminism has influenced its mission. The influence of unity feminism is evident in the mission statements of ADIC, CMM and Grupo Venancia because all of them recognize the importance of the collaboration between men and women to build a more equitable society. As a non-governmental health center for women, however, SI Mujer’s mission statement is more health-related and gender specific; it discusses topics such as sexual and reproductive rights, sexual and intrafamily violence, maternal mortality and abortion.

Regardless of the type of feminism that each organization supports, all the organizations’ mission statements show that their work expands participatory democracy. ADIC assists citizens with their processes of developing autonomy. CMM explicitly states that it defends human rights through political organizing and policy advocacy. Grupo Venencia wishes to transform cultural values to reduce violence and reduce submission of the vulnerable to the powerful. SI Mujer has policy advocacy goals such as promoting sexual and reproductive rights and addressing sexual and intrafamily violence. The formation of autonomy and the presence of political activities that increase awareness and fight for the vulnerable expand participatory democracy because more citizens will be available to participate in politics.

Since the reelection of Ortega, all the missions of these four organizations have not changed because political factors have failed to influence the organizations’ values. All of the organizations’ missions are autonomous in that none of them mentioned loyalty to the FSLN even though the FSLN has returned. Even when the Ortega administration has tried to threaten the work of the women’s movement by officially denouncing women’s NGOs, the representatives of all the organizations have told me that the organizations have tried to keep their missions intact. SI Mujer and CMM explained that making changes in response to political
and financial pressures shows the Ortega administration that its scare tactics have succeeded. Therefore, the reelection of Ortega has had no effect on the organizations’ missions.

Organizational Structure

Funding

The amount of funding that all the organizations receive from the international donor community has decreased since the reelection of Ortega, but ADIC and CMM experienced a more severe reduction in funding in 2002 and 2003. International aid from Western nations is the primary focus of this analysis because none of the organizations have received government funding, and private donations from individuals are rare.

The amount of foreign aid that each organization receives has decreased due to the new government’s effort to regulate the flow of international aid as shown earlier with the proposal of the new manual that would give more power to the government to control foreign aid. This outcome corresponds with what many scholars have said about the international community’s belief that local NGOs are trustworthy bodies that stand against corrupt governments, protecting democracy and human rights (see Literature Review). Since the Nicaraguan government has become less democratic under President Ortega, some international donors no longer wish to continue sending money to Nicaraguan NGOs. In 2008, the United States government and three of the six European countries that had provided financial assistance directly to Nicaragua decided to cut the amount of their contributions because of the weakening democracy in

\[\text{It was not possible to obtain financial data from any of the organizations because the organizations did not wish to share internal information. Therefore, I cannot provide a detailed list of all donors of these four organizations. From the interviews, I found out that Grupo Venancia receives money from Peace Winds America, el Institution de la Mujer of Spain and the Holland Embassy. SI Mujer receives money from the Norwegian Embassy, Forum Syd and Save the Children.}\]
Nicaragua (Rogers). In 2009, Denmark reduced the amount of financial aid to Nicaragua also because it was worried about the political situation that jeopardized democracy in Nicaragua (Agence France-Presse).

Grupo Venancia, SI Mujer and ADIC have personally experienced the impact of the decrease in international monetary assistance. Before Ortega returned to power, Grupo Venancia could directly contact its donors and present them with project proposals. Since international organizations have lost direct connections with NGOs, they do not wish to invest money in Grupo Venancia. Also, the return of Ortega has severed the connection between Forum Syd, a Swedish organization, and ADIC because the government accused Forum Syd of money laundering and illegal triangulation of funds in 2008 along with seven other organizations, including Grupo Venancia. SI Mujer has had the same experience. Even though many European countries such as Sweden had been financially assisting SI Mujer for almost 20 years, some of them retrieved their monetary support because Ortega tried to regulate international aid. SI Mujer, however, has been able to generate income on its own because the organization gains revenues from its customers who utilize the health center. Therefore, the negative impact on SI Mujer has not been as severe as what Grupo Venancia has experienced.

ADIC and CMM agree that the amount of foreign aid has decreased since the reelection of Ortega, but they argue that a more severe budget cut happened in 2002 and 2003 when European organizations and governments decided to redirect their aid to Africa. The primary reason for the diminished international aid was the politics among the donors at the international level, not the reelection of Ortega. Many international organizations and governments were interested in Nicaragua because of the Nicaraguan Revolution, but they decided to prioritize African nations over Nicaragua because Nicaragua became more politically and economically
stable. Due to the realignment of priorities, ADIC lost financial support from Austrian, Dutch and Norwegian organizations. CMM also lost support from international organizations such as NOVIC of Holland even though it had been one of CMM’s major donors for a long time. CMM, however, found other donors to replace those that left; it has successfully garnered new funding channels from the local governments and civil society groups of Catalonia and Italy.

With regard to the introduction of a manual that would give the Nicaraguan government more power to regulate international aid, ADIC, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer all have expressed their concerns. If the official implementation of the manual occurs, Grupo Venancia predicts that this law would have a negative impact on the organization because it would reduce the amount of foreign aid that it could use to execute projects and reach out to people. Grupo Venancia has joined the Federation of NGOs to minimize the impact of future financial losses by analyzing international aid. ADIC also thinks that the government’s stricter control over foreign aid would have a negative impact on ADIC because it heavily relies on foreign aid for revenues. Therefore, ADIC could disappear if it does not have access to foreign aid. Even though SI Mujer was not aware of the manual at the time of the interview, the organization said that it expects negative effects on international organizations because the new law imposes extra regulations. SI Mujer also noted that it is possible that it will further reduce the amount of international aid that comes into Nicaragua because the international donor community distrusts the Nicaraguan government.

Despite the decrease in foreign aid, all the organizations have expressed that they will continue carrying out the same kind of activities as before with limited resources to achieve their mission of promoting women’s rights. SI Mujer has a specific example of reducing costs

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7 I could not obtain a response from CMM.
associated with holding events. When a SI Mujer employee visits the Caribbean Coast for an event, she will only take one trip and stay there for 15 days instead of taking four different trips with breaks in the middle. Even though there are fewer resources, SI Mujer can carry out the same projects by cutting costs this way. Another way it can save money is by asking participants to bring light refreshments to events instead of SI Mujer providing food in addition to event materials.

*Size: Employees and Projects*

Since the reelection of Ortega, the sizes of all the organizations have decreased except for CMM. The number of employees has declined for only two organizations, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer. These two organizations have experienced downsizing due to lack of funding from international organizations. Grupo Venancia downsized its staff from 16 to 8, and job security became uncertain. In order to prevent any further reduction of the size of staff, Grupo Venancia has lowered salaries. SI Mujer could not avoid the financial downturn as it also reduced its staff’s salaries and dismissed several employees such as administrative personnel and promotoras (community advocates). ADIC has downsized as well, but the major change happened in 2002 when European organizations and governments decided to focus on Africa instead of Central America.

Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer also have reduced the number and length of projects and changed the content or the size of their projects due to political pressures and lack of funding. The decrease in international aid has curtailed the length of Grupo Venancia’s projects. When the organization’s financial situation was more stable, projects usually lasted for five years, but the length changed to one year due to limited resources. In addition to project insecurity caused
by a decrease in international aid, political pressures have affected Grupo Venancia. Because the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas has dissolved, Grupo Venancia can no longer pursue a project that assists women in public space and civil society in women’s empowerment. After the government accusation, Grupo Venancia has reduced the scale of la Hora Lila because the national radio station that it used was a strong Ortega supporter and refused to give the organization a time slot. As a result, la Hora Lila has changed into a local radio program, broadcasting in Matagalpa only.

SI Mujer has not abandoned any projects, but it cannot start new projects due to a decrease in funding. SI Mujer stated again that if it were to abandon projects, the government and other non-state actors would think that the organization was afraid of the Ortega administration. The organization has lost a lot of opportunities to start new projects because it has devoted so much energy into protecting itself from the government’s verbal attacks and fiscal terrorism. Without defending itself, the organization could disappear. In order to keep the organization safe, SI Mujer said that it no longer pursues projects that discuss sensitive topics such as safe and legal abortion because those projects can provoke the government. The organization, however, continues to discuss other subjects related to women’s rights because it still believes in women’s rights.

Even though the number of employees and projects decreased primarily due to financial instability, it is important to keep in mind that international aid has declined because the international donor community feels uncomfortable sending money to Nicaragua due to Ortega’s undemocratic behavior. Also, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer have faced similar problems that AMNLAE faced during Ortega’s first term – they cannot pursue gender specific projects when

8 SI Mujer did not specify how it uses resources to protect itself.
the FSLN does not like the projects. Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer are autonomous organizations, but the fact that the Ortega administration influences their gender specific projects shows that the FSLN continues to place the party’s political interests over women’s rights. With fewer resources and employees, these two organizations have become less active and less able to reach out to ordinary citizens. Therefore, the Ortega administration has indirectly reduced the organizational capacity and political capacity of Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer.

**Accountability and Transparency**

Accountability and transparency indicate if there are other bodies that monitor how the organizations use their funds to finance their activities. All the organizations undergo the same process of presenting annual financial reports, summarizing all of their financial resources and their executive positions to the Ministrio de Gobernación and the Institutio Nicaragüense de Social Seguridad (Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security - INSS). They submit financial reports to their donors even when the donors do not require the organizations to do so. All the organizations except SI Mujer have websites, and Grupo Venancia stated that using its website to distribute information about the organization is another way of being transparent and accountable for its activities. During the Chamorro administration, some raised concerns about the fact that NGOs were only accountable to their donors, not to the public. Currently, that claim is true to a certain extent, but the organizations can now be accountable to the public by actively using the Internet.

Both Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer, however, have been the victims of fiscal terrorism regardless of how transparent they have been. Even though Grupo Venancia had been submitting financial reports regularly, it was on the list of eight organizations accused of
fraudulent activities in 2008. The police raided the organization for financial documents, and Grupo Venancia could not work for a few days. SI Mujer constantly has had obligatory government inspections by the INSS. The INSS occasionally visits SI Mujer and asks for contracts and documents that show how much money it has received. That is not a standard process that the INSS demands from all organizations. Another problem that SI Mujer has had with the INSS is that SI Mujer has youth promotoras, to whom the organization gives small economic remunerations. SI Mujer does not report them to the INSS because youth promotoras do not have contractual relationships with the organization. The INSS, however, has placed a fine on SI Mujer for not reporting youth promotoras even though the law only requires SI Mujer to report contractual relationships. Recently, the INSS has sent another notice to SI Mujer that it is going to visit the organization again. The Department of Labor also has reviewed the internal program that SI Mujer has implemented to advocate for workers’ rights. The Ortega administration has abused its power to oversee NGOs’ accountability and transparency and has forced Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer to take extra legal measures beyond what the law requires.

Organization Model

The organizational model has stayed the same for all the organizations. All the organizations have adopted the vertical organizational model, where there is a hierarchy of positions among their employees. The name for each level varies across organizations, but the vertical structures of all the organizations have three levels (lowest from highest): departments/teams, a general assembly and an executive board. The primary responsibilities at the lowest level are implementing and coordinating projects; all employees participate in these activities. A general assembly, which is also composed of all employees, convenes to discuss
new projects or the status of ongoing projects and elects executive members. The members of
the executive board ratify decisions.

CMM and Grupo Venancia, however, have adopted a vertical structure only for legal
reasons because they cannot have legal standing without an executive board. Grupo Venancia
told me that legal standing is required to receive international aid. In practice, every employee
has the same rank but different responsibilities. Political pressures have not forced organizations
to dismiss any employees in executive positions. ADIC said that it had to change its constitution
so that the absence of some members, who may be abroad at the time of vote, would not hurt the
quorum when the organization holds elections for the executive board. This change, however,
has occurred to respect the legality of the quorum; the Ortega administration did not request the
change. None of the other organizations said that they changed their organizational models after
the reelection of Ortega.

Membership System

None of the organizations’ membership systems have changed since the reelection of
Ortega. ADIC is the only organization with a formal system of membership. In order to
officially become a member of ADIC, a person has to send a written message expressing her/his
interest. There is no remuneration for members – only work and commitment. General events
such as forums, meetings and workshops are, however, open to everyone just like other
organizations. The organizations all use flyers, webpage, emails, brochures and other materials
to inform others about their activities. CMM sometimes hold events just for women because
they cater to women in rural communities to encourage them to take ownership of their words
and thoughts. This open attendance system is still possible because the international donor community continues to support them.

**Network Membership**

Even though only one out of the seven national networks that emerged from the 1992 conference survived, joining networks is still a major component of the structures of women’s NGOs. Grupo Venancia is the only organization that mentioned any changes in its network membership. It is currently part of the Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa (Network of Women of Matagalpa), the Red de Mujeres del Norte (Network of Women of the North) and the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia. The organization lost its membership with the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas de Nicaragua (Network of Municipality Women of Nicaragua) after the reelection of Ortega because the Network dissolved. The Red de Mujeres Municipalistas de Nicaragua used to provide a space for women in political leadership, women involved in the women’s movement and ordinary women from various towns to collaborate on the goals of increasing awareness about women’s rights and guaranteeing those rights to women. The majority of the women associated with the Network identified with the FSLN. Therefore, when the conflict between women’s NGOs and Ortega arose, the Network dissolved because many members prioritized party loyalty over the goal of advocating for women’s rights. The loss of the Network has reduced the number of avenues that Grupo Venancia could utilize to achieve its mission.

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9 ADIC and SI Mujer talked about their network membership but only in relation to other topics such as their support for Narváez as members of the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia. ADIC said that it is part of the Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa. CMM is part of the Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa and the Red de Mujeres del Norte. It is possible that these organizations are members of other local or national networks.
Grupo Venancia, however, joined a new network called Entre Redes (Between Networks), which created another space for various women’s NGOs to work together. At the first meeting of Between Networks, 30 women discussed how the new government and its politics had affected women’s NGOs and what they could do to continue working together even with the women who are affiliated with the FSLN. The relationship between the new government and women’s NGOs is an important topic because some women do not know how to reconcile party loyalty and the goal of promoting women’s rights. The meetings that followed addressed issues such as democracy and fundamentalism. Through Between Networks, women can articulate their ideas and fortify the women’s movement.

Even though Grupo Venancia has lost connections, friendships and opportunities to influence local policy after the Network dissolved, the organization has earned new allies and has solidified its relationship with women’s NGOs that decided to choose the women’s movement side. The political conflict became an opportunity for Grupo Venancia because it now knows who is the women’s movement side, not the government side. Also, by joining Entre Redes, Grupo Venancia met new people and might one day find ways to gain allies from the FSLN.

Political Role

Political Events

Since the electoral defeat of Ortega in 1990, three political incidents have transpired and intensified the tension between women’s NGOs and Ortega and created the current hostile relationship between women’s NGOs and the Ortega administration. These events are: the Zoilamérica scandal in 1998, the penalization of therapeutic abortion in 2006 and the
government raids in 2008. Also, during the interview, SI Mujer said the government indirectly denounced the organization because the Asociación Nicaragüense Pro-Derechos Humanos (Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights – ANPDH), an NGO, accused the organization’s director, Dr. Ana María Pizarro, of putting a girl in danger by assisting her with an illegal abortion operation. Therefore, this section explains a total of four political events that strained the relationship between women’s NGOs and the Ortega administration.

- Zoilamérica Narváez

The political clash between the Nicaraguan women’s movement and the FSLN began in 1998 when Zoilamérica Narváez claimed that Ortega had been sexual abusing her since she was 11. While ADIC, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer publicly supported Narváez, CMM decided to stay out of the fight between Narváez and Ortega because the organization did not agree with the intention behind the women’s movement’s support for Narváez. The Zoilamérica scandal not only placed women’s NGOs in opposition to Ortega but also divided the Nicaraguan women’s movement.

ADIC participated in protests and gave moral support to Narváez throughout the process as part of the Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa. As a member of the Red de Mujeres contra Violencia and the Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa, Grupo Venancia also believed in the testimony of Narváez, listened to what she wanted to do, supported her in every way throughout the process, and denounced Ortega for not confronting the situation and for not seeking justice. When Narváez withdrew her claim, Grupo Venancia respected her decision even though the

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10 Grupo Venancia was founded after Narváez’s publicly announcement. However, the Narváez case continued till 2008. Therefore, Grupo Venancia joined other members of the women’s movement to support Narváez as a member of the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia.
organization thought she might have been threatened to discontinue the process. SI Mujer was more directly involved with the case in that it provided Narváez with its own psychologist.

On the other hand, CMM refused to participate in the political campaign against Ortega because it believed that the Nicaraguan women’s movement supported Narváez just because she was the daughter of Ortega, who is a public figure. Using Narváez as the face of the campaign against sexual abuse, women’s NGOs denounced the Danielists and the Sandinistas. With other sexual abuse cases that involved non-public figures, the women’s movement did not protest at the same level of fervor as it did with the Narváez case. CMM argued that if women’s NGOs really cared about children who suffered from sexual abuse, they should have been on the streets protesting every day. The choice to stay neutral isolated CMM from the rest of the women’s movement. When Narváez negotiated with Rosario Murillo and withdrew her claim against Ortega, however, CMM realized that it had made the politically astute decision while the supporters of Narváez were ridiculed.

- Penalization of Therapeutic Abortion

The penalization of therapeutic abortion exacerbated the tension between women’s NGOs and Ortega because the FSLN unanimously voted to penalize therapeutic abortion just a few days before the presidential election of 2006. Other than ADIC, all the organizations said that the penalization of therapeutic abortion has directly affected them because: 1) women’s reproductive rights have been violated; 2) women no longer have access to safe abortions; and, 3) the law has created barriers that prevent the organizations from reaching out to women.

CMM has been defending women’s right to decide for their own bodies because improving women’s health is one of main objectives of CMM. Due to the recent legal change, a
few women that CMM worked with have died because they did not have access to safe, therapeutic abortions. The organization also expressed that the government has oppressed and silenced CMM by penalizing therapeutic abortions because abortion has become a topic that CMM cannot discuss. However, CMM said that it would continue condemning the FSLN for voting for the penalization of therapeutic abortion.

Grupo Venancia also noted that more women have died due to lack of medical attention since the penalization of therapeutic abortion, but hospitals report that these deaths occurred due to heart attacks or hemorrhage, not due to lack of medical attention. Grupo Venancia believes that therapeutic abortion is a right that feminism should protect and that the recent penalization is a backward movement. The organization has marched in Matagalpa, Managua, Condega and Nueva Segovia, held a sit-in protest in front of a police office, reading its pronouncements, and it has protested in front of the National Assembly to show that the penalization of therapeutic abortion violates women’s reproductive rights. Other activities include broadcasting its message via radio, participating in debates about this topic and informing various communities about this issue.

SI Mujer is not for abortion, but it is against women dying from unsafe abortions. However, the organization can no longer assist women who need therapeutic abortions because the procedure is illegal and such assistance can put SI Mujer at risk. Therefore, SI Mujer now helps women by informing them about their health rather than providing them with information about abortions. The organization believes that if women are fully informed about their reproductive health, they are less likely to be in need of abortion services. The organization had to change its approach to continue assisting women while not transgressing legal boundaries.
The penalization of therapeutic abortion has not directly affected ADIC as an organization because community development is the main objective, not women’s rights – yet the way the organization sees it, community development includes women’s rights. The change in law, however, has affected the girls and the women with whom ADIC works as there is no access to abortion anymore. For example, a girl was sexually abused by either her father or stepfather and got pregnant at the age of 11. Due to the penalization, she could not receive an abortion, and ADIC believes that her reproductive rights were violated.

• Government Raids

The tension between the organizations and the Ortega administration reached a climax when the government accused eight organizations of money laundering and illegal triangulation of funds in 2008. Grupo Venancia was one of them, and it was accused of illegal triangulation of the funds of the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas with which Grupo Venancia was affiliated. In order to debunk the government’s claim, Grupo Venancia complied with the request of the government and presented its receipts and documents to the Ministry of Governance. At the end, Grupo Venancia came out clean. Throughout this entire process, though, Grupo Venancia suffered economically and emotionally. For two weeks, the staff of Grupo Venancia could not work because of the investigation, which resulted in economical damage. The emotional impact was more serious because only ADIC and CMM supported Grupo Venancia during the investigation process. Some organizations of the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas did not wish to support Grupo Venancia because they did not want to put themselves at risk by speaking against the government.
Even though the government has not conducted an investigation into ADIC, CMM and SI Mujer, these organizations have been supportive of Grupo Venancia and seven other organizations that the government accused because the adverse relationship between women’s NGOs and the government has affected all of them. First, ADIC says that the government investigation of NGOs still has made an impact because the inspection has increased fear among civil society organizations. They say this is so because the Ortega administration can order another round of inspections. The incident shows that Ortega is in charge and that he indeed has the power to accuse any organization at any moment. Secondly, CMM was on the list of NGOs that the government wanted to investigate, but the government started with Grupo Venancia in Matagalpa. CMM continued working during the tumultuous time because it neither wanted to remain silent nor appear scared.

- SI Mujer and ANPDH

In 2008, ANPDH condemned Dr. Ana María Pizarro, SI Mujer’s director, along with eight other feminists for their involvement with the Rosita case. Rosita was a 9-year-old Nicaraguan girl who was raped and became pregnant in Costa Rica in 2003. Several feminists of the Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia transported her to Nicaragua because therapeutic abortion was legal then. Even though ANPDH is not part of the government, the director of the organization is Bishop Mata of Estelí, and Ortega solidified its alliance with the Catholic Church in 2006 when the FSLN unanimously voted for the penalization of therapeutic abortion. Also, the fact that Bishop Obando y Bravo oversees the Commission for Verification, Reconciliation, Peace and Justice of the government demonstrates that the separation of church and state has
been blurred. This violates the Nicaraguan Constitution, which states that the government is to remain secular. Therefore, the government condemned SI Mujer indirectly.

**Service Delivery**

Service delivery is a role for NGOs that developed in the 1990s when the government reduced the amount of spending on social services to privatize the public sector’s responsibilities and to downsize the government. The Ortega administration came back with the moderate version of socialism, but the main factor that has reduced the service delivery role of women’s NGOs has been the government’s hostile attitude toward women’s NGOs, not the increase in spending for the social sector.

- **More Government Budget Allocation for Social Services**

  As mentioned earlier in Literature Review, the Ortega administration has been spending more money on the social sector than the neoliberal administrations. The increase in government spending on social services such as education and health, however, has had no effect on the organizations’ role in service delivery. All the organizations agreed that there has been more government attention to health and education since the reelection of Ortega. There are, however, limitations to how much the government’s higher social spending can achieve.

  Grupo Venancia argued that Nicaragua has a clientelistic government system where politicians do not distribute resources to their constituents unless the citizens are willing to vote for them in the next elections. Therefore, there are still a lot of people who do not have equal access to education and health services because the Nicaraguan government wants to gain votes, not guarantee human rights. Grupo Venancia said that many students are not able to attend
college because post-secondary education is expensive and there are not enough universities for all applicants.

CMM gave another reason: the government does not truly understand what communities need – women who make clothes need sewing machines, not money. Other women might benefit more by receiving chickens. CMM claimed that the government does not consult community members to look for solutions, and this nonintegrated approach fails to bring positive results. Thus, the Ortega administration has spent more money on social services, but its authoritative behavior that fails to ask communities what their real needs are has had no effect on the organization’s social delivery role.

SI Mujer said that merely distributing money is not going to improve people’s access to health – it is the health system that needs to change. The organization pointed out that the main focus of the government is curative, meaning that it only tries to fix things after something bad has already happened. The government also has created a bureaucratic problem. SI Mujer mentioned that if someone wishes to seek specialized medical attention, he/she has to be registered with his/her municipality and carry a card from the municipality’s Consejos del Poder Ciudadano (Citizens Power Councils – CPC), which are neighborhood committees established by Ortega in 2008. This inconvenient, extra step that patients need to take when seeking specialized medical attention can be a barrier to receiving quick and efficient medical attention. SI Mujer also stated that some women from rural communities have to travel for seven hours to receive proper medical attention even when they are in grave situations because they do not have adequate health services in their villages. In relation to education, SI Mujer said that Nicaraguan society still has not achieved equal access to education because children cannot function in
school if they are malnourished. Therefore, the government needs to pay attention to Nicaragua’s poverty rate in order to see positive impacts from their social sector expenses.

ADIC made the same point about children not attending school because they live in poverty. The organization’s representative said that the government needs to solve economic problems and increase social spending simultaneously. Even though the government is paying more attention to education, there are a lot of mothers who do not send their children to school because these children earn money for their families. Also, the penalization of therapeutic abortion has negated the positive effect of the increase in government social spending. The increase of the government allocations for health services does not benefit women if they cannot receive legal abortions even when pregnancy complications put their lives in danger.

Unless the government starts addressing the politics around the social sector, such as abortion, clientelism and authoritarianism, the organizations will continue to be the main social services providers. The Ortega administration’s clientelistic and authoritative behavior and its stance against abortion make the government an inefficient service provider. Also, the government is just scratching the surface of the problems with education and health services because poverty is what it needs to reduce first or simultaneously to ensure that its social spending brings back positive results. Therefore, the increased social spending has not influenced the organizations’ service delivery role.

**International Aid**

The amount of foreign aid has declined because the international donor community is worried about Ortega’s undemocratic behavior and his hostile attitude toward women’s NGOs. Due to the decrease in international aid, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer have reduced the number
of their projects and have also downsized the staff. With fewer projects and staff members, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer cannot reach out to as many people as they used to because their resources are limited. Consequently, the tension between Ortega and women’s NGOs has reduced the organizations’ role in service delivery because the organizations’ capacity and ability to carry out projects efficiently has decreased.

- Effects of Political Events on the Service Delivery Role

While the government’s higher budget allocation has had no effect on the social sector, the hostile relationship between the government and the organizations has reduced their service delivery role. This is because the government has taken female citizens away from the organizations and has disunited the women’s movement by creating a polarized political atmosphere, where organized women have to choose between women’s rights and party loyalty. If female citizens do not seek the organizations’ help, the organizations cannot deliver services. The division within the women’s movement is a problem to service delivery because it prevents women’s NGOs from collaborating with each other on projects regarding women’s rights. Also, if some women’s NGOs side with the government, there will be fewer places for politically unorganized people to go to receive services.

The Nicaraguan women’s movement faced the first schism when Narváez accused Ortega of sexual abuse. ADIC, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer supported Narváez, but CMM decided not to because the organization believed that the motivation behind the support of many women’s NGOs was political. As mentioned before, CMM believed that women’s NGOs used the Narváez case because the abuser was a public figure. CMM had to pay the price of remaining silent because other women’s NGOs accused the organization of being Danielista,
which meant that CMM was supporting Daniel Ortega not the Sandinista spirit of the Nicaraguan Revolution. Even though CMM stayed neutral and did not side with anyone, the accusation brought back the party loyalty vs. women’s rights conflict from Ortega’s first term and demonstrated the brittle structure of the autonomous women’s movement.

The penalization of therapeutic abortion also reduced CMM’s service delivery role because some women stopped coming to CMM’s events due to external pressures. CMM said that the government and the Catholic Church have coerced women from rural communities to choose either to attend CMM’s talks or to go to church. While these women constantly interacted with their community leaders, spiritual leaders, family and neighbors, they only saw CMM when the organization held events. Therefore, these women chose to follow the community norm and not attend CMM’s events.

The party loyalty vs. women’s movement conflict emerged again when Grupo Venancia tried to seek support from the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas after the government accused the organization of money laundering and triangulation of illegal funds in 2008. Grupo Venancia said that only two or three people from the Red decided to help Grupo Venancia. The organization was emotionally hurt because it had been working with the Red for five years, and most of them did not stand up for women’s rights and sided with the government. The Red dissolved shortly afterward as the tension within the women’s movement grew. Grupo Venancia not only lost friendships and connections, it also lost opportunities to work with local female public officials because the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas provided a space for women’s NGOs and local female public officials to join forces to promote women’s rights.

Grupo Venancia experienced another split when a women’s cooperative in Mulukukú stopped working with Grupo Venancia. The women’s collective in Mulukukú organized
workshops for women about women’s health. Grupo Venancia had been collaborating with the group since 1993, but the women’s collective decided to support the government. Grupo Venancia said that how other women’s NGOs responded to the government’s accusation of Grupo Venancia elucidated who was on the women’s movement side and who was on the government side.

- Rhetoric of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo

The ongoing anti-NGO and anti-feminist rhetoric of Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo, has further aggravated the strained relationship between the government and women’s NGOs. Their rhetoric is influential and has succeeded in taking away the supporters of the women’s movement to the government’s side.

Grupo Venancia said that the government sends out a message to the public that God condemns abortions, that abortion is a sin and that the person who gets an abortion is a murderer. Ortega and Murillo’s rhetoric is powerful in swaying the public’s opinion because the majority of the Nicaraguan population is Catholic and the presidential couple has the resources to inculcate the religious message into people’s heads. The Ortega administration has the financial power to send out their messages through TV, written materials and web pages, but Grupo Venancia does not. Similar to Grupo Venancia’s point, ADIC said that it has lost some of the women with whom it worked to the Ortega and Murillo side. Then, these women have formed a new organization that has only female members of the FSLN. CMM also commented that the presidential couple’s rhetoric persuaded some women to leave CMM and join the government side even though the current FSLN is different from the Sandinista party of the Nicaraguan Revolution. In order to emphasize that the current FSLN does not reflect the Sandinista spirit of
the Nicaraguan Revolution, many members of CMM have left the party and have pursued projects that are political and social rather than partisan. In response to Murillo’s rhetoric about the necessity of redefining feminism particularly, CMM does not do anything. There had been an internal discussion about how to react to Murillo’s comment, and the final decision was to simply ignore what she said because the organization believed that her argument had no foundation. While all the other organizations noted that the presidential couple’s rhetoric has persuaded some women to change their alliance to the government, SI Mujer has not seen any impact on the organization.

The analysis of the interview data shows that most of the organizations have lost their allies and supporters because by escalating the tension between the government and women’s NGOs, the Ortega administration has successfully persuaded some women to support the government. Consequently, the organizations’ service delivery role has dwindled because the capacity of the organizations for executing projects has diminished due to the division within the women’s movement. Also, there are fewer women who seek their services. However, there is an interesting outcome of the three organizations’ loss of allies and supporters – the Nicaraguan women’s movement has solidified even more. The division within the autonomous women’s movement after the conflict between women’s NGOs and the Ortega administration began reminded CMM that the women’s movement was composed of a diverse group of women who had different perspectives. Therefore, CMM argued that the process of overcoming difficult moments involves your finding out who is truly on your side. Grupo Venancia also said that it realized who was truly on its side during difficult moments. Because those women who did not believe in the values of the women’s movement left, the current women’s movement only has women whose main concern are defending women’s rights. Grupo Venancia turned these
frustrating moments into an opportunity by joining Entre Redes to collaborate with FSLN
women to strategize about how to increase the solidarity of the Nicaraguan women’s movement
even further by interacting with the women who strongly identify with the FSLN.

Policy Formulation

Political differences between the Ortega administration and women’s NGOs have
eliminated the opportunities for women’s NGOs to influence the direction of public policy at the
local level. None of the organizations mentioned that they had participated in policy formulation
at the national level before or after the reelection of Ortega.

Grupo Venancia and ADIC noted that before the reelection of Ortega, women’s NGOs
had a cooperative relationship with the local government. In 2004, the FSLN controlled the
Matagalpan municipal government while the PLC took charge of the national government. The
municipal government formed the Committee for Municipal Development, the Committee for
Departmental Development and the Commission for Gender Equality, where the organizations of
civil society had representation. ADIC sent representatives to the Committee for Municipal
Development and the Committee for Departmental Development, making proposals on
community development. Grupo Venancia as part of the Network of Women of Matagalpa was
involved with the Commission for Gender Equality, proposing recommendations on gender
equality policy and workshops for women to the Mayor’s Office. In 2005, the representatives of
civil society suggested that the local government should create a Women’s Secretariat. The
Women’s Secretariat was responsible for supporting women from all communities, and the
campaigns against violence and workshops that discussed gender and civic participation.
When the new national government arrived, however, Consejos del Poder Ciudadano (Citizens Power Councils – CPC) of the FSLN replaced all of the pre-existing governing bodies where civil society organizations could articulate their voices. The CPC is predominantly composed mostly of the members of the FSLN with a few members of the PLC and other parties just to create an illusion that the Councils are not biased. Therefore, women’s NGOs now have fewer opportunities to contribute to public policy formulation because the reelection of Ortega removed the incentive for the FSLN to garner support from civil society.

When the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas dissolved after the reelection of Ortega, Grupo Venancia lost another opportunity of making an impact on policy formulation. The Red provided a space for NGOs and female public officials to work together. Since the connections with female political officials are no longer available, Grupo Venancia’s political role in policy formulation decreased even further.

CMM stated that it has never participated in policy formulation at the national level, but it also did not explain the role of CMM in policy formulation at the local level. SI Mujer also said that it has never participated in policy formulation. It is possible that CMM understood the intention of the interview question as its involvement at the national level. Therefore, CMM could have had opportunities to participate in policy formulation at the local level. SI Mujer is located in Managua, and Managua has different local politics. That could be one of the reasons why SI Mujer said that it has never participated in the policy-making processes.
Democratization

Democratization is the third function that women’s NGOs execute to serve the community and society. CMM, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer said that they democratize society by promoting women’s rights “at home, on the street and in bed.” This slogan emphasizes the importance of women taking ownership of their lives. Instead of relying on women’s organizations, women themselves have to stand up for their rights. Encouraging women to be independent, therefore, promotes participatory democracy because that mission motivates women themselves to participate in the mass-based movement of creating an equal society; these three organizations want to give all women the opportunity and the ability to defend their rights on their own. Because promoting women’s rights is not the core mission of ADIC, it does not use the slogan. ADIC still promotes participatory democracy by encouraging community members’ participation in their communities’ decision-making processes. In the end, it is the community members who have to take ownership of their work. The Ortega administration, however, has tried to undermine the effort of women’s NGOs to promote participatory democracy in society by eliminating the avenues that the organizations can utilize to motivate women to defend their own rights.

First of all, the removal of political spaces where Grupo Venancia and ADIC had representation has jeopardized the organizations’ democratization role. The negative impact on the policy formulation role also has a detrimental effect on the democratization role because the organizations can no longer express their views in the policymaking processes. The creation of the Consejos del Poder Ciudadano (Citizens Power Council – CPC) to replace governmental committees prevents participatory democracy from developing because only people who are politically affiliated with the FSLN can voice their opinions. That is the opposite of participatory
democracy because it promotes an “authoritarian and secretive government” (McKinley, 2008, par. 5) that does not allow dissenting perspectives unlike a mass-based movement where party affiliation is not a barrier to contributing diverse opinions.

Secondly, the Ortega administration has hindered the organizations from raising awareness and educating the public. SI Mujer used to be able to go to any traffic circle in Managua and install a banner for their campaign. When Ortega returned, however, his government claimed that certain traffic circles were prohibited for public use. Grupo Venancia had a similar oppressive experience. When the organization held marches or sit-in protests, the government would hire violent hooligans to disturb and physically attack the members involved in the events and other people to pray and play Catholic music in the background everyday for six months at a traffic circle. As noted earlier, Grupo Venancia had to downsize the scale of its radio program after the 2008 government raid because the national radio station supported the government. The Ortega administration has been carrying out these activities not only to silence Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer but also to prevent the public from hearing the organizations’ messages. The execution of political activities is one of the ways that Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer use to expand participatory democracy because those activities strengthen participatory democracy by educating and motivating women to participate in political decision-making.

Lastly, as mentioned before in the service delivery section, the Ortega administration has made community outreach difficult for women’s NGOs because the government’s position against women’s NGOs has discouraged women from speaking up for their rights and converted them to the government side. For example, some women stopped attending CMM’s events because of the external pressures imposed by the neighbors, family members, religious leaders and community leaders. Therefore, the reelection of Ortega has weakened the effort of the
organizations to promote democracy because the unorganized female citizens have been silenced by the fear of their communities’ rejection.

**Conclusion**

Since the reelection of Ortega in 2006, the structures and functions of ADIC, CMM, Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer have changed. Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer have experienced funding cuts since the reelection of Ortega because the amount of international aid has decreased. Therefore, they have made structural adjustments to accommodate to the new financial situation by reducing the number of projects and employees. Grupo Venancia’ network membership has also changed because it is no longer a member of the Red de Mujeres Municipalistas after the majority of the Network members decided not to support Grupo Venancia when the government raided the organization for illegal financial activities. The Ortega administration has also coerced the organizations to take extra measures to prove their transparency and accountability by fiscally harassing them and imposing fines for failing to report financial expenses that the law does not require them to report.

The changes in political role are more significant than the structural adjustments. The political roles of all the organizations in service delivery, policy formulation and democratization have diminished since the reelection of Ortega. The division within the autonomous women’s movement and the reduction in international aid instigated by various political factors has damaged the organizations’ role in service delivery. The FSLN has eliminated local political bodies where ADIC and Grupo Venancia used to have representation, thus decreasing the number of avenues that the organizations could utilize to influence policy formulation. Lastly, the role of each of the organizations in democratization has dwindled because Ortega has
prevented the organizations’ effort to get more citizens involved with political organizing. The Ortega administration also has interrupted Grupo Venancia and SI Mujer’s efforts to raise awareness and educate the public about social and political issues. Furthermore, some women that the organizations worked with have retreated from the women’s movement because they do not want their communities to abandon them. These findings show that the Ortega administration has systematically prosecuted women’s NGOs into reducing their capacity to execute projects and practice their political functions by using explicit and implicit tools to take advantage of the history of the Nicaraguan women’s movement.

The government has used explicit tools to affect the organizations’ political roles directly. The first explicit tool is publicly accusing women’s NGOs of alleged illegal and dishonest activities. Even though the transparency level of women’s NGOs meets government requirements, women’s NGOs are still vulnerable to government investigations. For example, the government raided Grupo Venancia in 2008 even though the organization had turned in its financial reports to the Ministry of Governance and the INSS as required by law. Even when SI Mujer had already turned in its annual financial report with a proper list of revenues and expenses, the Ortega administration sometimes asked SI Mujer to turn in additional financial documents and to pay fines for not reporting youth promotoras who did not have contracts with SI Mujer. The government also attacked SI Mujer for the organization’s involvement with the Rosita case by utilizing the alliance between Ortega and the Catholic Church. Their autonomous status makes women’s NGOs vulnerable to the government’s accusations and financial investigations because women’s organizations are no longer attached to the FSLN like AMLNAE was in the 1980s. Now that women’s NGOs are separate political entities that can criticize the government, the Ortega administration harasses them for political reasons so the
organizations will remain silent. Government accusations can negatively affect the capacity of women’s NGOs. During the government raid, Grupo Venancia could not work for a few days, resulting in economic problems. SI Mujer has had to pour its resources into protecting the organization from the government’s systematic abuse, which has diverted resources from the mission of helping vulnerable women.

The diminishment of the ability of women’s NGOs to influence policy formulation is the second explicit tool that the Ortega administration utilizes to reduce the organizations’ capacity. Policy formulation is a way for women’s NGOs to directly impact the lives of citizens. During Ortega’s first term, female Sandinista members participated in policy formulation (Vanden & Prevost, 1993). ADIC and Grupo Venancia were also part of local government committees before the reelection of Ortega. The Ortega administration, however, made a strategic move and replaced them with CPCs, where only the Sandinistas can join. The critics argue that Ortega established CPCs to gain more power and build an authoritarian government (McKinley, 2008). Thus, the government has reduced the organizations’ capacity by silencing them and disabling them from practicing their role in policy formulation.

The prohibition of therapeutic abortion has also made a negative impact on women’s NGOs because the revised abortion law has eliminated a women’s reproductive health issue that the organizations address. Ortega avoided taking a definitive stance on abortion during his first term, but he and the FSLN made a strategic move in 2006 to support the penalization of therapeutic abortion. Ortega wanted to solidify his alliance with the Catholic Church to gain more votes. SI Mujer has been especially affected by the penalization of therapeutic abortion because it is a health center that used to perform therapeutic abortions and inform women about abortion. However, SI Mujer has stopped providing information about abortion because all
abortions are illegal now and the organization does not wish to provoke the government. Since SI Mujer can no longer practice policy advocacy, the organization’s capacity has decreased.

In contrast to the explicit tools described above, the government’s implicit tools make an indirect but more powerful impact on the organizations. The Ortega administration has used two main tools to systematically abuse the organizations: blocking the organizations’ financial channels and creating schisms within the autonomous women’s movement.

The Ortega administration has not physically blocked the flow of international aid into Nicaragua; neither has it imposed a financial embargo on Western nations nor has it declared that Nicaragua would completely stop receiving financial aid. However, the government has demonstrated undemocratic behavior and created a hostile atmosphere for national NGOs. Due to the tension between Ortega and national NGOs, foreign donors have begun to question if their money will actually land in the hands of the organizations who are going to help the vulnerable. Because the Ortega administration has appeared undemocratic and dictatorial, Western nations such as the United States and Denmark have cut their funds. The decrease in international aid has jeopardized women’s NGOs because international aid is their major income source. Therefore, without foreign monetary assistance, many women’s NGOs could disappear. This particular way that the Ortega administration undermines the autonomous women’s movement is powerful because international aid is the reason why many women’s NGOs emerged in the 1990s. The government is haraSSing women’s NGOs by weakening the root of the autonomous women’s movement. This hurts the capacity of women’s NGOs because they cannot carry out projects or pay their employees without international aid.

Causing the autonomous women’s movement to disintegrate is another implicit tool that the government uses to harass women’s NGOs. All the organizations except SI Mujer
mentioned that they have lost their allies to the government since the reelection of Ortega. The Ortega administration has instigated the division by creating a party loyalists vs. women’s movement conflict. This conflict existed during Ortega’s first term, and it was the reason why a lot of Sandinista women left AMNLAE to establish autonomous women’s organizations in the 1990s after the defeat of Ortega. What once reduced Ortega’s power is now a principal tool that Ortega uses to revamp his authority. The Ortega administration has taken advantage of the tenuous solidarity and the brittle structure of the autonomous women’s movement, which is composed of women from diverse backgrounds with diverse perspectives. The schism has weakened the capacity of women’s NGOs because they now have fewer allies who will support them during difficult times and cooperate with them on projects that provide services to the vulnerable women, discuss politics and democratize Nicaraguan society.

It is important to note why the relationship between Ortega and women’s NGOs is different from that between Alemán and women’s NGOs. Alemán had attacked and denigrated NGOs and female foreign-born NGO leaders by blaming them for the high poverty rate in Nicaragua and the failure of Nicaragua to quickly recover from Hurricane Mitch. However, the Alemán administration did not systematically harass women’s NGOs because he did not have a historical relationship with women’s rights activists that he could manipulate. It is the history behind the Nicaraguan women’s movement that Daniel Ortega has systematically abused.

Policy Recommendations

There is, however, a positive outcome as a result of the strained relationship between the government and women’s NGOs. What the government has failed to foresee is that its systematic abuse has solidified support among those who have decided to remain with the
women’s movement. Grupo Venancia and CMM expressed that you know who is truly on your side during difficult times. The majority of the women who are currently affiliated with the autonomous women’s movement are women’s rights activists – they are not going to give up on women’s issues to support the FSLN. Therefore, the Nicaraguan autonomous women’s movement still has enough power to fight against the Ortega administration’s systematic abuse. These findings support the following policy recommendations for strengthening the autonomous women’s movement and to helping the movement confront and withstand any further negative ramifications of the systematic abuse of the Ortega administration:

1. **Find other ways to produce revenues to be self-sustaining.** Women’s NGOs need to find new revenue channels because they cannot continue relying on international aid to operate. The Ortega administration has targeted international aid as a way to undermine women’s NGOs because the government is aware that international aid is the major funding source for women’s NGOs. Women’s NGOs can invest in creating a team for marketing and sales. The members of this team would have the responsibility of developing marketing and sale strategies to create unique products that would be highly marketable.

2. **Collaborate with international organizations on projects.** Currently, financial terms define the relationship between national NGOs and international organizations. By collaborating on projects, Nicaraguan women’s NGOs could gain international allies and attract more international attention to the systematic harassment of the Ortega administration. Even though Ortega publicly censures capitalism and international influences, he still negotiates with the IMF for loans (Nitolápan-Envío Team, 2007). This shows that Ortega is concerned about international relations.
3. **Form alliances with FSLN women.** Grupo Venancia is already part of this trend and has joined Entre Redes. Other women’s NGOs need to participate in projects that restore the relationship between party loyalists and the women’s movement. This effort is especially important for expanding the role of women’s NGOs in policy formulation because female FSLN allies can help women’s NGOs gain representation in both the national and local government. Then, women’s NGOs can influence national policy to address women’s rights.

4. **Invest money in public relations.** The Ortega administration has denigrated women’s NGOs by accusing them of illegal activities. Women’s NGO can start public relation projects not only to rebuild their public image but also to inform the public about how the Ortega administration has systematically abused women’s NGOs. Then, women’s NGOs could obtain public support and perhaps become a formidable threat to Ortega’s future political career.

**Limitations**

One must interpret the findings of this study with caution because there are two major limitations to the study. First of all, the sample is not representative of all women’s NGOs in Nicaragua because only four organizations participated in this research. Three of them are in Matagalpa and one of them is in Managua. It is also possible that only those who have been negatively affected by the reelection of Daniel Ortega decided to participate. Therefore, the analysis of the data collected from a more representative sample in terms of geographic location and opinion on the current government could produce different results.
The second limitation is language barriers. The researcher spent only 10 weeks in Nicaragua and is not a native Spanish speaker. Therefore, some of the interviewees might not have felt comfortable sharing all the information with the researcher. Also, the researcher could have misinterpreted the data because she was not aware of the cultural significance of what the interviewees said.
Appendix

Interview Questions

Identification

1. Is this organization an NGO? Has it been recognized legally?
2. What is the history behind this organization?
3. What is the mission of the organization?

Goals

1. Before the re-election of Ortega, what were the main goals of your organization?
2. How have they changed, if at all, since the re-election of Ortega?

Structure

1. Since the re-election of Ortega, have there been any changes to the internal structure of your organization?
   a. Size, membership, number of staff, characteristics of staff, number of volunteers, addition or removal of departments and changes in top positions (president, vice-president)

Funding

1. Before the re-election of Ortega, what was the biggest income source?
2. How has that changed since the re-election of Ortega? What is the biggest income source now?
3. Before the re-election of Ortega, did your organization receive government grants? If so, what percentage of your income was from the government?
4. How has the amount of government funding changed since the re-election of Ortega?
5. Before the re-election of Ortega, did your organization receive financial aid from foreign governments? From foreign or international aid organizations or donors? From the Nicaraguan government? Can you tell me the approximate percentage of your income that came from each of these that you received?

6. How has the amount of foreign aid changed since the re-election of Ortega?

7. Have any of your relationships with particular international organizations been severed due to the re-election of Ortega?

Project Implementation

1. Before the re-election of Ortega, how many projects did your organization pursue and what were they?

2. Since the re-election of Ortega, has the number of projects changed? If decreased, what were the purposes of those dropped projects? Why were they dropped? If increased, what were the purposes of those added projects? Why were they added?

3. Since the re-election of Ortega, the government has been allocating more money on social services such as education and health according to the Central Bank of Nicaragua. How has this affected your organization’s work of promoting women’s rights?

4. (Optional phrase: Like you mentioned before) Since the re-election of Ortega, the overall amount of foreign aid to Nicaragua has decreased according to OECD. What kind of impact has this had on your organization?

Accountability

1. Does your organization have anyone overseeing your activities and funding for accountability reasons? If so, to whom is your organization accountable? Has that changed since the re-election of Ortega?
2. What kinds of effort has your organization made to be more transparent? Has your organizations’ level of transparency changed since the re-election of Ortega?

Membership

1. How can people join this organization?

Political Issues

1. Did the organization do anything when Zoilamérica Narváez claimed that she had been sexually abused by Ortega?

2. How has the revised Penal Code on abortion affected your organization, if at all?

3. Has the government recently accused your organization of anything? If so, what?
   a. If yes, why did the government accuse your organization of [whatever was the response to the previous question]? What did your organization do in response? How did this accusation affect your organization?
   b. If no, did accusations of other feminist NGOs affect yours? Why do you think the government targeted other organizations, such as [name some feminist NGOs]? Did your organization do anything in response?

4. Ortega introduced a bill that would regulate the flow of international aid into Nicaragua. What kind of impact would this have on Nicaraguan society? What kind of impact would this have on your organization?

5. Ortega has publicly stated his anti-abortion, anti-feminism and anti-NGO stances. Has his rhetoric affected your organization in any ways?

6. Ortega’s wife, Rosario Murillo, considers feminists “oligarchs, counterrevolutionaries, and well-paid agents of imperialism” (Mannen, 2009). How has her position on feminism affected your organization?
7. How would the organization define “feminism”?

Political Role

1. Was your organization consulted by the government (national or local) about policy formulation before the re-election of Ortega? What about now?

2. Was your organization contacted by the government (national or local) for policy implementation/service delivery to the community before the re-election of Ortega? What about now?

3. Do you think your organization promotes democratization in Nicaragua? If so, how? Has that changed since the re-election of Ortega?

Strategies

1. How will your organization pursue the goal of promoting women’s rights during the Ortega administration? What are your strategies?

2. If you are experiencing or expect a reduced income due to a decrease in foreign aid, how will your organization pursue the goal of promoting women’s rights?
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