

THINKING OUT LOUD V

Innovative Case Studies on Participatory Instruments

Spring 2004

*Supporting Empowerment Approaches in Programmatic and Adjustment Lending
in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay*

*Community Driven Development Approaches in Natural Resources Management
Projects: Lessons from Guatemala and Honduras*

*The Experience in Honduras with Maintenance of Roads through Community-based
Micro-enterprises*

*Community Mobilization for Fire Prevention in the Brazilian Amazon-Partnerships
between Civil Society, Government and the International Community*

Argentina: From Facing Emergencies to Building Social Capital

*Transparency Portals: Delivering Public Financial Information to Citizens in
Latin America*



Civil Society
Team

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION
THE WORLD BANK

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Foreword

Empowerment is a critical element in the fight against poverty. In its broadest sense, empowerment refers to the freedom of choice and action to shape one's future. Its critical dimensions include participation, capacity, access to information and accountability – all of which can have a strong impact on development activities.

The empowerment of the poor and the promotion of social accountability mechanisms, to help make public services more effective, responsive and accountable to all users, including the poor, have been the focus of the World Bank's Regional Strategy for Engaging Civil Society in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (FY02-FY04). During the past decade, the Bank has had the opportunity to contribute to the region's rich tradition of innovative initiatives to increase the poor's access to and control over resources and decisions affecting their well-being. In collaboration with governments, civil society organizations and other international development actors, civic participation has been institutionalized in a variety of countries, including Bolivia, Peru and Nicaragua. Social accountability mechanisms are being implemented throughout the region, including in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. And new mechanisms are providing citizens with greater access to public information in countries like Chile, Ecuador and Guatemala.

The articles that follow reflect innovative practices that actively engage the poor to further their own development. Most of the initiatives discussed make use of local knowledge, traditions and skills to formulate strategies that respond to multiple needs, including income generation, poverty reduction, environmental protection, infrastructure provision and information dissemination. These examples demonstrate the capacity, commitment and will of people living in poverty to transform their lives through active and effective engagement. At the same time, they also reflect new paths taken by the teams in the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LCR) of the World Bank to explore and promote empowerment in the Bank's lending and analysis.

In addition to the cases presented in this series, the LCR Civil Society Team continues to develop exciting initiatives to strengthen the ability of the poor to shape their development. Currently, the Team is providing support for the development of social accountability mechanisms in the monitoring and evaluation of the Poverty Reduction Strategies in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, numerous national and regional fora have been conducted for dialogue among various stakeholders, including civil society, in order to ensure that the voices of the poor are heard in the formulation of Bank programs and strategies.

I hope that these case studies will help to generate further discussion and new ideas to empower the poor, increase levels of social accountability and promote the goals of greater equity and less poverty.

David de Ferranti

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Introduction to Thinking Out Loud V

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I am pleased to share with you the fifth edition of case studies on empowerment through participatory mechanisms around World Bank products in the Latin American and Caribbean Region. By distilling the main challenges faced and lessons learned during the implementation stages of various projects, the *Thinking Out Loud* series aims to share innovative practices among World Bank colleagues as well as other development practitioners about challenges and successes in the effort to incorporate participatory mechanisms in development initiatives.

Like its predecessors, this issue of *Thinking Out Loud* seeks to generate understanding, support and capacity within and outside the World Bank for the participation of civil society in the fight against poverty. As previous editions of *Thinking Out Loud* have highlighted, building partnerships between government and civil society around World Bank-funded activities can be highly rewarding, but implies, nevertheless, risks and costs. These risks and costs can be heightened by the complexity of the civil society arena on the one hand, and the purely governmental constitution of the World Bank on the other. The review of participatory initiatives in terms of their advantages and disadvantages is, therefore, key to minimizing risks and costs, while maximizing the benefits.

Thinking Out Loud V compiles six case studies of initiatives aimed at engaging civil society organizations (CSOs) around Bank projects and policy dialogue in eight different countries. First, we present a comparative analysis of a variety of accountability mechanisms around World Bank policy-based loans in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay. Then, we present a case on how efficient community driven development approaches offer innovative solutions to natural resource management projects in Guatemala and Honduras. The case study from Honduras provides an example of efficient road maintenance through community-based micro-enterprises. The case study from Brazil shares lessons on community mobilization for fire prevention in the Amazon through an innovative partnership project implemented by CSOs. From Argentina, we present the social emergency program (FOPAR), which was restructured in the course of the crisis Argentina faced in 2001 to better target social services to the poor and to raise beneficiaries' participation in the project implementation. Finally, another comparative study is presented on Internet or Transparency Portals for public financial management information systems in Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia.

Although there is no single institutional model for empowerment, there are four key elements that are likely to be present when empowerment efforts are successful: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organizational capacity (World Bank, *Empowerment and*

Poverty Reduction. A Sourcebook, 2000). The case studies presented in this publication provide evidence of the inclusion of these elements in four important areas of the Bank's work to reduce poverty: (i) basic service delivery, (ii) strengthening local governance, (iii) supporting national governance, and (iv) pro-poor market development. The projects vary in the way they adopt the four elements of empowerment as discussed in detail in the article on empowerment approaches to programmatic and adjustment lending (See John-Abraham/Torres article) What follows is an overview of some initial findings that emerge from the six case studies in these four areas.

In the area of **basic service delivery**, it often has been suggested that engaging civil society organizations has led to better project design and greater sustainability. For many years, the Bank has supported government efforts to get resources down to the community level through Community Driven Development (CDD) approaches. CDD strategies give control of decisions and resources to community groups. These groups often work in partnership with demand-responsive support organizations and service providers including elected local governments, the private sector, NGOs, and central government agencies. CDD offers a way to meet multiple objectives – to provide social and infrastructure services, to organize economic activity and resource management, to empower poor people, improve governance, and enhance security of the poorest.

The Honduras experience with road maintenance through community based micro-enterprises (MEs), as well as the Argentina case on CSOs as implementing agents of the social emergency program FOPAR, are both examples of a CDD approach and suggest that civil society participation does indeed help to reflect the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries in the project design. In addition, as shown in the case studies from Argentina and Brazil, community-based groups have significantly improved the cost-effectiveness as well as the reach of projects, in comparison to initiatives designed and monitored by groups external to the community. The Guatemala and Honduras study of community driven management of natural resources points to a third advantage of community driven development approaches; local stakeholders absorb some of the costs and risks involved and, in turn, receive the benefits from the project, thus strengthening local ownership.

Despite these benefits, community driven development remains challenging for CSOs as well as governments and donors. The impact of CDD approaches is, of course, related to the strength of the community based organizations (CBOs) driving the process to form linkages with other organizations, both technical and membership based. Technical organizations are important in providing the necessary skills to leverage additional resources and create management capacity. Links to other membership groups are important if initiatives are to represent the broad concerns of communities and not just the interests of an organized few.

For the Bank, a major challenge continues to be its administrative procedures, which were designed for larger scale projects with government counterparts. While the advantages to CDD approaches are clearly outlined in the Argentinean and the Brazilian cases, it is clear that the World Bank administrative procedures for civil society involvement are often cumbersome for small-scale community projects. Finding ways to adapt internal procedures to these smaller scale,

more participatory projects as well as providing resources to strengthen the administrative capacity of the implementing agencies are flagged as issues for consideration in future project design.

The case studies that fall into the second area of **strengthening local governance** show that civil society participation can help to improve service provision and greater responsiveness to poor people's priorities. The Brazil case study, for example, suggests that establishing partnerships between local governments and civil society organizations, not only improves the responsiveness of projects and policies to sectoral priorities but also increases citizens' trust in government actions. The Bolivia example of the municipal data collection methodology developed in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), as presented in the comparative empowerment article, demonstrates that citizen feedback on government performance through information gathering on the effectiveness and responsiveness of public services can be a useful tool for improving both local governance as well as service delivery.

Nonetheless, for local governments it remains a challenge to respond to the diverse interests, needs and demands of civil society as they adopt a more open approach to the policy process. The examples from Uruguay and Brazil offer an effective mechanism to overcome this challenge. Both cases demonstrate that by engaging civil society more broadly at the local level, particularly through consultations, their opinions are directly conveyed to relevant stakeholders. However, for consultations to be productive, it is also important that consultations be based on solid information and careful methodological considerations. The Bolivia case study, in turn shows an important first step in creating solid information at the community level that could lead to and inform future consultations.

In addition, as the experiences from Argentina and Brazil illustrate, the focus concerning improved local governance has often been on the supply side. However, strengthening local organizational capacity remains critical in order to enable citizens to fully participate in such initiatives, improving the demand side. To do this, greater consideration is needed to understand how the Bank can systematically integrate capacity building into its lending instruments. In this context, it is noteworthy that capacity building for project beneficiaries creates skills far beyond specific projects. In addition to strengthening project effectiveness, it also facilitates a more fluid dialogue among the World Bank, governments and project partners, which can positively impact how people view future interactions.

Just as participation can help to improve governance at the local level, it can also, as some of the case studies presented show, help to improve **governance at the national level**. This third area of cases looks at participatory processes at the national level around policy-based loans. An overview paper by John-Abraham and Torres provides a more in-depth description of these processes and emerging findings. The cases suggest that policy-based loans provide an important entry point for mainstreaming empowerment at a broader level. While ultimately policy decisions need to be made based on a combination of technical expertise and understanding of local needs, participatory processes around reform processes can help to achieve at least three things. First, they can help to identify who the potential winners and losers will be and identify appropriate measures to reduce negative impacts.

Second, they can build support for reform processes and help avoid the derailing of the reforms because of opposition. Third, they can positively influence reform processes by helping policy makers to identify new areas for reform based on an understanding of the effectiveness of service delivery, as perceived by their users. The Uruguay example provides some interesting insights on the challenges and benefits in undertaking such a process. The cases on empowerment through policy based lending also suggest that policy-based loans can be an important tool for pursuing an empowerment agenda at the national level. The Peru case study of the Mesas de Concertación, for example, illustrates how a programmatic social reform loan helped to champion government reformers in the pursuit of more transparent information systems, a more open policy planning and evaluation process, input and oversight by citizens of local and national budget processes and well-trained civil society and community actors that were prepared to participate in a timely and informed manner. While an evaluation mechanism of this loan is just being put into place, early signs suggest that this approach, which has been embraced at the national level and by a number of departments and municipalities, is an effective way of improving service delivery while deepening the democratic culture in Peru at several levels. On a smaller scale, the emerging experience of the Citizen Charter Program, undertaken around the Public Sector Modernization reform loan in Argentina suggests that users can be an important source of information in reforming service delivery towards a more results-based and accountable approach. In a similar vein, the comparative paper of financial management information systems provides an interesting overview of how such systems are beginning to serve as transparency tools in the region, although much has still to be done to make them accessible and user-friendly.

Two challenges identified at the national level refer to the role of the media and the capacity of civil society organizations. There is clearly a potential for the media to play a greater and more sophisticated role in the region in both disseminating opportunities for citizens to participate in new initiatives, as well as providing the public with accurate information that can be used by participants. Both the Uruguay and Peru case suggest that the potential for inclusion of more actors would have been multiplied had the media played a more active role in accompanying these processes. At the same time, since the participation of civil society in macro level policy discussions is a relatively new opportunity there is, not surprisingly, a capacity gap to be filled in civil society, especially among the more rural organizations that represent the poor directly. It is thus important that this be recognized at the outset in the design of processes and loans, and time and resources be earmarked for capacity building initiatives. The Peru case highlights the importance of doing this within project preparation budget and of moving early to leverage additional grant funds to invest in capacity building, in order to ensure that processes do not reach an educated few in civil society.

The fourth and final set of cases presented touch on the area of **pro-poor market development**. Poverty and vulnerability is unlikely to be reduced without growth and economic development which, in turn, cannot be sustained if poor men and women are excluded from productive activities. Facilitating market access for local entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises (MEs) can help to remove obstacles that prevent poor people's involvement in economic activities. The case study from Hon-

duras demonstrates how promoting local participation in the design of MEs, which are responsible for rural road maintenance, generates new jobs and income in poor rural areas. These new employment opportunities may also help to limit migration from rural areas to cities. Another benefit seems to be the development of social capital in the form of entrepreneurial and organizational skills that can also serve as a catalyst for other or future local development initiatives.

Despite these clear benefits, the sustainability of these initiatives must be considered from the outset and exit strategies designed. In doing so, care must be given to providing communities with the necessary technical skills to manage projects after the withdrawal of external support.

One of the major conclusions the reader might draw from this publication is that the four empowerment elements, access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organizational capacity, applied to the different development areas are highly intertwined and mutually reinforcing. It is also clear that empowerment is not a perfect science and strategies need to be redefined over time in an iterative process. The cases presented deliberately highlight challenges in the hope that this, in itself, is a contribution to more robust evaluation and learning processes around empowerment approaches. Despite these challenges, however, one cannot help but applaud this wave of new participatory practices, tools for access to information, social accountability mechanisms and capacity building initiatives that have arisen over the last decade in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We hope the following cases serve as a useful source on which to base further actions to support more effective, responsive, inclusive and accountable institutions.

Supporting Empowerment Approaches in Programmatic and Adjustment Lending in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay

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Abstract

In the context of ongoing World Bank programmatic and adjustment lending operations in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay, five initiatives were selected in 2002 to receive funding for the implementation of empowerment-related activities. These were focused primarily around participatory and social accountability processes, including large capacity-building components.

The following pages aim to distill some general lessons based on an analysis of the empowering effects of these activities, notably around four key elements: *access to information, participation and inclusion,*

accountability and capacity building. First, a brief overview is given of the common rationale behind the five initiatives and the specific activities carried out in each one of them. The following section, which discusses the key four elements of empowerment mentioned above, shows that all five projects feature accessing and disseminating information as a central element from which increased accountability is expected. The final section examines opportunities, challenges, and general lessons to date. Additional resources, including web pages, are included in the references at the end.

I. Introduction: The Common Rationale behind the Initiatives

As part of a program to mainstream empowerment in the Latin American region, five ongoing programmatic and adjustment World Bank operations were selected in January 2002 to receive additional funding for innovative participatory processes. The five projects were selected on a competitive basis to support: (i) experimentation with transparency and accountability mechanisms; (ii) dissemination and capacity building of concrete tools and resources for governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) to design and implement these mechanisms; and (iii) a robust cost benefit evaluation of these new approaches. An analysis of the main lessons and challenges of each initiative are presented in the World Bank's regional series *En Breve* (published in February-March 2004)¹.

While not all of these activities are new, the focus on empowerment – explicitly recognized in the Regional Strategic Framework and Strategy for Engaging Civil Society FY02-FY04² – provides

¹ En Breve is a regular series of notes highlighting recent lessons emerging from the operational and analytical program of the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Region. For more information go to <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/LAC/LAC.nsf/ECADocByUnid/2DC8816CDCA2E92C85256CE900715D97?Opendocument>.

² World Bank (2002), *Empowering the Poor and Promoting Accountability in LCR: A Regional Framework and Strategy for Engaging Civil Society FY02-FY04*. Washington DC.

the opportunity to concentrate resources on issues of accountability, institutional analysis and capacity building. The overarching aim is to continue mainstreaming stakeholder participation, particularly that of civil society, in World Bank projects and policy dialogue, while contributing to generating learning and support for this approach within the Bank.

The notion of empowerment, as derived from a conceptual framework developed by the Bank, means “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.”³ Institutions are used here in the broadest sense to include political, social and economic institutions, such as the market. Empowerment is about increasing poor people’s freedom of choice and action by changing the nature of the relationship between them, state and non-state actors. This implies changes in rules and behaviors to enable citizens, and specifically poor people, to have their voices heard, represented and taken into account by those taking decisions that affect their well-being, either directly or through the enabling environment.

In promoting empowerment through traditional World Bank lending operations, the five projects examined here are contributing to advancing three important areas: (i) social accountability mechanisms, (ii) capacity-building of civil society with a focus on the poorest, and (iii) analytical work to better understand the links between empowerment and governance with a particular focus on removing obstacles to effective participation and inclusion.

II. Background: Brief Description of Each Initiative

▪ **Argentina’s Program of Cartas Compromiso**

The government of Argentina undertook, with the support of the World Bank, a program of State Modernization in 2000 that featured a key component around results-based management systems, specifically the creation of a Citizen Charter Program. The *Carta Compromiso* is a public document that establishes the commitment of a public service agency to uphold a series of standards and to meet a number of goals in a given timeframe⁴. In November 2001, the World Bank and the government jointly assessed the implementation of the program, and several challenges related to the participation of civil society were identified. As a result, it was agreed to improve the dissemination of information about the program and to strengthen civil society participation through: (i) the creation of a Civil Society Unit, and (ii) the organization of training workshops on participation and consultation processes, stakeholder analysis and information campaigns. Two agencies, namely the Social Security Agency (ANSES) and the Superintendent of Health Services (SSS), were selected to pilot citizen report cards based on the input from focus group discussions carried out around social services such as pensions, unemployment benefits and cash transfers. These mechanisms of social auditing are expected to provide data on the quality of services and other related aspects of service provision from the point

³ World Bank (2002), *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*, Washington DC. xviii

⁴ For more information on the Cartas Compromiso, go to: <http://cartacompromiso.sgp.gov.ar>

of view of the users. Additional participatory mechanisms used throughout the program include public hearings, consultations and the creation of NGO-based technical coordination groups.

▪ ***The Social Monitor in Argentina***

In the late 1990s, several social programs were established in Argentina with funds from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). These programs aimed at strengthening social safety nets to ensure basic health, nutrition and education for the most vulnerable sectors of society, particularly poor families with young or adolescent children. In this context, the World Bank, IDB and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly supported a process to design the Social Monitor, a coalition of CSOs to develop and implement mechanisms for social accountability of social emergency programs in Argentina. This program was designed to: (i) develop the capacity of and give voice to the beneficiaries of social emergency programs and (ii) ensure the provided services meet the needs and satisfaction of those directly impacted by them. The Social Monitor's tools to promote civil society's exercise of social accountability are articulated on two levels. First, a selected consortium of CSOs must carry out surveys, interviews, workshops, and *in situ* observations in order to verify the legal and efficient implementation of assigned resources. These tools complement the analysis of secondary sources and all conclusions are compiled in periodic reports presented to the World Bank. Second, a hotline has been established to field allegations of corruption and seeks to ensure accountability of public institutions and programs to civil society and strengthen social capital.

▪ ***Bolivia: Monitoring and Evaluation at the Municipal Level in the context of the PRSP***

The Bolivian government has developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which outlines an approach to increase poverty-related spending through investments in education, health and sanitation and risk management. These expenditures will be planned and executed mainly at the municipal level⁵. Although the institutional structures for monitoring public management are in place, local governments and oversight committees lack the tools and resources necessary, such as municipal information systems, to fulfill their responsibilities. In response to this need, the Bolivia Country Office of the World Bank proposed a pilot initiative to improve the sources of information and the mechanisms used to track progress in poverty reduction by developing a municipal data collection methodology around two main components: i) a results-based approach focused on setting and meeting targets and linking these to available municipal resources, and ii) a communications component that will present the information to municipal oversight committees in an understandable format. The pilot was launched in March 2003 in fifteen municipalities. Currently data is being collected through the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), also known as Palm Pilots. Capacity building at the local level, an increased focus on information dissemination and transparency and the linkages between participatory planning and results are additional areas addressed by this initiative.

⁵ *Bolivia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Joint IDA/IMF Staff Assessment*, 10 May 2001, p. 9.

■ ***Peru: Towards a System of Social Accountability***

During the political transition in Peru that followed Fujimori's fall, the government initiated three important national processes: (i) multi-stakeholder roundtables or *mesas de concertación* to support the fight against poverty, (ii) the formulation of national development goals, and (iii) a process of decentralization. These processes have contributed to the creation of an incipient system of social accountability, where most phases of the policy cycle (formulation, analysis, monitoring, impact evaluation) include the active participation of civil society organizations. The *Mesas de Concertación para la Lucha Contra la Pobreza* (MCLCP), created in January 2001, provide forums for dialogue and negotiation for government ministries and civil society representatives to design social policies and programs. From these dialogues emerged the Concerted Development Plans, and a more proactive CSO role in implementing and monitoring budgets of some social programs and local development plan implementation. The *mesas* helped elaborate national development goals in early 2002, formalized in the National Agreement signed by a variety of social, economic and political actors. The National Agreement has formulated thirty State policies in four key areas: (i) institutionalization of democracy, (ii) social equity and the fight against poverty, (iii) competitiveness, and (iv) anti-corruption. Monitoring benchmarks are currently being developed. Finally, the State's decentralization reform incorporated regional administrations as a new level of authority in the State structure, helping to institutionalize the need to identify regional priorities. The decentralization process mandates the use of participatory budgeting and concerted planning mechanisms at the local and regional levels, to facilitate the development of inclusive government agreements, make the fight against poverty more effective, and consolidate the democratic decentralization reform.

■ ***Uruguay: Consultations with Civil Society around Social Programs in Structural Adjustment Loans***

The Public Services and Social Sectors Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL) and Special Structural Adjustment Loan Project support greater efficiency in the provision of public services, including greater impacts from public expenditures for education and health. The World Bank has supported the Government of Uruguay to put in place a consultative process as a means to creating an open and public discussion with civil society organizations on reform policy design and implementation. The process is articulated using several tools at two levels. First, the initiative has supported the government in the preparation of a background document that describes the reforms, their goals and expected impacts. Second, a consultation process has been designed to include feedback from civil society on the reform strategy and a monitoring plan to track final goals at the regional and national levels. So far the consultative process has provided useful information to both government and CSOs on: 1) the degree of coverage of social protection programs (and any overlaps or duplications); 2) the degree of coordination between central and departmental administrations; and 3) the efficiency of public spending on these programs.

III. Analysis of Empowerment Elements

a. Access to Information

Reliable, consistent and decipherable information proves one of the basic “raw materials” required to generate empowerment towards accountability. The availability and access of credible information is essential to appropriate decision-making and effective monitoring of public policy. As the “checks and balances” of public administration have begun to incorporate its beneficiaries, namely citizens, into that process, the issue of information has taken on a different dimension. The type and sources of information, as well as the methods and medium through which they are presented, prove all the more critical for this diverse audience. In order to fulfill their responsibilities for ensuring accountability, citizens require adequate data to make informed decisions. Empowerment, therefore, implies not only the right and value given to one’s opinion and engagement, but also the tools to fulfill that obligation.

In each of the five models of social accountability presented, ensuring the availability and/or access to credible and relevant data proved fundamental to implementing the programs. In terms of availability, several of the programs seek to generate relevant data by focusing on user-based sources of information. Citizens are transformed into clients as the programs focused on measuring and ensuring the satisfaction of the intended beneficiaries of social programs. In Argentina, for example, both the Social Monitor and the Citizen Report Card programs include components of data collection by independent sources of the opinions, comments and recommendations of citizens regarding the quality and performance of public services. In the case of Peru, Uruguay and Bolivia, civil society provides the inputs to shape the development of public action plans. Participatory dialogues, namely the *Mesas de Concertación* in Peru, consultations around Bank lending operations in Uruguay, and consensus-building workshops of municipal stakeholders in Bolivia, serve as the basis for the development of governmental agendas. In addition to the workshops in Bolivia, new systems of local data collection are being promoted with the use of survey software with Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). This method allows for greater breadth and depth of data collection at reduced costs. By focusing on the end users, government programs can be more clearly targeted to the needs and priorities of citizens. These new models incorporated civil society both as the source of information and facilitator of data collection to give greater voice to those directly affected by government programs.

Access to information, or more specifically the ability to obtain relevant data in a user-friendly, non-cost inhibitive and objective manner, proved another critical component that was incorporated into all of the five models discussed. As one of its principal roles in these processes, civil society organizations have facilitated the dissemination of information to the general public. The creation of the Civil Society Unit, under the Citizens Charters program in Argentina for example, has facilitated information exchanges among key stakeholders through various forums of dialogue. In addition, the Charters have included a summary of all pertinent information regarding public services, including objectives, mission statements, services provided, standards, as well as expected improvements to

provide concise and digestible information to the direct beneficiaries. The media also has taken a more active role in promoting the empowerment of citizens. Both under the Social Monitor program in Argentina and the consultations in Uruguay, the professional media has provided a far-reaching medium to convey the activities of these programs and generate awareness and further engage the larger civil society in these processes. Another important feature included in some of the models has been the development of more user-friendly channels of information. Under the Peruvian model, an internet accessible window of the Financial Integrated Monitoring System (SIAF – *Sistema Integrado de Administración Financiera*) was developed to provide budget information to all levels of government as well as civil society organizations⁶. Likewise in Bolivia, the transmission of the data collected at the local level to a comprehensible and accessible format for both municipal officials and citizens alike proves critical to its usefulness. As such, the program has explored alternative sources for the distribution of information, including local newspapers, radio and community assemblies.

b. Participation/Inclusion

The prospect for empowerment relies on the foundation of participation and inclusion. Through greater and more effective civic engagement, citizens recognize their own capacity, value and potential to shape actions and activities that directly affect their lives. Particularly among the poor, participation and inclusion can transform helplessness to hopefulness, as citizens become protagonists in their own development. Civic empowerment throughout the public decision-making process is a constant reflection of the needs and will of the people. With greater commitment and ownership comes greater responsibility and obligations to perform competently. The five models presented demonstrate mechanisms for effective civic engagement through the *coordination, information/input and responsibilities* of civil society that provide concrete benefits both to citizens and government agencies/entities alike.

As civil society identifies an extremely heterogeneous group, with differing priorities, capacities and interests, effective participation and inclusion rely on *well-coordinated and structured mechanisms of engagement*. The example of the *Mesas de Concertación* in Peru provides a clear, concrete and cohesive method not only to express the voice of numerous actors *within* civil society, but also to create a forum for dialogue *among* the various stakeholders. In addition, the expansiveness of the *mesas*, with over 1,000 throughout the country and growing, provides a consistent and more formalized mechanism for participation with the expectation of consensus-building.

Likewise, the concept of inclusion clearly shaped the nature of the models developed in Argentina. Both programs established entities that sought to *respond specifically to the diversity of interests represented by civil society*. The Civil Society Unit established under the Citizen Charters program provided a mechanism for the inclusion of civil society groups. Likewise, the coalition of 56 civil society organizations that formed the Social Monitor was a deliberate effort to incorporate the wide range of interests in civil society under a consolidated and collaborative entity.

⁶ For more information, see <http://www.mef.gob.pe>

The consultation process in Uruguay surrounding the Structural Adjustment Loans (SAL) proved a more targeted mechanism for participation. Citizen participation served specific objectives to *provide information for analysis and design* of reform proposals and public policies. Nonetheless, its effectiveness stemmed from its well-coordinated implementation with the government, key agencies of international cooperation and the diversity of civil society actors. The consultations provided critical information for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of reform policies at a punctual point in time.

In the case of Bolivia, participation and inclusion was formalized, not through the creation of a coordinating body, but rather through the process itself. The right to information has been faced with the nascent formation of information systems. To meet this gap, civil society has *complemented this right with increased responsibility*. Civic engagement has been integrated into the process of data collection and analysis, identification of targets for public policy actions, and linking results orientation to resource allocation.

c. Accountability

Accountability means holding public officials, private employers, or service providers responsible for performance of their policies, actions, and use of funds measured as objectively as possible.⁷ This involves both answerability, the obligation to inform and provide explanations; and enforcement, the capacity to impose sanctions where public power has been abused or ill-used.⁸ Accountability can be political (through elections), administrative (exercised between agencies), or social or public (between agencies and citizens). The five initiatives analyzed here introduced various forms of social accountability to further the empowerment of citizens, particularly those with the least resources, as well as the improvement of basic services. Corruption and inefficiencies generally hurt poor people the most, because they are the least likely to have access to officials or to alternative private services when public ones are not available or function poorly.

Accountability is often at the center of demands for increased access to information and participation of civil society, particularly in those countries where political systems are widely discredited or perceived to be controlled by dominant groups. Empowering civil society organizations to hold their governments and public agencies accountable can reinforce existing structures of accountability: vertical (elections) and horizontal (among agencies and officials). It can also create new successful accountability mechanisms to pressure agencies to do their job effectively through processes that are society-driven. For instance, direct monitoring and pressure from civil society actors on particular issues or services increases the frequency and clarity of signals that citizens send to public officials, thereby improving the quality of outputs.

To this end, users' evaluation scorecards are increasingly being introduced and piloted, particularly as a way of measuring progress towards stated goals to improve services. Citizen report

⁷ Paul, Samuel (1992) "Accountability in Public Services: Exit, Voice and Control," *World Development*, Vol. 20, No. 7, pp.1047-1060.

⁸ See: John Ackerman (2003), *State-Society Synergy for Accountability: Lessons for the World Bank*, World Bank: Washington DC. Draft Paper.

cards are one of the key elements to the *Cartas Compromiso* program in Argentina. It allows for an in-depth analysis and stock-taking of current social services and may provide leads as to how they can be improved effectively. In some cases, such as in Uruguay, social accountability mechanisms are seen as the natural next step to the consultation process. Consultation processes also can be used to identify an important number of CSOs interested in engaging in future social accountability programs.

In addition to the external pressures from below through users' feedback, civil society involvement also can strengthen the effectiveness of accountability within state agencies. For instance, it is of fundamental importance that the causes for complaints from users/citizens are investigated and corrected in order to both encourage public confidence and to ensure the sustainability of programs. In Argentina, this entailed the creation of a "hotline" to field allegations of corruption or malfunctioning services, as in the *Monitor Social* and the *Cartas Compromiso*. Nonetheless, to correct and improve the relationship between service providers and beneficiaries, a culture shift, focusing more directly towards its users, is often needed within the agencies. At the same time, civil society needs to be informed of the existence of such programs in order to play an active role.

In order to add pressure from outside and reinforce existing control mechanisms within the state, civil society organizations often need technical capacity to engage in participatory processes and contribute to the enforcement of public commitments. Workshops directed at networks of CSOs and aimed at sharing local and international experiences of social accountability have been part and parcel of the *Monitor Social* in Argentina, for example. In Bolivia, capacity building on participatory budgeting and planning was carried out in parallel to the selection of municipal indicators, in a hands-on approach (for more on capacity building, see next section).

Finally, a central pillar to an effective social accountability mechanism is its institutionalization. The results of increased transparency, participation and accountability will only prove effective if mechanisms are continuously enforced and sustained. For the popular participation approach to municipal planning in Bolivia to be effective and sustainable over time, the budgeting process needs to be modified to ensure that resource allocations are directly related to specific results targets, and that these are set by the community at the local level. In Peru, processes to facilitate civic engagement have been institutionalized through changes in the legal frameworks, the creation of a public expenditure management information system and the launching of a pilot monitoring and accountability program supervised by the Ombudsman, among others.

d. Capacity

Capacity broadly refers to the ability of social groups to work together, organize themselves, create partnerships and acquire the necessary technical knowledge to solve problems of common interest or interact with others, particularly public officials and organizations, to advance a given agenda. Capable and organized groups are more likely to have their voices heard and their interests well-articulated. Additionally, partnerships between a diverse set of public, private and civil society actors –as explored in the initiatives presented here– require capacity-building for sustainability and ownership.

Multilateral agencies, including the World Bank, have played a key role in training both CSOs and governments on specific tools and instruments for social accountability, information and dissemination campaigns and participatory processes. Examples include a variety of participatory evaluation tools (such as users' report cards), participatory budgeting, preparation and dissemination of policy documents, national and regional consultative processes, performance-based data collection, and others. Many of the initiatives discussed here included participatory mechanisms that require the capacity of CSOs and even government agencies to carry out surveys, interviews, workshops and observations in order to verify the use of assigned resources and to evaluate the quality of outcomes. The pilot program for setting targets and evaluating outcomes at the municipal level in Bolivia is a case in point, where the use of indicators to monitor progress in poverty reduction as well as of specific software and hardware to collect data is potentially replicable to all municipalities in the country, given appropriate levels of funding and political commitment.

Another important area for capacity-building is through networking and coalition building. Several of the initiatives have featured forums, workshops and informal meetings where a variety of actors converged to discuss the design and execution of activities. This has contributed to a socialization process, by sharing best practices pursued by different organizations under different contexts to overcome similar problems. At the same time, opportunities for coalition building such as these can foster horizontal synergies among actors by allowing them to engage in common strategies, reduce vulnerabilities and grow in terms of reach and audience. The consultations carried out in Uruguay revealed the diversity of social actors and their lack of horizontal articulation. Some of the CSOs that took part in these activities proposed to set up NGO networks that could play an important role in terms of collecting local information relevant for policy making. Such networks, as in the case of the Social Monitor, can potentially help to identify overlapping authority problems and lack of territorial coordination at the different levels.

A final word of caution in relation to capacity-building, particularly for CSOs, is related to the fact that such activities often lag behind the introduction of legal changes. This became evident in the case of decentralization in Peru, where swift legal changes outpaced the corresponding need to develop human and technical capacity to assume new responsibilities for participatory public management at the regional and local levels. As such, it is important that such gaps be considered and addressed appropriately.

IV. Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

While each of the five models presented unique difficulties, certain challenges were found in common. The programs have suggested different methods to address and overcome these obstacles, creating new opportunities for social accountability.

One of the common challenges faced not only by all of the cases described, but more generally in processes of empowerment, is the **complexity in the representation of civil society**. The term *civil*

society assumes a wide range of actors with a diversity of interests. Civil society encompasses entities that represent an array of sectors from academic to technical to religious to grassroots, just to name a few. Their constituencies, objectives and methods often vary greatly. As such, coordinating the efforts of this amorphous, diverse entity known as civil society proves a real challenge.

Different models have approached this issue differently. Under the Social Monitor program in Argentina, the consortium of CSOs serves to coordinate the voice of civil society. Through the coalition, the member organizations assume responsibilities that often extend beyond their traditional constituencies and individual agendas. The representatives of the consortium then serve as the primary interlocutors with other key stakeholders, particularly the government.

Another way in which this challenge is addressed is by identifying a formal entity through which the various interests of civil society are channeled. Such is the case with the Civil Society Unit under the Citizen Charters program in Argentina and civil society representation in the *Mesas de Concertación* in Peru. These groups serve as the conduits of information between the larger civil society and other stakeholders.

Finally, the models in Uruguay and Bolivia offer yet another mechanism to overcome this challenge. These cases rely on a participatory process, rather than a particular instrument or entity to represent the interests of civil society. By engaging with civil society more broadly at the local level, particularly through consultations, their needs and opinions are conveyed directly to relevant decision makers.

At the same time, numerous **weaknesses in the capacity of civil society** limit their ability to assume fully often newly-realized rights and responsibilities. Although concerted efforts have been taken to develop the capacity of civil society in its various manifestations, the high learning curve to stimulate effective civic participation often cannot meet the demands of the timeline posed for organized civic action. This has been particularly true in Peru, as the rapid decentralization process has far outpaced the capacity-building efforts. This knowledge gap, then, results in a disinclination to engage actively and effectively in their new spheres of influence. In addition, there persists a level of distrust toward multilateral organizations and State structures that impedes or deters civic action. Also, there often remains a considerable degree of competition and rivalry among CSOs. Such changes in attitudes require time coupled with positive new experiences to evolve.

Nonetheless, in each of the models presented, significant investments have been made in the capacity-building of civil society organizations and government officials alike in issues of social accountability. Both actors are unaccustomed to the rules of participatory engagement. The World Bank, in particular, has dedicated, and likely will continue to dedicate, notable resources to strengthening the capacity of a wide range of stakeholders. At the same time, it should be noted that as Bank lending instruments do not often allocate sufficient resources specifically for capacity building, such initiatives rely on securing additional grant funds. As such, leveraging funds for this invaluable activity has proven challenging. Consequently, further consideration should be given as to how the Bank can better respond to the continuing and growing need for support to capacity building and pilot initiatives.

On-going evaluations are critical to distill best practices and adjust programs given the different institutional, political, economic and social contexts. Evaluations also serve as a valuable tool to deepen transparency and build trust among the various actors. Such far-sighted investments specifically address a common concern of CSOs that long-term problems cannot be solved through short-term interventions. The World Bank can play a particularly useful role in consolidating and sharing lessons learned and best practices across countries and regions to accelerate the process.

Many uncertainties remain regarding the will, capacity and resources to incorporate citizens into the processes of public management and monitoring. The concerted participation of civil society in public decision-making disrupts the balance of power relationships developed through history. The tensions arising from initiatives that aim to empower the poor need to be addressed carefully. Lack of flexibility to adjust and/or amend operational structures or procedures can lead to failure or greater conflict. At the same time, it must be noted that governments in the region have made great strides forward in establishing the institutional frameworks for the incorporation of civil society in the formulation and evaluation of public policy. Now the key next step will be to translate those structural foundations into operational procedures that are sustainable over time.

Information dissemination is key to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of programs, be it around consultations with civil society, data collection at the municipal level, social accountability mechanisms or participatory budgeting programs. Disseminating international best practices and experiences can help to build consensus and support for all these activities.

As previously outlined (See Section II, B—*Access to Information*), access to information remains a critical component of each of the five empowerment models presented. Bridging the gap of information also often implies responding to disparities in access and opportunities to technology and educational flows.

Strengthening strategic partnerships, among civil society actors and between civil society and government, can contribute to improving the quality and credibility of public administration. Good governance and democracy are increasingly perceived in many countries of the region as dependent on the reduction of inequalities and the maintenance of public confidence. The initiatives

Social Accountability During Crises

Social control and accountability are increasingly coming to the forefront of the governance agenda as an empowering element, particularly in situations of economic crisis and social unrest. The case of Argentina is one in point: during the turmoil of the last year, allegations that the emergency programs designed to face the unmet social needs were being distributed on a discretionary basis eroded the government's credibility and perceptions of its commitment to respond in a timely manner to the crisis. Accountability is often expected to contribute towards restoring the level of confidence in the public administration and to increasing effectiveness of public policies.

discussed here seek to ensure that the concept, design and implementation of public programs and projects are carried out through management processes that involve a variety of actors, including civil society and government, as well as public agencies, the private sector and multilateral institutions.

The World Bank, and other multilateral organizations, can play an important convening and facilitating role. Analytical work and capacity-building exercises can lead to important political dialogues. Additionally, the Bank and other donors can mobilize resources outside national budgets to build the capacity of poor people and citizens to enable their participation in public policies.

The forms of civic empowerment described in the cases presented provide clear opportunities for the development of strategic alliances. For example, through the creation of the coalition of CSOs under the Social Monitor program in Argentina, valuable relationships are being forged among CSOs, which will result in a cadre of organizations with the specific technical skills to implement similar types of programs in the future. In addition, these same organizations can serve as trainers to replicate the experience among other CSOs.

V. Conclusions

As stated at the onset of this article, each of the initiatives described was developed in conjunction with World Bank programmatic or adjustment loans. Contrary to common perceptions about such lending instruments, these empowerment-related activities have encouraged greater consensus-building with civil society through increased access to information, participation and inclusion, social accountability and capacity-building. These tools of civic engagement have served as useful resources to coordinate public opinion and action towards effective public management. Yet many challenges remain on many sides, including in the development of a well-articulated civil society to meet the needs and demands of burgeoning democratic societies. Towards this end, the World Bank can play an important facilitating role in promoting transparency, supporting results-based management and strengthening capacity to yield positive poverty reduction outcomes.

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World Bank Participation Page - <http://www.worldbank.org/participation/>

Annex 1: Specific activities carried out in each initiative

Argentina: Cartas Compromiso

Objective	Activity carried out	Next steps
Improving the dissemination of the program	Creation of a hotline service, email address and website	
Strengthening civil society participation	July 2002 Workshop on participation and consultation processes, stakeholder analysis and information campaigns	
Piloting a system of report cards	November 2002 Workshop on report cards and focus groups	Piloting of report cards in two agencies: ANSES and SSS

Argentina: Social Monitor

Objective	Activity carried out	Next steps
Sharing experiences on social accountability	April 2001 workshop on "Participatory Public Management"	
Setting up the Social Monitor through coalitions of CSOs	July 2002 tenders were solicited and by December 2002 El Foro del Sector Social was chosen	During 2003 Social Monitor is being piloted for 6-18 months
Providing Capacity Building	WB and IDB have supported a Capacity Program on Social Accountability for 630 CSOs	

Bolivia: Monitoring and Evaluation at the Municipal Level

Objective	Activity carried out	Next steps
Establishing a participatory approach to target setting and develop a data collection methodology	June 2003 Workshop to discuss the pilot program and the information needs including indicators	A survey with two modules will be prepared and software and hardware training given to collect data
Establishing a participatory approach to link public policy actions with targets		Training on simulation tools and work with municipalities to develop strategies to achieve 2-3 targets
Promoting user-friendly information sources		Developing alternative sources of information dissemination, including local newspapers, radio and community assemblies

Peru: System of Social Accountability

Objective	Activity carried out	Next steps
Multi-stakeholder roundtables	Created in January 2001, to date there are 1,024 of them	
Formulation of national development goals	National Agreement was reached early 2002	Monitoring benchmarks are being developed
Decentralization	Formulation of concerted plans and budgets in 22 of 24 regions (40% participatory) included in 2003 budget.	

Uruguay: Consultations with Civil Society

Objective	Activity carried out	Next steps
Information dissemination	Preparation of a background document that describes the reforms, their goals and expected impacts	Events increasingly covered by the media (radio, newspapers and TV) featuring press conferences
Consultations with civil society and others to analyze their opinion on the pertinence of the reform proposals in the social protection and public services areas	Consultations at the national level were launched in Montevideo on October 4, 2002. On November 29, 2002, a second meeting was carried out in Paysandú. On May 17, 2003, another consultation was carried out in Florida city	Several additional meetings are currently taking place in the center, south and east regions of the country.
To design a monitoring system of selected indicators that tracks whether or not program goals have been attained at the regional and national level.		A social accountability mechanism program following the completion of the ongoing consultations may be undertaken.

Community Driven Development Approaches in Natural Resources Management Projects: Lessons from Guatemala and Honduras

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Abstract

Traditionally, many societies of Central America formed relatively closed social systems fully rooted in the local cultures, as part of a scheme of influences and roles between the human inhabitants and the environment known as *holistic systems*.¹ Rural communities tended to establish themselves around a body of natural resources they could manage together, guaranteeing the cohesion and sustainability of the systems. In other words, in many traditional societies natural resource management (NRM) and the social life naturally were interconnected. By the 1970s, greater recognition was given to the strong social, cultural and economic dimensions of NRM problems, and consequently their solutions. This, in turn, stimulated the development of new approaches, such as community-based NRM. Since then, further experience has

demonstrated the importance of participatory NRM methods. With the rise of Community Driven Development (CDD) programs for rural development and poverty alleviation, CDD approaches are now also being applied to Natural Resources Management projects. This article summarizes the findings and lessons learned through a field study on CDD approaches used in NRM projects under implementation in the western highlands region of Guatemala and Honduras. The study results show that community-based approaches can support the generation of economic and social benefits, when CBOs are the organizational focus of the projects. Working with and through CBOs is, in fact, an effective way to increase public participation in decision making as the CBOs are demonstrably involved in local development issues.

I. Introduction

The study was carried out to determine if there was any evidence that CDD approaches achieve improved natural resources management as well as poverty reduction objectives in areas with similar socioeconomic conditions in Guatemala and Honduras. This work was conducted to support the preparatory work of a project in Guatemala's western highlands.² The study also sought to identify lessons learned that might be useful to scale up CDD experiences.

Participatory processes, such as the engagement of CBOs in public management or oversight, involve complex social changes, for which both quantitative and qualitative indicators are necessary

¹ Borrini-Feyerabend G, Taghi Farvar M., Nguingui J.C, Ndongang V. A.: "*Co-management of Natural Resources. Organizing, Negotiating and Learning by doing*" GTZ, Heidelberg, 2000.

² The board approved the Western Altiplano Natural Resources Management project on May 27, 2003. The project aims to improve the management and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, and the income of the people who depends upon these resources.

to provide a complete understanding of reality. In this study, the identification of qualitative indicators — for the evaluation of a series of intangible or non-income generation activities (such as participants' perception of subprojects' results) — was utilized as a tool to determine the nature of participation and how it took place. Together with the development of qualitative indicators, common characteristics, based on the literature review of the CDD project, were considered in developing the selection criteria.

CDD can be defined as *a process by which community groups organize and take actions to achieve their common goals, in the context of an enabling environment with support from responsive institutions (private, local governments, national agency, etc.).*³ The types of small-scale projects supported by CDD programs are defined as community-based, because of their focus on local priorities and involvement of local community members at all stages of project preparation and implementation. While there are many different models of CDD, they all share certain inputs and goals. They focus on local groups, organizations, and associations generally defined as Community-Based Organization (CBOs), which are recognized and driven by the community. Some examples of the types of activities engaged in by the CBOs are explained in Boxes 1 and 2.

The size and the scope of a CBO can vary considerably. They can be generally identified as geographical entities, such as urban neighborhoods or rural villages or groups with common interests, for instance, water users' associations or women's groups. Once these groups have been formed, they typically work in partnership with the support of other organizations and service providers (local governments, private sector or NGOs) to develop and implement projects that focus on their field of interest.⁵ In some cases, these groups also manage and are responsible for the allocation of project resources. Their contribution to the project takes the form of labor, material, or cash. In other cases, community groups are involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Box 1: AMEDIPK, Santa Eulalia, Guatemala

The women's group of Santa Eulalia is taking full advantage of the state incentives to reforest municipal land. The group agrees with the municipalities of the surrounding areas on a reforestation plan. The applications for financing for the women's group are prepared and presented by four technicians, who also supervise the reforestation practices. As part of their group's activities, the women of Santa Eulalia work together to reforest the designated areas. Their services are paid by the *alcaldías*, as part of the municipality's five-year reforestation plan. With the revenue from their reforestation project, the women's group has been able to gather its own capital to build a training center.⁴ The training center will serve as a new source of income for the group members, creating new jobs as well as opportunities to access capacity building programs for the community.

³ World Bank: "Who we are, Community Driven Development (Draft for discussion)", 4 April 2000 in www.worldbank.org/participation/CDDprinciples.htm

⁴ Additional support was received through the state funds for infrastructure.

⁵ World Bank (2002), "Tools and Practices 9: Community Driven Development" in *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 209.

The study of the CDD project was designed to provide representative geographic coverage in Guatemala and Honduras. It was divided into two steps: (i) an initial literature review of participatory methods and CDD experiences from the World Bank and other international organizations; and (ii) field research conducted in the western highlands of Guatemala and in western region of Honduras. This study identifies three major categories where lessons have been learned in terms of: i) natural resources management, ii) socio-economic benefits, and iii) improved governance.

Box 2: New Opportunities through Old Traditions, El Roblar, Honduras

Doña Clementina leads a women's group in El Roblar. The women's group has learned to cultivate medicinal plants, their benefits, their processing cycle, and a bit about commercialization. Now they are trying to share their knowledge with women from other communities, so that they also can cure their families when needed, as well as sell new products in the local markets. During the group's visits to other communities, Doña Clementina and the other members often face the resistance and disbelief of skeptical people who think these remedies are derived from witchcraft. In response Doña Clementina has said, "They have a bad impression that these things are witchcraft, so we tell them parables from the Bible; these are all natural things, and can heal a person with their own resources."

II. Methodology and sample selection

The study, conducted between April and December 2002, focused on natural resources management projects or projects with NRM components. The main agencies considered were international organizations (IO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the western regions of Guatemala and Honduras.⁶

Taking into account the similarities between ongoing projects in Honduras and in Guatemala, a literature review was conducted to distill the main lessons learned and generate preliminary indicators to be tested in the field.

Based on the literature review, criteria were developed and used during field visits to selected projects. Only community subprojects in place for at least a year that had been developed and implemented using CDD approaches were considered. The study employed a mixed methodological approach, using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. (See Annex 1)

After selecting these projects according to the criteria described above, interviews with project coordinators and teams were carried out, with special attention to their participatory approach. From the eight projects (See Table 1), thirty sites (subprojects) were chosen randomly (See Annex 2). Taking

⁶ The research explicitly excludes World Bank financed projects, as a mean to explore lessons from other institutions, which can be applicable to Bank operations.

into consideration time and logistical constraints, site visits were made to a representative sample of twenty subprojects (i.e. 67 percent of the universe of subprojects) (See Table 2).

Table 1. List of Selected Projects in Guatemala and Honduras

Projects	Funding Agency
<i>Guatemala</i>	
1 PROAGI	CARE
2 MIBOSQUE	CARE
3 PCET	CECI
4 PROBOSQUE	HELVETAS
5 PPD	PNUD
6 PROCUCH	Dutch Cooperation
<i>Honduras</i>	
7 Lempira sur	Dutch Coop/FAO/Gov of Honduras
8 Cuenca del Río Choluteca	USAID

Subsequently, initial field visits were carried out to verify the criteria developed from the literature review with local actors and to validate the selection of eight different CDD projects with dual poverty reduction and improved NRM objectives.

The information collected was then organized and analyzed in order to draw preliminary conclusions. A subsequent set of assumptions was developed, and a second series of field visits carried out to the same projects in order to verify the information and assumptions. Findings from both sets of field visits were organized in order to analyze perceptions⁷ about the impacts of the subprojects in terms of improved local organization and problem solving, obtaining economic benefits and achieving natural resources management results.

Among the NRM portfolio, the subprojects reviewed were organized in three main categories:

- Type 1. Projects addressing NRM objectives only; e.g., conservation and reforestation projects.
- Type 2. Projects addressing the dual objectives of NRM and rural well-being improvement.
- Type 3. Projects implicitly addressing these dual objectives but for which a rural development objective dominates.

⁷ Perception was used as an indicator to detect outcomes applicable to the projects considered in this study and that had different recording data systems. This set of indicators documents the positive or negative perceptions of the results achieved thus far at the economic, environmental and organizational level, and their view towards the future. Recording the change in perceptions helps to indicate an on-going process towards attitude and, in the long run, behavioral change.

Table 2. List of Subprojects Visited

Project	Community Group	Subprojects studied
Guatemala		
1. PROAGI	Corinto	Organic Agriculture
2. MIBOSQUE	Tejutla	Reforestation/agro forestry
3. PCET	Montebello	Organic agriculture/reforestation
4. PROBOSQUE	San Martín	Eco-tourism
	Cantel	NRM/institutional strengthening
5. PPD	San Vicente 1	Orchards
	San Vicente 2	Reforestation
	Tacaná	Organic agriculture/ reforestation
6. PROCUCH	Santa Eulalia	Reforestation /training
	Paquixenia	Organic Agriculture
Honduras		
7. Lempira Sur	San Matías	Agro forestry
	Agua Caliente	Watershed management
	La Londra	School camp/soil conservation
	El Roblar 1	Organic agric/Small business
	El Roblar 2	Orchards /Small business
	Campara	Agro forestry
	El rodeo	Agro forestry
	Tomala	School camp/soil conservation
8. Cuenca del Río Choluteca	Moroceli' 1	Watershed cons
	Moroceli 2	Organic coffee

The conclusions drawn from the information collected and presented in this article are empirical. They seek to generate discussion and new hypotheses relevant for scaling up and replication of CDD approaches to achieve the dual objectives of rural poverty reduction and NRM.

III. Findings

The qualitative study, in both countries, revealed that the respondents considered subprojects adopting the CDD approach as successful in terms of enhancing economic, environmental and organizational results (See Tables 3-4 below).

Among the people interviewed during the field studies concerning the organizational strengthening and its future:

- 38 percent regarded their organizations as considerably strengthened by the project actions, and they are confident that they will continue performing fruitfully in the future.
- 49 percent considered the organization sound and confident in its future functioning.
- Only 1 percent of the interviewed did not register any significant results. None of the CBOs member expected their organization to fail after the project that sponsored it had finished.

With regards to environmental outputs:

- 9 percent considered the project fully successful in improving NRM.
- 81 percent were overall satisfied of their acquired or modified system of managing natural resources. This result reflects increased environmental awareness among subprojects.
- 13 percent did not notice any substantial change.

Economic outputs were quite different depending on the project type:

- 23 percent of the respondents could register a profitable change in their economic situation.
- 49 percent noticed an improvement, but could not exactly define or quantify in what terms.
- 27 percent noticed only a negligible variation.

A. Analysis of subprojects' performance

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate CBO members' responses to subproject results in terms of institutional strengthening in both systems of resource distribution.⁸ In both cases, there has been a positive impact on organizational strengthening. A more remarkable result appears in the case of revolving funds. This result reflects participants' greater sense of ownership as CBO members, since they contributed with personal resources to the group's capital and activities.

Tables 3-4. CBO members' response to organizational, economic and environmental subprojects results

Table 3: Direct payment & Technical support

	Subprojects	Organizational Strengthening	Environmental Results	Economic Results
Type 1	San Martin	2	2	1
	Cantel	2	1	1
	Santa Eulalia	2	2	2
	San Vicente	2	3	1
Type 2	Paquixenia	3	2	2
	San Vicente	2	2	2
Type 3	Tacana'	3	2	2
Average		2,28	2	1,57

⁸ In general terms the projects have similar structural characteristics, with the exception of systems of financial resource distribution. In some cases, the project administrators and CBOs agreed with the civil society representatives of other implementing agencies on the percentages of direct payments (grants) in order to allow the CBO to implement its subproject (direct payment). In other cases, the project administrators provided the CBO with materials (seeds, fertilizers, etc.) to be sold among its members. The revenue collected become the group capital and can be used to finance group new subprojects/ activities (Revolving Fund).

Table 4: Revolving fund & Technical support

	Subprojects	Organizational Strengthening	Environmental Results	Economic Results
Type 1				
	Tejutla	2	2	1
	San Matías	3	2	2
	Agua Caliente	3	2	2
	Moroceli	2	2	1
Type 2				
	Montebello	2	2	2
	Moroceli'2	2	2	2
	Tomala	2	2	1
Type 3				
	Corinto	3	2	3
	La Londra	3	1	3
	El Roblar 1	2	2	2
	El Roblar 2	3	2	3
	Campara	2	2	2
	El Rodeo	2	2	3
Average		2,38	1.9	2,0

Scoring system: 0= very bad (decline), 1= bad (stable), 2 good (improvement), 3 very good (significant improvement).

The economic and environmental outputs, according to CBOs' view, were higher in projects addressing both objectives of NRM and rural development, combined (type 3) with revolving funds mechanisms (group B). When considering this particular type of activity (group B, type 3), it seemed that participants perceived economic changes as having a positive effect on the environment, as well as on the broader issue of poverty reduction.

In the case of subprojects Type 1 (NRM only), all the activities involved more than one community and, in some cases, the whole municipality. In this type of subproject, a social agreement was reached, by which community members invested extra time and their own resources without expecting additional retribution, as in San Vicente or Agua Caliente, where the final goal was to preserve watersheds and to assure a provision of water. Some of the reasons why perceptions on the economic performance of certain subprojects seemed to be less significant can be attributed to the fact that: (i) reforestation/ conservation programs have an impact in the long term; and (ii) natural resources still have a relatively low economic value, and associated with this, the low value people give to the degradation of the available natural resources.

The overall perception of subproject performance can be affected in certain cases by collateral problems that arise during the implementation. One of the most common obstacles reported has been the issue of land tenure and problems related to it, such as land demarcation and conflicts over resources.

B. Observations

During the semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups, a number of interesting observations were made that were not of direct consequence to the narrower study questions, but which are worth mentioning here:

- 70 percent of the CBOs considered in the selected sample are formally established. They participate actively in the municipal development plan and tend to work well with the local government. This collaboration appears to be the result of two complementing factors. First of all, in the process of gaining legal status and in the implementation of development plans, CBOs came to be known and recognized by the local government. Second, through the training activities and organizational meetings, CBOs not only gained new skills, but also increased their self-confidence.
- An established practice for most CBOs is to visit other successful CBO activities within the same or different communities/municipalities, to allow people to see for themselves what can be achieved and how to achieve it. This has proven an effective and efficient way not only to share knowledge and experiences, but also to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit of the CBOs. According to participants, such exchanges stimulate a positive change in social attitudes. People become more interactive, collaborative and optimistic towards their own CBO's future activities.
- All CBOs were active in networking and knowledge and information sharing among municipalities and communities. This practice has created initiatives for inter-municipality learning tools, such as investigation and training groups. Investigation groups are created based upon interest of CBOs' participants. Although there are no fixed norms for the establishment of these groups, they often develop through informal gatherings, such as community meetings or celebrations.
- CBOs are often treated as non-stratified entities with uniform interests, rather than as a network of micro-power relations contextualized and differentiated along lines of gender, age, wealth, status, etc.

IV. Lessons learned

The most significant lessons learned from the experiences of the projects visited can be summarized as follows:

- Representative CBOs provide a forum for mainstreaming members' needs and opportunities.
- Investing in local organizational capacity has proven to be an essential instrument to promote entrepreneurship.
- Projects aiming to achieve NRM goals have been perceived as successful when they address the lack of basic services (water supply, sanitation, etc.) or when they provide a non- traditional, concrete source of income in the short term (i.e. resin collection and marketing).
- Revolving funds have increased CBO members' sense of ownership and participation; as such, they serve as important means for enhancing empowerment.

V. Conclusions

The study results show that community-based approaches can support the generation of economic and social benefits, when CBOs are the organizational focus of the projects. Working with and through CBOs is, in fact, an effective way to increase public participation in decision- making, as the CBOs are demonstrably involved in local development issues.

The study also implies that CDD practices can promote progress in terms of achieving enhanced civil society participation and better governance:

- (i) Through community planning of income-generating natural resource management activities and improved yields of their products, CBOs were able to raise funds and contribute to the construction of roads, school and other public buildings.
- (ii) As a result of the community assemblies that are being held on a regular basis, the represented groups play a significant role in decision-making regarding resource allocations and review expenditures. As a consequence, the transparency and dynamism of local leaders at the municipal level is increasing, and expectations for government performance are rising.
- (iii) Furthermore, youth and women are increasingly participating community decision-making.

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FAO: World Food Summit (five years later): <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsummit/spanish/newsroom/focus/focus7.htm>

Eldis on participation matters: <http://www.eldis.org/participation>

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World Research Institute: <http://www.wri.org/>

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World Bank on Participation: <http://www.worldbank.org/participation/>

The World Conservation Union on Community Based case studies (lessons learned): <http://www.iucn.org/themes/pmns/community/lessons.html>

Ashoka Trust for research in Ecology and Environment (on local communities and NR conservation): <http://www.atree.org/livelihoods.htm>

Annex 1. List of main indicators

Main Indicators	Main variables/questions
Production NRM	Increase in productivity (Qq/Ha) Percentage of land conserved (Ha) New productive activities (Has the group started any new activity a part from the project ones activities not directly related with the projects objectives, or productive objectives?. E.g. construction of road, schools, theatre groups, etc....)
Participation/empowerment	Participation to activities (training, field, planning) Women participating (how many women are part of the CBOs and what is their role?) Meeting frequency (weekly, monthly) Relation with Municipality Group undertaken independent actions
Organization	Group status (formal or informally established) Group decision-making system (majority vote, decisional committee, Unanimity Organizational level (how is the group organized?) Managing capacity
Perception	Perception on organization strengthening Perception of economic results Perception of environmental results

Annex 2. Project Universe

Project	Community	Association/ group	Subproject	Organization	Department
Guatemala					
PROAGI (Agriculture Project)	Corinto	Grupo de tomate	Organic agriculture	CARE	Huehuetenango
	Corinto	Aves	poultry	CARE*	Huehuetenango
MIBOSQUE (My forest)	Tejutla	Grupo comunitario de productores	Reforestation/agro forestry	CARE	San Marcos
	Tejutla	Grupo de productores	Green houses/organic agriculture	CARE*	San Marcos
PCET (Communities in Transition Project)	Barillas	ASOBAGRI	Organic coffee	CECI*	Huehuetenango
	Montebello	Comunidad de Montebello	Organic agriculture/ reforestation	CECI	Huehuetenango
	Barillas/Munic	Casa barillense de mujeres	Orchards / reforestation / training	CECI*	Huehuetenango
PROBOSQUE (Pro Forest)	San Martín	Dept.municipal de Cantel (DEP)	Eco-tourism	HELVETAS	Quetzaltenango
	Cantel		NRM/institutional strengthening	HELVETAS	Quetzaltenango
	Zunil	Dept.municipal de Zunil (DEP)	NRM/institutional strengthening	HELVETAS*	Quetzaltenango
PPD (Small Grant Program)	San Vincente	ASPARVI	Orchards	UNDP	Totonicapán
	Buenabaj	AIDECOP	Reforestation	UNDP	Totonicapán
	San Vincente Buenabaj Tacana'	El Quetzal	Organic agriculture/ reforestation	UNDP	San Marcos
PROCUCH (Sustainable Natural Resources Management in the Cuchumatanes Mountains Project)	San Eulalia	AMEDIPK	Reforestation /training	H Coop	Huehuetenango
	Chantla	Cooperativa Paquixenia	Organic Agriculture/	H Coop.	Huehuetenango
	San Juan	Flor Bacuense	Reforestation	H Coop*.	Huehuetenango
Honduras					
PROLESUR	San Matias	San Matias	Agro forestry	H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Campa
	Agua Blanca	Ass productores	Watershed management	H.copo/FAO*	Lempira/Campa
	Agua Caliente	Grupo de mujeres	Orchards	H.copo/FAO*	Lempira/Campa
	La londra	La londra	School camp/soil conservation	H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Gualcinse
	El Roblar	El Roblar	Organic agric/Micro empresa	H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Gualcinse
	El Roblar	Grupo de mujeres	Gardens/Micro empresa	H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Gualcinse
	Campara	Campara	Quetsungual/ agro forestry	H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Candelaria

	El rodeo Tomala'	El rodeo Tomala'	Agro forestry Institutional strength./ watershed	H.copo/FAO H.copo/FAO	Lempira/Virginia Lempira/Tomala'
Cuenca Choluteca	El Gallo	El Gallo	Reforestation/soil conservation	USAID/ Zamorano*	S. Antonio
	Moroceli'	Moroceli'	Watershed cons	USAID/ Zamorano	Moroceli'
	Hoya Grande	Hoya Grande	Organic coffee	USAID/ Zamorano	Moroceli'
	La Enea	La Enea	Organic agric/Micro empresa	USAID/ Zamorano*	Maraita

* Subprojects that were part of the project universe, but that for logistical reasons were not selected as part of the final sample. Field trips were carried out, but not validation of data.

The Experience in Honduras with Maintenance of Roads through Community-based Micro-enterprises

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Josef Trommer – World Bank – Washington, D.C.

Abstract

This paper assesses the role of community-based micro-enterprises (MEs) to undertake routine maintenance of roads under the 'Roads Maintenance Pilot Project', a component of the 'Honduras Road Reconstruction and Improvement Project' financed by the International Development Association (IDA).

The involvement of local communities through MEs has resulted in a cost effective and efficient strategy for road maintenance. There has also been broader poverty alleviation benefits: (i) creation of permanent and reliable sources of employment in poor areas, especially in rural areas; (ii) heightened community awareness of the need for sustainable development; (iii) development of entrepreneurial and organization

skills, which have empowered local communities to undertake other local development initiatives; and (iv) production of positive spillover effects into neighboring communities.

The first section of this paper provides background on the transport sector in Honduras. The second section describes the Pilot Project, while the third section addresses civil society participation and benefits from the Pilot Project. The fourth section deals with the challenges and risks involved in the participatory process. The fifth section outlines lessons learned from the experiences in Honduras that might be applied to other World Bank programs. The sixth and final section offers conclusions.

I. Background

Present-day Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. With an annual GNI (Gross Capital Income) per capita of US\$920 in 2002, nearly two-thirds of Hondurans live in poverty, and close to half are extremely poor¹. In 2001, Honduras launched an ambitious strategy to reduce poverty. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) stresses the importance of developing a comprehensive approach to improve access to productive assets, infrastructure, markets and technology for poor rural areas. The PRS also calls for the promotion of micro-enterprises as a mechanism for poverty reduction. Micro-enterprises generally tend to be more labor intensive than larger firms and, in addition, do more to stimulate sources of employment².

¹ World Bank; World Development Indicators 2002. The extreme poor are those living below poverty line, which is the cost of a food basket designed to meet basic nutritional needs.

² Road maintenance MEs are cooperative-type groupings of 11 of 15 members contracted by the government to carry out routine maintenance activities on approximately 50 km of road using basic tools. The members of the MEs are selected from communities along the road section to be maintained.

The Honduran transport sector, which was vulnerable from the outset, suffered unprecedented damage when Hurricane Mitch struck the country in October 1998. Nearly 70 percent of the road network was affected, while 112 bridges were either destroyed or severely damaged. The main road corridors suffered extensive damage to the point that Tegucigalpa and other towns were cut off from the rest of the country for several days. The effects of Mitch on infrastructure were even more pronounced in the already poorer rural areas, due to the extensive damage suffered by the secondary road network. A recent Household Survey indicated that 63 percent of people in the lowest income quintile have no access to transport and less than one-fourth use buses as the principal means of transportation.

Hurricane Mitch also exposed the deficient state of road maintenance services in Honduras. Routine road maintenance always had been inadequate, with only partial coverage of the road network. Maintenance was intermittent in some parts of the country, and only covered short periods of the year. These circumstances convinced the Government of the need to find alternatives to the existing deficient program of road maintenance and its financing. MEs have contributed to resolving the issue of routine road maintenance, while the creation and implementation of the Road Fund has resolved, to a large extent, the lack of funds for maintenance works. The Road Fund was created in the early 1990s as mechanism to ensure long-term financing for road maintenance in Honduras.³ A portion of the fuel tax is transferred to the Road Fund by the Minister of Finance to cover the maintenance contracts, including the MEs.

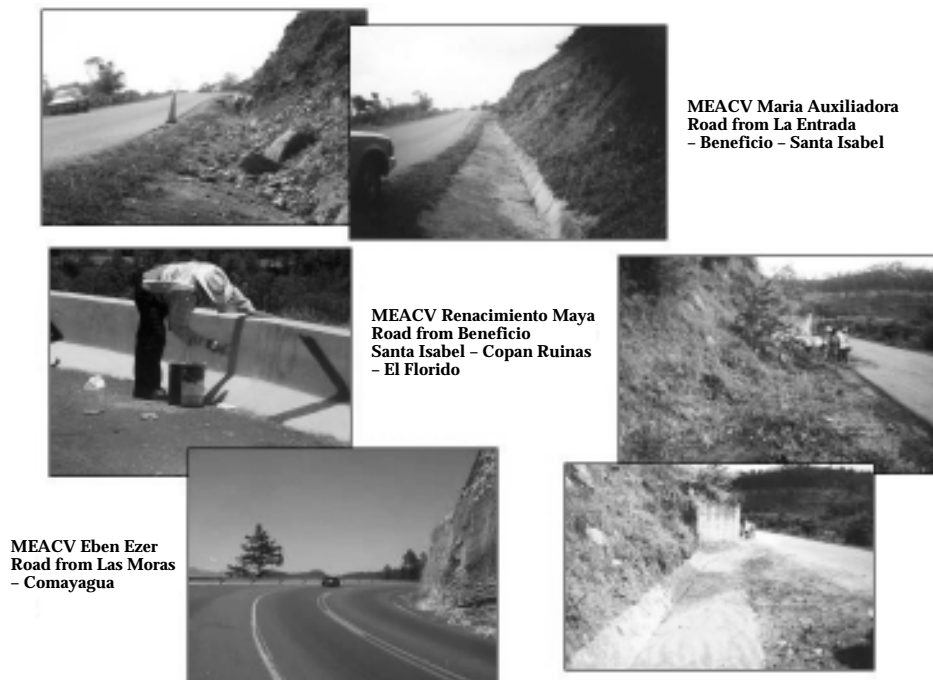
II. Description of Project Objectives and Activities

The 'Roads Maintenance Pilot Project through Micro-enterprises (MEs)' is a component of the Honduras Road Reconstruction and Improvement Project financed by the World Bank. This project became effective at the end of 2001 and remains active to date. The Pilot Project's principal objective is the provision of effective and cost-efficient routine maintenance of about 2,300 Km of paved roads through the use of community-based MEs. Routine road maintenance activities include vegetation control within the road's right-of-way, clearing of culverts and ditches, removal of small landslides, repairing traffic signs, painting of bridges, small patch work with local materials and tree planting.

The Pilot Project has resulted in an increase in employment opportunities in poor rural areas across Honduras. In order to maximize the poverty alleviation impact of the project, MEs in areas of high unemployment are expected to use labor-intensive technologies that are cost effective. By involving local communities in the maintenance of the roads, the project assures that development decisions reflect the needs and priorities of these communities. The financial sustainability of MEs is

³ The Road Fund is managed by an executive director who reports to a 7-member board made up of three ministers (Minister of Transport and Public Works, Finance, and Economy), the Director of Roads of the Ministry of Works and Transport, one representative of the Association of Municipalities, and three from the private sector (Chamber of Commerce, Association of Transport Enterprises, and College of Engineers).

achieved through performance-based contracts subject to quality standards stipulated in the contract. To support the program, a sustainable financing mechanism was developed, whereby the Honduran Road Fund provides the contracts and resources for road maintenance activities.



The Pilot Project finances the following activities and goods: (i) the creation of the MEs; (ii) training for members of the MEs, including micro-entrepreneurship and technical skills for routine road maintenance; and (iii) the purchase of equipment required to strengthen the maintenance management capacity of the Road Fund (vehicles, computers, pavement evaluation equipment, office equipment and other basic tools).

III. Description of Civil Society Participation

■ ***Establishment of road rehabilitation Micro Enterprises***

The road maintenance Pilot Project is being implemented by community-based MEs, organized in cooperatives with all members having equal rights and obligations. To establish the MEs, facilitators were dispatched to communities selected on the basis of low-income levels and proximity to roads in need of maintenance. The facilitators began an information campaign to explain the nature and advantages of the Pilot Project to local community members. The MEs would not only improve the quality of roads in their communities, and create new sources of employment, but also would transform

laborers into small entrepreneurs. Subsequently, the facilitators asked for volunteers to form the MEs. To date, 50 MEs have been established covering about 2,300 Km of paved roads or 83 percent of the paved network of the country. The MEs provide direct employment to 693 community members (of whom about 4 percent are women).

▪ ***Methods of participatory process***

The road maintenance MEs were designed with an emphasis on local ownership, in order to effectively fulfill their responsibilities and facilitate their interaction with other stakeholders. The success of this method of civil society participation demonstrates that the project's sustainability is dependent on the level of ownership, diversification and autonomy that the MEs are given during the implementation of road maintenance. Working directly with the communities in establishing MEs has proven a critical step in securing both effective coordination with government institutions and adequate dissemination of public information regarding project activities and potential benefits. The MEs have their own internal organizational structure. The members select the President, Secretary and Treasurer to serve during the life of the contract. Some MEs may decide to rotate the different positions annually. This inclusive approach also has established a pattern of sustainable local ownership.

▪ ***Ways by which participation has enhanced project outcomes***

By creating road maintenance MEs staffed by community members that actually live along the roads themselves, an efficient, cost-effective and reliable road maintenance strategy has been achieved. In addition, activity diversification has brought about the creation of indirect jobs such as the provision of transport or food services by outside suppliers.

The familiarity that locals have with the roads they use on a daily basis and their ability to recognize critical road sections are helping to make the roads safer, in addition to prolonging their lifespan through timely maintenance interventions. Local involvement in both the decision-making process (on issues such as the sections of the road that need repair and type of materials to be used) and the long-term maintenance of the roads provides communities with a personal investment in the project that transcends their financial commitments.

Promoting local participation in the design of the MEs has helped to address important socio-economic issues affecting poor communities in Honduras. The project has succeeded in creating *permanent and reliable employment* in poor rural areas. The creation of new jobs, both direct and indirect, has proven successful in *alleviating poverty and realizing economic gains*. In addition, new employment opportunities also may help to *curb migration from rural areas* to already saturated cities. Another benefit is the fostering of *entrepreneurial and organization skills*, which have empowered the local communities to undertake other projects and local development initiatives such as the opening of community stores, agriculture related activities and animal husbandry.

IV. Challenges in the participatory process

During the Pilot Project's implementation, the following elements are being carefully monitored to ensure that the project's participatory objectives are met:

- **Ownership** of the project at all levels was ensured very early in the project preparation process and must be maintained throughout project implementation so that, among other things, necessary decisions are taken in a timely manner. Accordingly, community members and local leaders are being kept informed of all aspects of project implementation. An increased sense of ownership by the MEs members and the community at large will help to ensure that the benefits from improved road access do not disappear over time. Furthermore, the fact that the road being maintained benefits the community has served to strengthen project ownership.

- **Female participation** needs to be aggressively promoted, given the prominent role of women in poor rural communities (in many cases as heads of households). Low female participation in the project's sponsored MEs (currently under four percent of associates) may be related to the fact that road rehabilitation work is viewed traditionally as a male occupation. Increasing female participation in MEs can play an important role in poverty alleviation.

- **Capacity building** is time consuming and requires substantial commitment from all involved parties including local leaders, central government and the World Bank. Sustainability also depends on the ability to establish managerial and technical capacity in the MEs. MEs should not be viewed as a welfare program, but instead as a cost-effective way of carrying out road maintenance activities. There has been personnel turnover particularly in those MEs located close to urban centers where better-paid employment can be found. Despite the fact that the turnover rate has gradually decreased as MEs members have understood the advantages of the program, more should be done during the formation process of the MEs to explain the benefits of the model.

- **Flexibility** to adapt to local cultural and economic conditions must be seriously taken into consideration at the design stage. Different areas require different approaches to guarantee the success of project activities. Certain regions also may present unique geographical challenges that will have specific implications on the type road maintenance work needed.

- **Financial mechanisms** to guarantee sustainability of the MEs model must be ensured. No matter how deeply rooted in the community, support for the MEs can decline over time if communities perceive that they are not benefiting directly from the MEs. The government needs to ensure that the Road Fund has sufficient budget allocated to make timely and fair payments for the services provided by the road maintenance MEs.

V. Lessons learned that may be applied to future Bank Programs

The success of the MEs Pilot Project has been widely acknowledged. MEs are being used as a model framework for addressing and dealing with road maintenance in other countries (Colombia, where the model was initially developed in the early 1980's; Peru and Nicaragua). Having recognized its success in building social cohesion and participation, other governments are interested in using it as a model. Experience in other countries' shows that MEs regularly maintain roads; and this approach has proven sustainable in the long-term. The main lessons learned from the provision of routine road maintenance through community-based MEs can be summarized as follows:

- ***Balancing poverty alleviation and the promotion of economic opportunity***

One of the main principles of the poverty alleviation strategy lies in the recognition that sustainable solutions rest on encouraging income generation opportunities. In this manner, the ME strategy is strongly oriented toward poverty alleviation. The development of entrepreneurial and organizational skills foster economic progress and serves as a catalyst for other local development initiatives. Once MEs have demonstrated an adequate implementation record, they become a useful mechanism for voicing common problems, developing system-wide solutions and creating complementary income generation opportunities such as opening of community stores, agriculture related activities and animal husbandry.

- ***Promoting ownership of project activities***

The success and sustainability of the project can be predicated on the level of ownership that the MEs and its associates are given during the implementation of road maintenance works. Experience has demonstrated that increased local ownership encourages lower worker turnover and higher productivity, maximizing efficiency and promoting sustainability of project activities. Working directly with communities in establishing MEs, effective coordination between government institutions and MEs and adequate dissemination of public information regarding project activities and potential benefits are critical mechanisms for establishing and sustaining local ownership.

- ***Strengthening local empowerment through local participation***

Participation of communities in the provision of basic services has led to community empowerment beyond the project's original scope. The establishment of MEs has led some communities to make additional decisions about their own welfare. The process has served as a springboard for active community involvement in broader development agendas. It has also provided positive spillover effects into neighboring communities.

- ***Use of appropriate technologies***

Once the ME demonstrates initial results, there is pressure from a variety of sources to move to more expensive technologies, such as the purchase of motorized tools and small construction

equipment. MEs should focus on using labor-intensive technologies, an approach that is both cost-effective and consistent with striving for significant poverty alleviation impact in a country like Honduras, with a comparative advantage in labor and yet high rates of unemployment.⁴ Although more expensive technologies should not be excluded once the work of the MEs is expanded to other activities (such as extensive patching and concrete works), it is important that MEs are not pushed into using these technologies prematurely.

VI. Conclusions

The establishment of community-based MEs has brought tangible benefits to the country as a whole since MEs provide highly satisfactory routine road maintenance to a large part of the country's paved road network. Simultaneously, the MEs are creating permanent and reliable sources of employment to the communities into which they were introduced.

However, the real benefit has been the creation of an instrument that allows communities to solve their problems and undertake other productive projects and local development initiatives. The MEs have strengthened community cohesion, a critical element for introducing social change. The development of local entrepreneurial and organizational skills is helping promote other development initiatives that are having a positive impact also on neighboring communities.

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⁴ The unemployment rate in Honduras was estimated at 28 percent in 2002. Unemployment is especially prevalent in the poor rural areas of the country, targeted by the project.

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Community Mobilization for Fire Prevention in the Brazilian Amazon – Partnerships between Civil Society, Government and the International Community

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Abstract

In early 1998, wild fires raged out of control in several parts of the Amazon, causing major economic and social losses for the peoples of the forest, the Brazilian population and for humanity. In the northern Amazon alone, an area almost the size of Switzerland, approximately four million hectares were lost to fire. These fires were due to a severe drought caused by the meteorological phenomenon El Niño, as well as traditional burning practices used throughout the rainforest to clear fields for crops, cultivate pastures and to renew grazing lands. Since these fires often reach neighboring fields and virgin forests, chances are high that additional fires could occur with greater intensity in the following dry seasons.

In order to avoid the potential for immense economic, social and environmental losses from these widespread forest fires in the world's richest repository of biodiversity, representatives from the World Bank, Brazilian civil society and the Government of Brazil came together to support an awareness/educational campaign targeting poor farmers on how to prevent

subsequent fires. The result of this collaboration was the establishment of a project on "Community Mobilization for Fire Prevention in the Brazilian Amazon – PROTEGER", as part of the Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforests, known as PPG7¹.

The aim of PROTEGER² is to conduct a grassroots mobilization and training campaign to educate local rural communities in the Amazon to the dangers of uncontrolled fires, as well as to teach fire prevention techniques and alternative methods to clear fields through the strong participation of civil society. Although most projects within the PPG7 include the strong participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), overall programs, projects and actions are largely managed and controlled by the Government. PROTEGER is unique in that it is the first PPG7 project fully coordinated and implemented by a civil society organization (CSO), the 'Grupo Trabalho Amazônico' (GTA), or the Amazon Working Group, a coalition of 513 grassroots organizations in the Amazon.

I. Introduction

The Brazilian Amazon contains nearly one-third of the world's remaining tropical rainforests. As a repository of biodiversity, a carbon sink and protection of the watershed of the world's largest

¹ PPG7 is a program conceived and implemented as a shared undertaking of the Brazilian Government, domestic civil society and the international community for the conservation of the Brazilian Amazon. It was established in 1992, and currently has funds of \$350 million from the G7 countries, EU, Netherlands and Brazil.

² PROTEGER is funded by PPG7 with contributions provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through a Trust Fund established within the World Bank.

river, this forest is a fundamental environmental treasure. Scientists believe that regional weather patterns are closely linked to the mass of vegetation in the Amazon Rainforest, thus reinforcing the critical need for its conservation. In recent years, global attention has been focused on the degradation of large areas of land due to forest-to-pasture conversion, slash-and-burn agriculture, logging, mining and uncontrolled fires. Estimates show that roughly 1.5 million hectares of old-growth forests have been slashed and burned annually during the last decade, and an additional 1 million hectares are selectively logged. Research suggests this process destroys up to 75 percent of adult trees.³

Most Amazon burnings occur during the dry season. They often come as a result of the clearing of brush by farmers and ranchers to plant crops or renew pastures. Burning is a technique used for centuries by indigenous people to clear small tracks of land for crops. Since the 1970s, larger areas of land have been cleared annually for pasture, plantation crops and infrastructure. Due to the high cost of mechanical clearing, fire is used as the cheapest means of rapidly clearing felled timber and any undesirable species. However, each year a significant amount of land has been burned accidentally.

These 'escaped' fires have caused the destruction of timber resources, pasture, fences, power lines, infrastructure, etc. Accidental wildfires have become more common in dry years, including fires that occur at the ground level, or sub-canopy forest fires. Sub-canopy burning increases the likelihood of the reoccurrence of forest fires in subsequent years. The growing number of timber industries in the region further heightens this risk. Logged forests are especially fire-prone, as logging roads with debris create pathways for fires. The gaps in the forest caused by the roads allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, which in turn dries out leaves, twigs and branches along these open trails. These dry trails that prove a fire hazard, as they serve as ideal fuel for fires.

In 1998, there was a deficit in rainfall compared to previous years, due to El Niño. During February and March of 1998, a series of large-scale wildfires occurred in northern State of Roraima, destroying almost 4 million hectares, including 92,540 hectares of closed-canopy forest and extensive areas of savanna, agricultural fields and Indian reserves. The burning was finally halted only by the onset of the rains at the end of March 1998. Such large-scale fires have proven nearly impossible to extinguish.

Therefore, in an effort to prevent the occurrence of large-scale wildfires in the next dry season, which, although with less intensity, is expected to reoccur annually, the Government of Brazil requested a USD\$15 million loan from the World Bank (WB) for a new project called the Amazon Emergency Fire Prevention and Control Project – PROARCO. The purpose of this project was to support risk assessment and fire monitoring mechanisms, including the strengthening of emergency coordination and fire prevention activities at the federal and state levels.

³ Daniel Nepstad et al. 1999. Large Scale Impoverishment of Amazonian Forests by Logging and Fire. *Nature*, Vol 398, April 1999. — Gerwing, J. 2002. Degradation of forests through logging and fire in the eastern Brazilian Amazon. *Forest Ecology and Management* 157 (1): 131-141. — Nepstad, D; Moreira A; Alencar A. 1999. *Flames in the Rainforest: Origins, Impacts and Alternatives to Amazonian Fires*. The Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest. Brazil.

Early in the PROARCO preparation process in May 1998, the Government identified the urgent need for a mobilization, training and public awareness campaign at the local level to inform farmers of the extreme risk of fire. This activity, what would develop into the PROTEGER project, would provide training on controlled burning techniques, fire prevention and the organization of community awareness groups. The Brazilian government selected, through a participatory process, the GTA NGO network as a suitable partner to perform these objectives. GTA works in collaboration with a network of small community-driven CSOs reaching even the most remote areas.

II. Using an NGO network to reach local communities

The original objective of PROTEGER was to implement a grassroots mobilization and training campaign to educate local rural communities in the Amazon about the dangers of uncontrolled fires in the upcoming unusually dry seasons, as well as to teach fire prevention techniques and alternative methods of field preparation through the strong participation of civil society.

In its first phase (1998-2000), the project provided training on fire prevention to 200 monitors or trainers, who in turn sensitized and mobilized 12,000 people from 322 municipalities in the nine states of the Brazilian Amazon. After the evaluation of these results and their impacts, the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment, the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) agreed that fire prevention activities must continue with strong CSO participation, due to its ability to reach thousands of farmers in remote regions in a short span of time. Preliminary data based on personal accounts indicates that people in these areas have become more aware of the risk of fire, and have learned how to prevent fires from the outset as well as how to control them when they do occur. As a result, USAID committed additional grant funds for PROTEGER II, which is currently ongoing.

In its second phase (2001-2003), the project is continuing some of the activities tested in the first phase, such as training and prevention among others, and expanding to include a larger educational program and partnerships to search for alternatives to the use of slash-and-burn agriculture. Another addition is the discussion of public policies and the increased participation of women's and youth groups.

PROTEGER II aims to provide training to 42,000 small farmers in the Amazon from 131 municipalities of eight Amazon states through a decentralized approach. Under this project, each trainer participates in training workshops, after which he/she organizes two or three classes/seminars/meetings for community leaders in his/her region⁴. In turn, each one of these 12,000 community leaders will return to his/her community for knowledge sharing and awareness promotion. Environmental education activities and a grassroots information network to disseminate experiences on sustainable agriculture and fire risks through field visits, studies and seminars, all

⁴ To discuss fire prevention techniques and the risk of accidental fires due to the drought

targeting small farmers also are planned. Likewise, more partnerships among all levels of government with CSOs are also expected.



Source: www.junglephotos.com

III. Who Are the Main actors Involved?

The project is being carried out by the GTA and its broad network of family farmers, women's cooperatives, agricultural workers, nut gatherers and indigenous communities. Overall project management is centralized at the GTA headquarters in Brasilia. Operations are executed by its affiliates, specifically the Federation of Agricultural Workers-FETAGRI in several Amazon states.⁵ In addition, GTA has been able to mobilize and coordinate the efforts of a large number of local organizations not yet a part of the network of CSOs formally linked to the Amazon Working Group. Likewise, close collaboration has been established with the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Resources (IBAMA), a government agency, as well as with the firefighters organizations from the respective states of the Amazon region.

In addition to providing daily information on fire risk throughout the Amazon, IBAMA

specifically provides technical specialists to train the monitors. IBAMA's trained personnel possess the technical know-how and first-hand experience in forest fire monitoring and prevention. IBAMA and CSOs have collaborated in fire prevention activities in the past. However, in many places there remains a historical resistance of local communities to the presence of IBAMA. It is still perceived principally as an enforcement agency, and thus, has difficulties in fostering a good relationship with local people. In an effort to overcome this resistance, technical experts from IBAMA are always present at local level meetings, training sessions, etc., so that in time they will gain the trust of the community members. IBAMA also has begun to focus more on educational activities rather than solely on enforcement.

PROTEGER has been successful in achieving a framework where different actors at different levels have been able to foster partnerships and collaborate in combating a problem that affects

⁵ The States are Para, Amazonas, Amapa, Mato Grosso, Rondonia, Acre, Roraima and Maranhão.

everyone – fires. This unique framework of cooperation has become a useful foundation for mobilization and social inclusion in the action and implementation of other projects as well. Indeed, the PPG7 itself is now broadly applying an adapted version of this collaborative type of methodology of operation throughout all of its projects. PROARCO as well has incorporated PROTEGER's methodology and as a result has fostered stronger partnerships and collaboration of their emergency fire coordination at the federal, state and municipal levels. The same applies to their fire prevention activities that are carried out primarily through community mobilization and participation.

IV. Recipe for Success – Methodology

■ **Participatory planning, meetings and discussions:** Annual Action plans are negotiated locally with the local organizations and later incorporated into the Annual Project Plan, which is negotiated at national level. Each year, community leaders meet on a regular basis to share experiences, challenges and success stories.

■ **Training workshops for trainers, community training and the domino effect:** Regionally identified leaders receive training on fire prevention techniques, public policy and alternatives to using fire to prepare their fields for agricultural crops. This training is provided jointly by the GTA, IBAMA and firefighters. As previously mentioned, each of the participants then conducts three training sessions at the municipal level to local community leaders in seminars containing approximately 30 persons each. Thus a domino effect is created, as each of these community leaders disseminates their newly acquired knowledge to their respective communities.



Puxirum in Marabá, State of Pará – Training course offered to local population on the control/prevention of forest fires.

■ **“Puxirum ambiental” or voluntary community work for the environment:** In some communities, a combination of a strong and effective leader/trainer and community support often results in the creation of what is locally called “*Puxirum ambiental*”. *Puxirum* is a community practice that consists of voluntary work in a labor brigade on common land or individual property belonging to a community member. This is often done for harvesting, building or other activities that require significant manual labor. The *puxirum ambiental* concept is incorporated into the project by involving community brigades to solve or prevent environmental problems. They are mobilized and trained in

fire prevention techniques, combating forest fires, disseminating these techniques, providing environmental education as well as addressing other environmental issues (i.e. reforestation). This initiative also has sensitized communities to the value of the environment. Thus the *puxirums* seek to ensure the sustainability of the objectives of PROTEGER through an existing social network.

▪ **Communication strategy, women's groups and self-esteem:** PROTEGER has created several innovative mechanisms to share experiences among communities, including a monthly newsletter,



Community forest fire in Marabá, the State of Pará.

a web page, regional and national meetings and community radio programs. One of the most successful of these dissemination mechanisms has been the communication workshops led by local women. These workshops produce CDs that are distributed to community radio stations throughout the Amazon. Each CD contains several broadcast programs, in which women present their experiences, music, and information from the discussions held during regional and national semi-

nars. Naturally, a strong emphasis is placed on environmental issues, specifically fire prevention. The empowerment of these women has improved their self-esteem, especially when they listen to their own voices on the radio and know they are being heard.

▪ **Learning from peers in the field:** Local coordinators and leaders, with the help of consultants, identify existing as well as promising initiatives and experiences in sustainable agricultural methods. This is an interesting facet of the project, as it takes into account local knowledge. This is critical as each community faces a different reality, so the training and methodologies need to be flexible to accommodate these realities. Through field visits, farmers are given the opportunity to discuss their successes and methods to improve their agricultural practices. Through this component, the project seeks to build upon existing social capital and to jointly determine the appropriate solutions and methodologies.

V. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

▪ **Local Organizations that Reach the Poor:** PROTEGER has succeeded in developing a decentralized methodology that relies on existing Rural Workers Unions to implement the project.

This decentralized approach allows for local stakeholders to influence the project through local participatory mechanisms and to increase transparency. Local stakeholders absorb some of the costs and risks involved, and in turn receive the potential benefits from the project, thus underlining the local ownership of the project. The long-standing presence of these organizations in many of the remote areas, and the existing trust and partnerships that grassroots organizations have within the local community greatly contribute to the effective implementation of project activities.

■ **Establishing Partnerships Between Civil Society and Governmental Organizations:** PROTEGER has promoted project involvement and implementation by civil society organizations, as well as their partnerships with state and municipal government bodies. Innumerable alliances were created at the local level with local governments, state institutions, firefighter organizations, the church, the army and governmental environmental agencies. Such participatory processes tend to enhance the technical quality of projects, as well as promote better governance.

■ **Strengthening Local Organizations.** While local organizations have the means to reach the poor, they often lack management and administrative skills. The project, therefore, had to concentrate on capacity building in these areas. Specific actions needed to be included during project design for capacity-building and institutional strengthening for civil society and other beneficiary groups, in order to prepare them for responsibilities in implementation. In the future, financing development activities perhaps could focus more on strengthening existing networks, as this seems to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

■ **The Need to Create Simplified Administrative Procedures.** World Bank procedures, devised for larger projects, are often too cumbersome for small-scale community projects. There is a need, where possible, to design more flexible arrangements, and to include within the project the necessary resources to strengthen the administrative capacity of the implementing agencies to adequately comply with their obligations.

■ **One Size Does Not Fit All:** Although the project has a menu of activities, it has not been implemented in the same way in all of the states, as each state varies in terms of political, economical, social, environmental factors. Some communities, for example, were more active in the production of radio programs, while others focused more on executing environmental activities via the community brigades. The project, therefore, has adapted itself to the local needs and realities of each community. This is a key factor that needs to be taken into account when scaling-up.

■ **Test First, Than Scale Up:** The methodology developed by PROTEGER is currently being scaled-up into public policies elsewhere in the Amazon region. The ‘learning by doing’ concept has provided excellent lessons for other development endeavors.

■ **Women and Youth – The Power of Empowerment:** In its second phase, the project has supported the creation of women's and youth groups, and has made concerted efforts to include them as trainers. The results have been outstanding. In several communities, women and youth assumed leadership functions, and in others they took advantage of the opportunity provided by the project to assume a larger role in their community.

VI. Conclusion

The investment costs in fire prevention activities are low in comparison to the high potential losses from wildfires. As a result, agencies at all levels of government are likely to continue to support these fire prevention efforts in the long term. However, additional resources are needed to continue to stimulate innovative and up-to-date research/experiences on sustainable production, alternative techniques to the use of slash-and-burn and fire prevention techniques that can be disseminated across the Amazon and elsewhere. Possible future incentives could focus on investing in new partnerships with research institutions, universities and other entities, so as to consolidate and formalize partnerships and agreements for the financial, educational and technical sustainability of projects such as PROTEGER.

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Argentina: From Facing Emergencies to Building Social Capital

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Abstract²

In December 2001, Argentina faced an economic and social crisis that triggered high rates of unemployment and poverty. In order to address the social emergency, the Government of Argentina decided to restructure the Participatory Social Investment Fund (FOPAR). FOPAR typically had provided poor communities with technical assistance and grants for beneficiary-identified small-scale civil works, including construction of water supply facilities, and training programs. In response to the crisis, resources were redirected specifically towards supporting community-based activities to respond to the food emergency. The readjusted project had four primary objectives: (i) to provide food supplies to community soup kitchens run by civil society organizations (CSOs), (ii)

to offer technical assistance to these CSOs in legal and financial matters, (iii) to provide funds for infrastructure and equipment for the kitchens, and (iv) to support the networks linking many of the CSOs. The program sought to both capitalize on the presence of these organizations and the services they were providing to the community in order to respond as quickly as possible to the crisis, while at the same time, strengthen their capacity. This paper first provides the context and impacts of the emergency and describes the project's objectives and activities. It then analyses the participation of civil society organizations as the implementing agencies of the project. Finally, it reflects upon the lessons learned from implementation and future challenges.

I. Background

Argentina's social and political breakdown in December 2001 was accompanied by an economic crisis unparalleled in the country's history that severely worsened already deteriorating indicators of unemployment and poverty. In urban areas, unemployment rates had risen from 6 percent in October 1991³ to 17.8 percent in October 2001.⁴ In the span of these ten years, the number of people affected by unemployment rose from 698,000 people to over 2.5 million. Additionally, increases in precarious employment, such as informal jobs with low wages, reduced earnings in many households. By May 2002, unemployment in urban areas had increased to 21.5 percent.

¹ This paper was rendered possible with the special support of Theresa Jones, Task Team Leader of FOPAR, Mariela Alvarez, Program Assistant, and Osvaldo Baigorria, external reviewer.

² For additional information, see web pages, www.bancomundial.org.ar/arg_pro_p37.htm, www.prodeso.org.ar/Fopar

³ When the Convertibility Law was enacted that fixed the Argentine peso to the US dollar.

⁴ Permanent Household Survey, National Statistical Institute, INDEC, correspondent periods

Given the drastic downturn of economic activity and the currency depreciation, per capita GDP declined to US\$ 2,695 in 2002 (down from US\$8,210 at its peak in 1998). With the peso depreciating sharply after floating the exchange rate in 2002, Argentina experienced dramatic inflation for the first time since 1991. The share of the population living below the poverty line rose from 37 percent in 2001 to a peak of 58 percent by the end of 2002.⁵ During the same period, the number of people living below the indigence line doubled.⁶ Generally, the risk of food deficit is greater for children below the age of three and for pregnant women, and malnutrition has been proven to have longer-term consequences for these sectors of the population. Nonetheless, it should be noted that malnutrition often arises under circumstances of structural and extreme poverty, and is, as a general rule, not subject to short-term change.

The impact of the recession also was manifested in the middle classes. Many middle class families, faced with both declining wages and a freeze on bank assets, moved into poverty for the first time. These “new poor” clearly have different characteristics from the structural poor, including higher levels of education and personal assets. The structural poor have learned how to access social protection programs. In contrast, the new poor may have more difficulty to adapt their behaviors to their new socio-economic realities. A final, but important, impact of the recession has been the erosion of credibility and/or confidence in government officials. This also has been seen by some as contributing to the political, social and financial crisis in Argentina. Unfortunately, the emergency aid from international financial institutions (IFIs) was not excluded from this erosion of trust in public management and thus the need to address this negative public perception through new participatory methodologies arose.

II. Addressing the Food Emergency: FOPAR Program Objectives and Activities

Social emergency programs, funded by the reallocation of World Bank (WB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loans, have aimed to alleviate the negative impacts of the crisis on the most vulnerable groups, and were designed specifically as strategies to reach poor families. In April 2002, the WB and the Government of Argentina agreed to introduce amendments to its FOPAR loan agreement in order to make community kitchens eligible for financing. In addition, the Government wanted to channel this financing through community organizations, expecting that the use of this mechanism would improve the transparency of spending and, in doing so, help to rebuild social trust. Coverage was extended nationwide in order to include a larger share of the poor than was envisioned in the initial design of the

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Poverty lines consist of the basic food basket and nonfood consumption bundle whose combined values are just sufficient to allow a typical individual to achieve a minimum level of material welfare. The basic food basket was constructed by looking at the food consumption patterns of a reference household group between the 2nd and 4th income deciles in the 1985–86 Survey of Income and Expenditure administered for Metropolitan Buenos Aires (GBA). The indigent food line is the value of the basic food basket that would allow a representative adult male age 30–59 years with moderate activity level to achieve consumption of a daily energy intake of 2,700 calories. (Argentina Crisis and Poverty, Poverty Assessment, Norman Hicks, Report 26127-AR, World Bank 2003).

project. US\$30 million was reallocated to support community kitchens through FOPAR, thereby complementing the Government's National Food Emergency Program.

As economic turmoil worsened and extreme vulnerability spread, community soup kitchens became an essential civil society initiative to respond to the social emergency. Consequently, the Government and World Bank agreed that FOPAR should fund these organizations that had been providing food and social protection, and which were managed by those affected by the crisis. These organizations included the Sociedad Española de Socorros Mutuos, Unione e Benevolenza and Societé Francaise, which have existed since the arrivals of immigrants in the 19th century and have a long track record in addressing nutritional crisis in Argentina. FOPAR based its food emergency strategy on these experiences and designed funding mechanisms for community organizations to:

- Provide food supplies for up to 1,000 beneficiaries per CSO, offering one principal meal daily and a secondary ration five days a week,
- Improve current infrastructure (especially for kitchens and bathrooms),
- Purchase basic equipment (freezers, cookers and kitchen appliances),
- Provide technical assistance to be able to obtain legal status and thus open bank accounts, prepare budgets and expenditure reports, to work simultaneously with different donors (private, governmental, volunteers, donor institutions) and to learn about nutritional aspects, including a well-balanced diet for each of the vulnerable groups.

In addition, each sub-project financed under FOPAR would support one or more community kitchen, where 80 percent of their budget would be dedicated to food supplies. In practice, the largest subproject supported 32 community kitchens. After a year, more than 4,000 community kitchens had been supported by FOPAR, reaching approximately 400,000 beneficiaries, principally children, pregnant women and elderly people.

The WB in the fight against poverty has financed social funds, such as FOPAR, since the beginning of the 1990s. However, the evaluation of the social emergency in Argentina carried out through consultations with civil society in early 2002 under the Rapid Social Emergency Assessment (RASA)⁷ indicated that the critical needs of the poor had changed because of the crisis, and noted that attendance at community kitchens had increased dramatically since the beginning of the year. FOPAR responded to this and other findings of RASA by making the following adjustments to the project design:

⁷ In the context of demands to empower civil society organizations as active players in emergency assistance, the World Bank designed a study to measure their capacity to conduct social emergency programs targeted at the most poor and vulnerable groups, called the Rapid Social Emergency Assessment (RASA). This study sought the view of the CSOs, especially those directly linked to the satisfaction of needs of vulnerable groups, on the impact of the social emergency. The study followed the principles of the *Voices of the Poor* study, seeking first hand accounts regarding the response of civil society to the emergency. It focused on learning the CSOs' point of view on the impact of the crisis: (i) on the organizations; (ii) on the communities in which the CBOs are carrying out their activities; (iii) on the families belonging to these communities (See: Cesilini, Sandra, Novacovsky, Irene, Mera, Carolina, and others, LCC7 Working Paper N1/4 *Evaluación Rápida de la Emergencia Social*. Oficina Subregional del Banco Mundial para Argentina, Chile, Paraguay y Uruguay, 2003).

- *Narrowing the focus to groups at high nutritional risk:* FOPAR refocused its program towards those most vulnerable to the long-term consequences of malnutrition.
- *Decentralizing financial resources:* Funds for social services were transferred from the central government to local CSOs. Throughout the 1990s, CSOs had gradually increased their participation in the provision of social assistance, and in many cases proving their capacities to fulfill these responsibilities in a suitable and cost-effective manner.
- *Increasing the participation of CSOs in project implementation:* The program has been implemented through CSO networks and formal and informal community organizations working to alleviate food insecurity. In addition to food provision, some organizations were also involved in the provision of education services and coordinated their activities with primary health services. Examples of these additional activities included: primary health care training for mothers, workshops on family violence and reproductive health, technical assistance in productive subprojects, including micro-enterprises, community orchards and farms, tailoring and adult literacy.

FOPAR was received with great interest by a wide range of CSOs. In the first year of its execution, the project implementation unit in the Ministry of Social Development provided substantial support to the CSOs on legal and financial issues in order for them to be able to receive and administer public money and to follow WB procurement guidelines for food purchases.

III. Results and Civil Society Participation

The evaluation data being collected for the restructured FOPAR is primarily qualitative. There already are a number of benefits that can be observed vis-à-vis civil society organizations. First, FOPAR has managed to reach an inclusive range of civil society organizations, including grassroots membership organizations (such as organizations of inhabitants of slums- piqueteros groups⁸), volunteer groups staffed by upper and middle class volunteers and technical NGOs. This has helped disparate organizations form horizontal relationships with one another in important “bonding forms of social capital”. Bonding social capital can, it has been noted, help to form important social safety nets, particularly during crisis periods (World Bank 2000). Second, significant attention has been given to capacity building for beneficiaries. As a result, community members have had the opportunity to learn new skills and organizational techniques whose benefits extend beyond a single or specific project. Third, in part thanks to the inclusive reach of FOPAR with civil society organizations through an open and transparent selection processes, the project may contribute to re-establishing some level of trust and credibility around the management of public programs. Fourth, some of the community

⁸ 255 community soup kitchens sponsored by piqueteros groups are receiving funds from FOPAR. A total amount of \$ 3.129.047,70 has already been disbursed

counterparts also have provided the World Bank and the Government with suggestions for new areas of development in future stages of FOPAR, such as in the area of productive subprojects to promote nutritional self-sufficiency. Finally, FOPAR also has succeeded in establishing an Evaluation Council the purpose of which is to evaluate project proposals, monitor their implementation and provide technical assistance. In doing so, FOPAR has contributed to a growing culture of social accountability whereby citizens hold public programs accountable for results and monitor transparency in the use of public resources. The Council was created as part of an agreement between the major national-level CSOs and academic organizations that were convened by the World Bank based on their technical expertise in the area of nutrition. Members of the Council include the National Association of Nutritionists, the National Association of Social Workers, members of the Transparency Forum, the Social Sector Forum, the religious council, represented by the Jewish organization Bet-el, and the National Budget Association, among others. As the role of the Council has developed, it has advised the Government and the World Bank, as well as beneficiaries, on the design of the project and its future strategy. As a result, the project has, for example, incorporated new localities and has addressed issues of implementation at the local level, the role of the media in disseminating the program, the articulation between the provincial and municipal governments and the availability of nutrition experts through the project to advise communities on nutrition plans and services.

IV. Lessons Learned

While it is still early to evaluate this new initiative, it is possible to identify some emerging hypotheses that may be helpful in the preparation of future projects aimed at providing emergency assistance in times of crisis.

- **It is important to develop indicators for targeting the most vulnerable populations that reflect quickly changing contexts, rather than indexes that may not be up-to-date.** In Argentina for example, during the first phase of FOPAR (1995-2001), the Unmet Basic Needs Index⁹ (NBI), was used as the primary indicator for poverty. The NBI indicator is based on the national census that is carried out every ten years. However, given the severe macroeconomic crisis suffered by Argentina, accompanied by high rates of unemployment, measurements based on household income became a more accurate reflection of the needs of the population. Thus the indicators used during the restructuring FOPAR attempted to capture the “new poor” by using poverty and indigence, as measured by the household survey covering urban areas, which is undertaken every six months.

- **CSOs can provide useful information on changes in the distribution and nature of poverty, as a result of their active engagement in the economic and social crisis.** Given their intimate

⁹ Indicator based on availability of infrastructure, literacy and level of education of the head of household, inhabitants per residence, etc.

experience in the communities, CSOs offer a unique insight and capacity to provide detailed information about existing conditions. As noted in this case, CSOs were key in helping the World Bank to undertake a rapid assessment of emerging needs (RASA), which was an important source of information for the design of this and other programs.

■ **Subprojects built on existing activities of civil society organizations can be more cost-effective and efficient.** Civil society organizations can provide important inputs during the implementation and evaluation stages of the project. In the case of FOPAR, the traditional project cycle of a typical social fund was streamlined and simplified, due to the fact that civil society was already offering these services.

■ **Program administrative processes and selection criteria should be flexible and simplified.** If the aim of the project is to attract local grassroots organizations that provide effective services, but are not necessarily legally formalized organizations, selection and administration procedures may need to be adapted. FOPAR found that many of the best counterparts were informal CSOs, which, like their beneficiaries, were poorly resourced with little administrative capacity. In allowing informal groups to present proposals, FOPAR opened the opportunity to work directly with the poor's organizations and thus try to reach the most needy.

■ **Facilitating access to national programs for community organizations contributes to the capacity building of the poor** by providing a channel for them to voice their needs and manage the resources being directed at them within a difficult context. As implementers of the subproject, CSOs gained concrete management skills. This, in turn, has had the unexpected result of strengthening a direct and constructive relationship between state service providers and communities without mediation by technical NGOs, political parties or other intermediaries.

■ **Investments in capacity building are key for project success and their benefits may continue beyond the life of the project.** During the implementation of FOPAR it became clear that counterparts had little technical knowledge of nutritional needs, appropriate health practices, accounting practices, record keeping and management of bank accounts. Acquiring these skills during the implementation of FOPAR will allow them to use them in the future, both within and outside the project.

■ **Up-to-date knowledge of CSOs can expedite response in times of crisis.** With current information regarding CSO's activities, history and their impact, the World Bank and governments can move quickly to better identify effective and well-accepted social protection mechanisms. FOPAR builds on a project first identified under the *Partnership for Poverty Reduction* initiative funded by the World Bank Institute (WBI), which had studied and promoted a greater understanding and recognition of the role of CSOs in curbing social violence. This initiative created a general acceptance within the government and the World Bank of the legitimate role CSOs can play during crisis times.

■ **The flexible procedures of choosing the project beneficiaries and the decentralization of the project can improve cost-effectiveness, reduce supervision costs and amplify the scope of the program.** In the first phase of FOPAR, a maximum of 500 subprojects were executed. During the second phase and during the crisis, 1,300 subprojects were implemented. The decentralized approach adopted under the second phase of the project required CSOs to use their new skills efficiently in order to provide better records on results, activities and the use of resources.

■ **The size of subprojects has to be designed according to the management capacity of CSOs.** In the course of project implementation, it was observed that when the number of community kitchens was higher than five, the link between the CSO and the kitchens became weaker and technical assistance provided to each kitchen seemed to have less impact. In the design of FOPAR, the reduction of the maximum number of community kitchens permitted in each subprojects improved the potential for CSOs to manage subprojects effectively.

■ **World Bank support can help countries to leverage new funds.** During the implementation of FOPAR, the European Union (EU) watched with interest, and the World Bank provided them with initial results. As a result, the EU later decided to provide a • 10,000,000 grant.

V. Looking Ahead: Addressing Upcoming Challenges

Many of the negative effects of the economic, social and political turmoil that occurred in Argentina in 2001-2002 may not be reversed in the short term. Unemployment and precarious labor situations still affect substantial portions of the population, and nearly half of the Argentine population still lives below the poverty line. New ways are being sought to address these continuing challenges.

FOPAR is implementing certain activities to improve the sustainability and management of community soup kitchens, and consider exit strategies so that communities do not become dependent on external assistance. In addition, issues of access are being evaluated and some consideration is being given to the menu of subprojects and its diversification. FOPAR so far seems to have been successful in avoiding old clientelistic practices. Finally, poverty reduction can only be achieved by adopting a multi-disciplinary approach and ensuring coordination among the different ministries.

It is possible that in the future the participants of FOPAR could foster access to other social services, such as primary health services, and help to promote better institutional coordination. For example, with the proper training, members of the organizations managing the community kitchens could act as health agents as well. This would help to detect children or pregnant women at risk of food deficit as well as early detection of other health problems.

The strategy exemplified by FOPAR, to involve CSOs in project implementation, offers an interesting option for the provision of particular public services, especially in times of crisis. The program in particular, and this approach in general, would benefit from a thorough evaluation and review to further consider its viability and replicability.

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Transparency Portals: Delivering public financial information to Citizens in Latin America

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Abstract

Internet websites for publishing public financial information in Latin America have become an important means to enhance and promote government transparency and accountability. Their importance has increased as information and communication technologies have developed in the region, and projects aimed to improve and modernize public financial management have entered new

phases of development. This paper presents a comparative analysis of several “Portales de Transparencia” or Transparency Portals, which publish public financial management information on the Internet. The study looks at initiatives in this area for five countries and suggests further actions. While some of these efforts are moving in a positive direction, there is still room for improvement.

I. Introduction

For over fifteen years, multilateral development banks and bi-lateral agencies have been involved extensively in financial management operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objective of these operations has been two-fold: i) to increase efficiency of public sector financial management; and ii) to increase transparency.

With regards to the first objective, there has been important progress. Several Latin American countries now have centralized financial management systems. These systems typically are managed by the Ministry of Finance to register budget implementation, treasury and accounting for the whole central government. Recently, these systems have been expanded to include other functions such as asset management and payroll. It is believed that the impact on public financial management has been considerable (see Box 1 below).

The increase in transparency, the second objective of these operations, has been less of a priority until recently. As second and third public financial operations funded by the World Bank are either under preparation or execution in several countries in the region, the access to information on the governments’ financial accounts has become a critical issue for increasing transparency, building trust and responding to civil society requests for more open and accountable government. Fulfillment of these objectives is considered crucial to building good and effective governance¹.

¹ For further information, see, for example: Johannes F. Linn, *Good Governance and Transparency in the Transition Countries*, Speech for OSCE Conference on Good Governance and Transparency in the Transition Countries. Prague, 2001. <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/0/d315c32906509bd685256a4f004fac9f?OpenDocument>; Inter-American Development Bank, *Strengthening a systemic framework against corruption for the Inter-American Development Bank*, 2001. <http://www.iadb.org/leg/Documents/Pdf/Corruption-EN.pdf>; FMI, *Código de Buenas Prácticas de Transparencia Fiscal*, 1999. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/mae/mft/code/spa/code2s.pdf>

This paper will discuss the achievements of these operations, highlighting gaps and what actions could be taken to overcome them. Section II will explain exactly what is meant by a Portal de Transparencia, or Transparency Portal. Section III will comment on different features of these portals in five countries—Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia. Section IV will briefly compare these portals, while Section V will suggest further actions for improvement.

II. What is a Transparency Portal?

Transparency Portals are a relatively new initiative by Latin American countries to push forward the financial transparency and accountability agenda. In short, these portals are websites solely devoted to publishing public financial information. The Ministry of Finance in each country generally maintains the portals.

Depending on the portal, financial information regarding public companies, municipalities and government procurement can be found. The scope and detail of the information published varies considerably country by country, depending on regulation, quality of the website and the government's commitment to transparency.

The information in a portal of this kind normally includes budget law, definition of technical terms related to the budget and manuals and other related support documents. Most of the portals analyzed also publish country macro-economic data, information on domestic and external debt and budget execution for past years.

Additionally, several portals offer information regarding current-year budget execution. This information includes month-by-month revenue and expenditure information, by institution, category

Box 1. Guatemala's Integrated Financial Management Project

Since 1995, the World Bank has been involved in the modernization of public finance in Guatemala in order to promote more transparent, efficient, and effective public sector financial operations. The results of this modernization effort have been remarkable and include: i) reduced prices paid for wide-ranging supplies due to modernized procurement and payment systems implemented under the project; ii) streamlined payments, increased number of electronic funds transfers, and reduced number of government bank accounts to reduce time and transaction costs while maintaining transparency; iii) designed a unique relational database that provides immediate and detailed information on all recorded financial transactions, thus providing an audit trail as well as relevant and timely budget execution information for managers at various levels; iv) provided legislators, private citizens, NGOs and any other stakeholder access to proposed and executed national budgets at several dedicated in-country sites. The first project implemented in Guatemala received the World Bank President's Award for Excellence in 1999.

The reform process is now in its third phase. Among other actions, this operation involves: i) the transfer of the system to an internet-based technological platform; ii) decentralization of the system to executing agencies within ministries, such as schools and hospitals; iii) extension of the system to municipalities; iv) development of an e-procurement system and iv) implementation of a system to increase efficiency and effectiveness of auditing processes within the Office of the Comptroller General. The project also aims to define a sustainability strategy to maintain the reform process once the project finishes.

For more information:

<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/External/lac/lac.nsf/45b1a64b68f7a2d3852567d6006c364a/fa74f52dce0172b1852567e60046499d?OpenDocument>

and relative to approved amounts. This information is retrieved from the government's financial information systems, which, as mentioned above, are being financed by multi-lateral or bi-lateral lending institutions in several countries in the region.

The information regarding budget execution is highly transactional and, in order to be automatically updated, the portal needs to be directly linked to the financial management information system. It is believed that this type of "real-time" information is critical to increase transparency, as users can track, with minimal lag time, how budgets are being executed and how tax revenues are evolving. Table 1 offers a short description of the types of information that may appear in a transparency portal and its main sources.

Table 1. Types of Information in a Transparency Portal

Type	Source	Examples
Non-transactional	Legal department, Budget department, Portal's web-team	Laws, regulation, technical terms, definitions
Transactional	Debt systems, Fiscal Affairs Departments	Debt information, macro-economic information, past years budgets
Highly transactional	Financial Management Information Systems	Current-year budget execution, past years budget execution, accounting

It is important to highlight that most of these portals are still being developed, and therefore upgrades and improvements are frequent. However, the nature of the portals is determined by the strategy and objectives to be accomplished in each of the countries that are featured in this study.

III. Transparency Portals: A brief description and comparison in five countries

Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia are the countries selected for this analysis². In 2003, all five of the countries implemented operations in public financial management financed either by the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank. The investment has been considerable, while the objectives, especially in the area of transparency (in fact, only a minority of these projects include a component to develop a transparency portal), have only been accomplished partially. Under this section, some of the notable positive and negative features of each of the portals will be mentioned.

² Web addresses for these portals are: Peru: <http://transparencia-economica.mef.gob.pe/documento/>; Guatemala: <http://transparencia.minfin.gob.gt/>; Chile: http://www.dipres.cl/fr_presupuesto.html ; Bolivia: <http://www.sigma.gov.bo> ; Colombia: <http://www.transparencia.gov.co/transparencia/>

■ **Peru.** Peru is arguably the most advanced country in Latin America with regards to financial transparency. Under a comprehensive transparency strategy, several initiatives have been undertaken, including the transparency portal, law on access to financial information, promotion of citizen involvement in transparency processes and the elaboration of an assessment of the liabilities of the State.

The Ministry of Finance considers the transparency portal as an essential element of this strategy for two reasons: i) the amount of information that can be consulted; and ii) the unlimited access for any citizen. These two aspects serve as the main pillars of the country's transparency strategy³. It is believed that this alignment between the strategy and the portal has very positive impacts on the quality of the portal itself and the information presented. The overall strategy has fostered a strong commitment from institutions to present reliable, updated and comprehensive financial information that has had a significant impact on the quality and reliability of the information registered in the financial information system, which is the data source of the portal. The government's support to the portal also has been considered essential; the portal was launched by the President and has been legitimized by a Presidential decree.

On the operational side, the portal, launched in 2001, is also the most advanced in the region. It offers all three types of financial information presented in Table 1 in a comprehensive and complete manner and is frequently updated. The portal is very user-friendly and presents a large amount of simple explanatory information on basic financial management. (See Figure 1.)

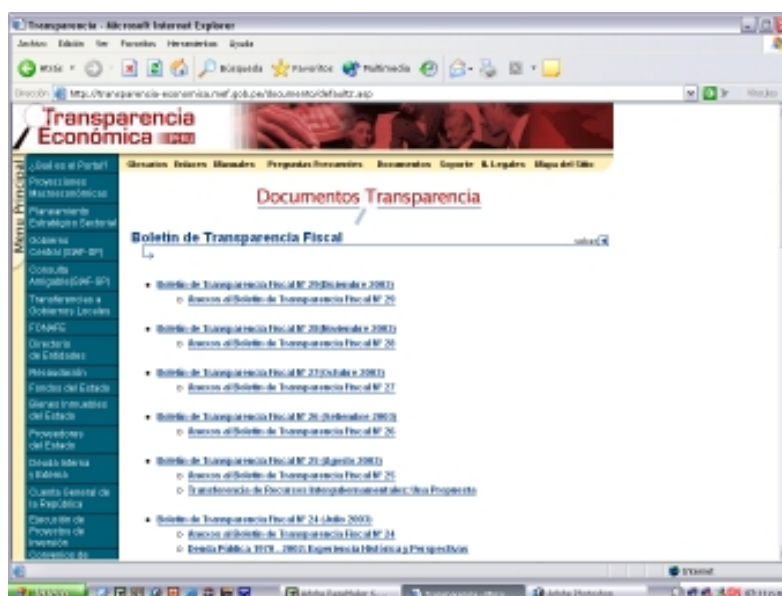


Figure 1. Peru's transparency portal.

³ For further information, see: Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas, *Transparencia Económica y Fiscal*, 2001 (http://transparencia-economica.mef.gob.pe/documento/doc/DT_Transparencia_RCC.pdf) y *Preguntas Frecuentes sobre Transparencia Económica y Fiscal*, 2002 (http://www.mef.gob.pe/misc/faq/faq_n18tef.htm)

■ **Guatemala.** Launched in 2003, the portal represents a major effort to improve the transparency of the public sector. Although not part of a larger transparency strategy, the portal may prove an important milestone in involving civil society in public financial monitoring. It is expected that the portal will be followed by other initiatives in the area of financial transparency. These include, among others, the inclusion of the municipalities into the portal as soon as they are incorporated into the financial management system.

The portal is updated monthly, and is directly linked to the government’s financial management information system (See Figure 2). It includes detailed information on expenditures, revenues and debt. On the expenditure side, users are able to review information according to different criteria such as spending institution, purpose and geographical location of the expenditure. This data is illustrated with graphs, making the information more user-friendly.



Figure 2. Access to Guatemala’s Transparency Portal available through the Ministry of Public Finance website.

Overall, the portal lacks detailed information on the framework within which budget execution is exercised. The portal does not present information on budget law nor macroeconomic data for the year. As in other portals, this makes it difficult to establish comparisons between planned and actual expenditure.

■ **Bolivia.** Bolivia’s transparency portal has been set up as a means to publish data on budget implementation. The portal is under the website of the public finance modernization project. The

most important component of this project has been the development of the integrated financial management information systems from which the website takes the information. In fact, the portal is named after this system – *Sistema Integrado de Gestión y Modernización Administrativa*, SIGMA. Although there is an explanatory section on budget issues, little additional information is provided beyond data related to budget execution.

The information is well-presented, comprehensive and includes past years' budgets and a large number of graphs. However, the design of the portal could be improved to be more user-friendly. A major revamping of the portal is expected during 2004. This effort will include improving the presentation of the information and expanding its usefulness to civil society by adding functionality to the portal and enhancing the clarity of the information presented.

■ **Colombia.** Colombia's transparency portal publishes data relating exclusively to social investment. The portal includes links to several agencies with investment responsibility in this area. Within each of these agencies, the portal presents a list of investment projects for which the agency is responsible. However, the information on each of these projects is not extensive and could be increased. The portal is very rich in non-transactional information, while transactional data is limited. Among other things, the portal includes links to control agencies, such as the Comptroller and the Accountant General. Also, the portal elaborates government plans on social investment and provides a large number of technical definitions.

Although well-designed and attractive, the fact that the portal only publishes social investment data may hide information on operational costs of the ministries or agencies responsible for it, therefore limiting awareness on the importance of reducing this latter cost to increase budget for actual investment.

■ **Chile.** Although Chile does not have a transparency portal as defined in Section II, the Budget Directorate's website offers a considerable amount of information on macroeconomic data, budget legislation, publications and budget execution. It also has an outstanding "Frequently Asked Questions" section with detailed information on budget issues and a Management Control section with information on performance indicators of institutions.

The website presents a large amount of non-transactional information, while the highly transactional is limited. Budget execution is updated quarterly and presented in detailed and comprehensive reports along with graphics.

IV. Comparative country analysis: Information presented

■ **Type of financial information.** Among the five websites examined, Peru's portal is the one that offers the largest amount of financial information of the three types mentioned in Table 1. Guatemala's portal, designed following many features of the Peruvian one, focuses on presenting

information on budget execution. This is an important achievement, as this information is the most complex to present. By increasing the amount of non-transactional information, Guatemala, as well as Bolivia, could improve the user's ability to evaluate the approved budget in relation to the previous budgets. Chile, conversely, ranks well in this respect.

Regarding Colombia, its focus on social investment has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, this approach helps to evaluate the commitment of the government to social programs more efficiently than in the rest of the portals. However, the drawback of this approach is that running costs are not presented and, therefore, one of the most important ratios of government's efficiency, running costs to investment budget, cannot be analyzed.

▪ **User-friendly design.** Regarding design, the website of the Budget Directorate in Chile stands out. It is attractive, user-friendly and includes comprehensive information, although limited in terms of budget execution data. Guatemala's portal offers a high degree of customization to the user, to some extent higher than in Peru's case. Anyone can arrange the information according to different variables, such as investment program, type of expenditure and location. Colombia has also a very well-designed website. It is user-friendly and contains links to institutions responsible for social investment. Peru's portal succeeds at presenting a large amount of information without making the navigation experience complicated. On the other hand, Bolivia's portal needs considerable improvement, when compared to the other four portals.

▪ **Source of information.** In both Guatemala and Peru, the transparency portals are directly linked to the financial management systems, improving the regularity and reliability of up-to-date information. In Chile, it is expected that the undergoing development of the financial management information system will help to increase the amount of highly-transactional information. It also is recommended that the portal in Colombia be linked to the public financial information system. Although Bolivia is the country where the financial management system has been under development for a longer period of time and is one of the most advanced in the region, there is no direct link between the portal and the information system.

It is important to highlight that currently, there are no major barriers, neither technological nor functional, to move ahead in linking transparency portals to the public financial management information systems.

▪ **Governmental ownership.** In Bolivia, it is the Accountant General, and not the Ministry of Finance, as in the rest of the countries, which is the institution responsible for managing the portal. The fact that the financial information is presented in the public finance modernization project website, and not in the institution's, indicates that there has been a limited transfer of ownership to the government. However, to be sustainable and successful, these portals need the commitment of the government. In Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, the portals have had considerable support from

international organizations, but in all of them there also has been transfer of ownership to the government to a greater or lesser degree.

Table 2. Transparency Portals: Highlighted aspects

	Type of Information	Design	Source of Information	Ownership
Bolivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transactional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large number of graphs - Could be more user-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not linked to public financial information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited transfer of ownership to government
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large volume of non-transactional information - Limited highly transactional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficient design - User-friendly - Comprehensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expected to increase amount of up-to-date information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed by Budget Directorate
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large volume of non-transactional information - Limited highly transactional information - Focus on social investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User-friendly - Linked to responsible public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Various public agencies responsible for social investment - Not linked to public financial information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed by Ministry of Finance
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large volume of highly transactional information - Limited non-transactional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High degree of customization - Large number of graphs - User-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linked to public financial information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed by Ministry of Finance
Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large volume of non-transactional, transactional & highly transactional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linked to public financial information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linked to transparency strategy - Managed by Ministry of Finance

V. Suggested further actions

This paper has evaluated one of the more relevant tools for financial transparency in five Latin American countries. Overall, transparency portal usage and design has been moving in the right direction, and the impact of such portals is growing as the information is becoming more readily available. Gradually, these portals are becoming effective tools to monitor public financial administration by providing on-time financial information. Media and opposition political parties are becoming frequent users of this information. During the last week of July 2003, Peru's portal registered 1,512 unique visits⁴. In Guatemala, some congressmen are frequent users of the information and several TV debates have referred to data published on the portal to highlight issues related to budget expenditure.

While these first steps are a very positive sign in enhancing transparency and making governments more accountable to society, there are still ways to improve them. There is no doubt that the only means for the transparency portals to succeed is to **sustain and increase consumer demand**. Society needs to consider them a source of valuable information to find out how governments are managing public finances. This requires an effort to consult with key sectors of society, especially those who monitor and hold governments accountable, such as the media and opposition parties. This exercise has been lacking in the portals thus far, and this could hamper their success as a transparency tool.

Another key element for the success is to **raise civil society awareness** as to the existence of these portals. Currently, there are few countries where these portals, and the financial information systems to which they relate, are known and employed to analyze public finances. Peru and Guatemala are the most advanced in this respect. To do this requires a concerted effort by governments to promote these portals as a means to enhance governance and transparency. In this respect, launching the portals by organizing events with civil society and media campaigns may be considered.

Most of these portals have been developed as isolated initiatives. However, it must be emphasized that experiences in countries like Peru indicate that the success of the portal is strongly related to the existence of a comprehensive transparency strategy, in which the portal serve as a central element. In this respect, **improving transparency laws and creating an overall framework for transparency** is crucial. Modern transparency laws limit considerably the amount of secret financial (and other) information, encouraging almost total public disclosure of government's financial transactions. Also, control agencies such as the Auditor and Comptroller General can be strengthened, becoming more autonomous and powerful.

In order to respond to the needs of citizens, the portals should be **updated regularly**. The effectiveness of the portals can be improved by providing timely information regarding budget laws, regulations and budget execution. Highly transactional information may be the most challenging to keep updated. However, financial information systems currently in place in these countries could

⁴ Provided by portal.

facilitate this effort. Publication of financial information in these portals is not keeping pace with the considerable development of the systems that record the information. This issue should be a priority in forthcoming years.

The ***involvement of government and civil society*** is essential to make the portals successful. Their commitment, active involvement and support for these transparency systems are crucial. In this respect, ownership of these initiatives must fall to key stakeholders, among them top officials in the executive, legislative and judicial powers, political parties and sectors of civil society such as the media and other organizations. However, this is not always the case. In many projects, these portals are built by external consultants with little or no knowledge by the stakeholders, and therefore, without consultation. This process has a serious negative impact in the development of transparency portals. The role of financiers is important to accomplish ownership of the system. Banks can brokerage between government and civil society to encourage their involvement in the initiative. In this respect, pushing forward an overall transparency strategy along with the portal should help.

It must be emphasized, nevertheless, that transparency goes far beyond the information that a government publishes online. In the long term, this an effort that needs ***strong political commitment, a culture of accountability and a legal framework*** that supports these goals. Transparency portals are just a tool for information and communication towards achieving these objectives.

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