

# **THINKING OUT LOUD III**

## ***Innovative Case Studies On Participatory Instruments***

**Spring 2002**

**Katherine Bain**

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## FOREWORD

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The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean face persistent challenges. Poverty rates are still high, as are levels of inequality. Institutional weaknesses, as reflected in serious problems of corruption, continue to constrain development in the region. Enhancing the role of civil society institutions in policy dialogue and in development processes offers an important mechanism for strengthening efforts to address these challenges more effectively.

In 1999, the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office of the World Bank (LAC) approved its first Regional Civil Society Strategy, which was implemented over FY00-FY01. This strategy produced important results on many fronts. First, a more diverse set of Bank-financed projects now include civil society participation in areas such as infrastructure and judicial reform. Second, through non-lending services and grants, LAC has promoted a variety of multi-stakeholder dialogues between governments, civil society and the private sector –at both the regional and national levels. Third, an increasing volume of analytical work on civil society participation has been produced and disseminated. Finally, LAC now has an effective group of about a dozen civil society specialists (CSSs), including members working on the ground in most of our larger client countries. All CSSs have extensive experience in working with civil society organizations, and they are charged with mainstreaming participation and empowerment in the Bank’s products and processes wherever this makes good operational sense.

The present World Bank Regional Civil Society Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean (FY02-FY04) builds on the experience we have accumulated over the past few years with the implementation of the original strategy, as well as on consultations with partners in civil society across the region. It is grounded in the recognition of three main principles from the World Development Report 2000/2001. First, development requires ensuring that institutions are responsive and accountable to users, especially the poor and excluded. Second, building the capacity of the poor and excluded to articulate their own views and interests in the formulation of public policy is essential. Finally, sustainable and equitable development cannot be achieved without removing obstacles that prevent the poor and excluded from accessing public services and institutions.

The implementation of the present strategy will require efforts from all departments in the LAC Regional Office of the World Bank, including both sector and country management units, as well as by our group of civil society specialists. Even with these efforts, though, empowerment and social inclusion cannot be achieved by any single institution working in isolation. Establishing partnerships with other regional developmental institutions, bilateral agencies, governments, and, of course, civil society organizations themselves, will be crucial. I look forward to the implementation of this Regional Strategy enabling the World Bank to make an enhanced contribution to a region that achieves more equity and less poverty, and builds institutions that are more responsive and accountable to its citizens.

DAVID DE FERRANTI  
Vice President  
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office



## Introduction to Thinking Out Loud III

*KATHERINE BAIN*

**Regional Civil Society Team Leader and Senior Social Scientist  
Latin America and the Caribbean Region  
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I am pleased to be able to present the third annual publication in our Series, Thinking Out Loud. We began this series in 1999 in an attempt to increase the knowledge of regional staff by exchanging experiences among themselves on the issue of engaging civil society around World Bank products. The series has proved very popular among our own regional staff, other Bank staff and external audiences too and thus while we are also moving into more direct and interactive ways to promote the sharing of knowledge between task teams, we intend to maintain this regular series of publications.

This year we received 12 proposals from task teams anxious to disseminate their experiences in engaging civil society around World Bank products. We selected six keeping the quality of the proposal, level of innovation and thematic and country spread in mind. This year then, we are proud to present experiences in the education sector from Argentina, from the environment portfolio in Brazil, a joint El Salvador – Mexico project from the private sector in information technology, a consultative approach to the formulation of the country assistance strategy in El Salvador, an urban upgrading project from Mexico and a participatory review of the social funds portfolio in Brazil.

Each case study presents unique findings and reinforces the rationale for pursuing civic engagement to Bank products. A quick overview of the 6 projects provides more convincing evidence of reasons for engaging civil society around Bank products. However they also provide a series of lessons on challenges and observations.

In terms of **reasons for engaging civil society organizations**, these case studies suggest that such an approach can; make projects more relevant to local contexts and ultimately more sustainable; provide increased transparency and accountability around projects, ensure that new technologies are accessible to those who live in remote areas and/or lack access, produce a multiplier effect among communities, integrate sectoral projects into a more holistic approach to community development, provide links between local producers and national and global markets and promote confidence, skills and unity among otherwise disparate development actors.

While there is clearly no blue-print approach to designing such participatory approaches – rather strategies need to be **tailored to local contexts** - the cases provide some tentative recommendations for making civic engagement a rewarding experience for all involved. First, they suggest that **timely and detailed preparation** of participatory processes is essential. In the information technology project in El Salvador as well as in the country

assistance strategy in the same country, the success of the approach depended, in large part, on timely dissemination of information to participants. Second, **clarifying “rules of the game” for engagement at the outset** of participatory process avoids creating false expectations, consultation fatigue and frustration. This was illustrated in several of the case studies. Third, processes should be results oriented if they are to maintain the interest of participants. The Harnessing Information and Communication Technology project in El Salvador and Mexico provides a good example of how local ownership can be built around concrete results. Fourth, **linkages** between levels of actors or actors in different sectors can also enhance project outcomes. In the Argentina Conciencia project, for example, regional linkages promoted good sharing of information across national borders and improved the quality of the intervention. Cross country linkages also provided the impetus for the Ciudad Juarez project in Mexico, which was inspired by an earlier project in Brazil. Fourth, **understanding local and national contexts, building on existing initiatives and seizing opportunities in a timely fashion** also seems to be helpful in promoting civic engagement around World Bank products. In the Mexico - El Salvador project, for example, the team seized the moment and took rhetoric and existing initiatives in information technology or government- civil society collaboration to create the necessary infrastructure for participatory dialogue. In Brazil, the *abertura* period led to the government’s acceptance of a more collaborative approach with civil society and this enhanced the effectiveness of the project. In El Salvador, country-wide discussions about the development plan made it easier for the World Bank to discuss its own country assistance strategy openly and the information technology project in Mexico - El Salvador benefited from the Modernization Commission which was created in the wake of the peace process. Finally, in this year’s series the role of **information technology** is emphasized in a number of the case studies. In the El Salvador CAS process it was used to promote constructive dialogue and achieve minimum consensus, in the Harnessing Information and Communication Technologies project in Mexico - El Salvador information technology was used to expand the dialogue to include over 50 people from a dozen countries in an internet conference as well as to draw on international experience which was key to the projects’ success. However, information technology does not seem able to replace face-to-face dialogues or in-depth discussions and therefore should be seen as a tool which can complement other tools in participatory approaches.

The observations on **decentralization** are more mixed. Clearly decentralization is not a synonym for increased participation although, devolving responsibilities has the potential to promote enhanced local ownership and increase the relevance of specific interventions. Clearly, decentralization does not provide a recipe for success and it must be accompanied by an in-depth knowledge of local institutional dynamics, an assessment of local capacities and ultimately efforts to address local institutional strengths and weaknesses as well as interventions to build **capacity for both government and non-government** counterparts. Capacity building can seem expensive but, as the Brazil rainforest case suggests, it is well worth the investment over the long term. Without this, projects can be seriously weakened, unforeseen obstacles are quickly encountered and their sustainability is put at risk. Ensuring that the project has specific capacity building objectives and is supported by the necessary tools and investments can help to ensure that decentralized approaches reap their full potential.

The case studies also make a series of observations on the role of different actors. Several of the case studies note that **the role of civil society organizations** in products may evolve over time. Thus, in Brazil the network evolved from a broker to an actor with decision making power. In El Salvador the organizations who participated in the CAS aim to move into a role of social auditors of the strategy. However, the case studies once again, underline the challenges involved in; selecting legitimate representatives as counterparts, understanding conflicts and tensions among the civil society community, managing tensions between governments and civil society and addressing capacity gaps. These observations underline the need for clear and transparent selection of partners, based on in-depth knowledge of the sector, clear rules of the game and expertise to manage complex processes, a process designed for and resourced sufficiently for investing in civic engagement.

With respect to **the role of governments**, the case studies also make a number of observations. First and foremost, government commitment to any initiative is key to ensuring ownership and long-term sustainability. When this is not secured or is interrupted, projects can face unresolvable obstacles. Commitment however must also translate into capacity to follow up on actions. In the case of Argentina, for example, the inability of the government to provide the textbooks it had committed risks undermining the relationships and outcomes of the project. However while government support is important, the case studies suggest that avoiding identification with partisan politics is wise. The inclusive nature and the ability of projects to avoid identifying with partisan politics promotes the ultimate sustainability of projects, beyond the agenda and time frame of individual leaders or parties.

Finally, the case studies suggest that **World Bank** can play a convening role between different social actors and this ultimately serves to build trust between actors. While these inter-sectoral relationships between actors are often fragile, as was the case in the Argentina case study, these relationships can ultimately become long-term in nature. Finally, the issue of the World Bank adopting a more proactive role in requiring participation as a condition in loans is raised. While this has already been experimented with as part of the PRSP processes in heavily indebted countries, the Ciudad Juarez case closes by suggesting that it may also be appropriate to make participation a conditional part of future programmatic loans.

As you can see, this year as in previous years, the case studies presented are rich and inspiring. I would like to express my thanks to all the authors for their high quality and timely contributions to this regional efforts and their willingness to share experiences with colleagues. There is no better way of increasing our collective knowledge and learning about what we do than to learn from our experiences on the ground . I am also grateful to Moji Anderson for her patience and professionalism in the edition of the case studies. And, as always, I am grateful to Roberto Senderowitsch for his efforts in launching the series and making this the most aesthetically attractive edition, by far!



# **Lessons from the Rain Forest: Participation in the First Decade of the Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest<sup>1</sup>**

**JUDITH LISANSKY AND LORETTA SPRISLER  
WORLD BANK, WASHINGTON**

***Abstract:** The Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest has long been noted for its explicit commitment to broad civil society participation in a wide range of program activities. In an effort to gauge the impact and lessons learned from participatory processes supported under the Pilot Program, the Bank commissioned a study of the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) during the first ten years of the program. The findings of the study, which are summarized in the present article, highlight the ultimate success of the program in fostering a high level of participation of CSOs and beneficiary populations. Given the range and diversity of Pilot Program activities, however, the nature and extent of participation was shown to vary widely, ranging from simple information-sharing and consultations to integral involvement and control of project activities. Thus, one of the major lessons learned is that there is no “one size fits all” recipe for fostering meaningful participation in environmental projects; rather, certain key dimensions of project or program development must be carefully examined in order to design the most effective participatory processes.*

## **Introduction**

During the 1980s the international community became increasingly concerned about the rapid destruction of Brazil’s rain forests, both the vast Amazon region and the remnants of the Atlantic Forest along the coast. There were many reasons for this global attention, ranging from calculations about the effects of destroying the forest on the world’s climate, to the implications of losing much of its vast and largely unknown biological resources before they even became known to science. There was also concern about other vital roles that the forests play in maintaining the local climate, protecting watersheds, and providing raw materials for crafts and industry. The rain forest is also home to millions of people who depend on the forest for their livelihoods, including rubber tappers, nut gatherers, fishermen, small farmers and indigenous groups.

People and organizations in Brazil and around the world called for measures to slow or stop the destruction. In 1990, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl called for a pilot program

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based in part on research commissioned by the Bank carried out in 2000 and financed by the World Bank Strategic Compact, the Brazil Country Management Unit and the Rain Forest Trust Fund. The four-person team was comprised of Ms. Rebecca Abers – University of Brasilia (coordinator), Mr. Brent Millikan – University of California-Berkeley, Ms. Marisa von Bülow – University of Brasilia, and Mr. Paul Little – University of Brasilia. The research involved extensive document collection and review, approximately 100 structured interviews with key informants from government, civil society and the international donor community, as well as a series of targeted field visits. A full report of the study is available from the Pilot Program.

to help reduce the rate of deforestation of Brazil's rain forests. Representatives of the Brazilian government, the World Bank, and the European Commission worked together to outline a program. In 1991, the G-7 countries, the European Union and the Netherlands pledged US\$250 million for the program, and Brazil committed a minimum of 10% counterpart financing. The G-7 asked the World Bank to coordinate the program, with Brazil's Ministry of Environment acting as the lead national agency. Responsibility for project design and implementation was given to a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

Hence, the Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest got underway in 1992. The objectives of the program are to help:

- Demonstrate that sustainable economic development and conservation of the environment can both be pursued and achieved in tropical rain forests.
- Preserve the biodiversity of the rain forests.
- Reduce the rain forests' contribution to the world's emission of greenhouse gases.
- Provide an example of international cooperation between industrial and developing countries on global environmental problems.

The program is comprised of projects and pilot activities that aim to, among other things, regularize indigenous lands; provide support to local communities' sustainable development initiatives; help create active NGO networks in the Amazon and Atlantic Forests; consolidate and strengthen extractive reserves; carry out community forestry initiatives; and support community-based projects in the management and use of the river floodplain ecosystems. The program also finances a project to improve integrated environmental management in the Amazon at the state and local levels, and a subprogram to promote the generation and dissemination of key scientific knowledge (see Annex for a list of Pilot Program projects).

From its inception, one of the hallmarks of the Pilot Program has been its explicit commitment to broad participation of civil society in a wide range of program activities. This effort grew out of the recognition that many earlier investments in the Amazon and Atlantic Forest regions failed to reach their objectives because of lack of political and social support. Further, the program mandates the participation of all stakeholders, focusing in particular on the involvement of traditionally excluded groups, such as grassroots and intermediary social and environmental civil society organizations (CSOs), and the impoverished beneficiary populations with whom many of these organizations work. As such, the Pilot Program has been viewed as exemplary for its unusually high degree of participation by CSOs and beneficiary populations.

As the Pilot Program approached the end of its first decade of implementation, the Bank commissioned a study to examine participatory processes in the program. While the rhetoric of the program endorsed participation, we wondered how well we were really doing and what lessons we have learned thus far. This paper is an attempt to summarize the most important lessons learned about civil society participation in the Pilot Program.

## The Pilot Program

The Pilot Program was designed to support pilot projects and activities in a number of key thematic areas:

- **Experimentation and Demonstration** – Work in this area includes an ongoing project that funds demonstration subprojects in some 160 community organizations throughout the Amazon and Atlantic Forests which experiment with new approaches to using and conserving natural resources. In addition, another project financed the training of more than 12,000 people from 322 municipalities in fire prevention through a partnership between civil society organizations and the government, with a second phase scheduled for this year. New projects under development include one to finance support for sustainable business practices, and another to fund demonstration projects targeted specifically at indigenous communities.
- **Conservation** – This thematic area includes a project for establishing and consolidating four extractive reserves in the Amazon totaling two million hectares, an indigenous lands project that has to date demarcated almost 30 million hectares of indigenous lands, and a forest resources management project. A new project on floodplain resources management is just beginning, and another on rain forest corridors (networks that link protected areas and the buffer zones around them) is also about to come on line.
- **Institutional Strengthening** – One of the largest of the Pilot Program projects finances capacity-building at the state and municipal levels for integrated natural resource management in the nine states of the Amazon region. Other activities supported under this thematic area have included direct support for the creation and consolidation of NGO networks in the Amazon and Atlantic rain forests, and support for encouraging public-private partnerships around specific products to be produced and marketed under innovative, sustainable conditions. A new project focusing on institutional strengthening of Brazil's environment ministry is under development.
- **Scientific Research** – This thematic area has included financing to help modernize and strengthen Amazonian research centers, and support for competitive research and dissemination on key topics pertinent to the rain forest ecosystem and its peoples.
- **Lessons and Dissemination** – This includes financing of a monitoring and evaluation project for the program as well as support for preparation and dissemination of a series of studies on topics including agroforestry and forest fires.

Since the end of 1999, the Pilot Program has featured a governance structure led by the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment (MMA) with the involvement of the World Bank and international donors. Specific projects are prepared and implemented by pertinent Brazilian government agencies, often in conjunction with NGOs, private sector organizations and community groups. Participating entities include, among others, MMA, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the Brazilian Institute of the

Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), state environmental agencies, the Amazon Working Group (GTA), and the National Rubbertappers Council (CNS), to name a few.

Although the program began with approximately US\$250 million in international commitments, the amount has grown over the years to US\$350 million plus Brazilian counterpart funding. This amount includes both multilateral and bilateral projects and activities. The World Bank is involved in about 70% of the core activities, due in part to the financing it provides from trust funds established within the Bank by the donors. The donors also support various technical cooperation activities not included in the aforementioned total, and there are also 13 bilaterally financed projects (by Germany, Spain, Japan and France) that are considered to be bilateral associated projects.

### Civil Society Participation in the Pilot Program

The participation of civil society in the Pilot Program takes various forms and connects with the program and projects at different levels. At the broadest level, civil society participation has been fostered by the program through its support for the creation and consolidation of NGO networks in the Amazon and Atlantic Forest regions. In its first ten years, the Pilot Program has allocated specific funds either directly or indirectly through projects such as the community demonstration projects to assist in building the institutional capacity of the Amazon Working Group (GTA), a network of 430 CSOs working on Amazonian issues,<sup>2</sup> and the Atlantic Forest Network (RMA), which has 195 member CSOs. Furthermore, civil society representatives from both GTA and RMA have long participated in the Brazilian Coordinating Commission, which provides program oversight, and since 1999 have joined the government, the World Bank and donor representatives on the Program Steering Committee, the highest level of programmatic decision-making.

The greatest diversity of participatory processes can be found at the project level, ranging from substantial civil society influence on project design and implementation (as in, for example, the fire prevention and demonstration projects), to minimal civil society involvement in project design and execution (e.g. the science project). In general, the degree of involvement and influence of CSOs and beneficiaries in project design as well as in project implementation has tended to vary from project to project.

During the design phase of some projects, for example, CSO and beneficiary involvement has been limited to consultation, while in other projects, they have been more actively involved in project preparation. The science project, for instance, was designed with a minimum of CSO participation, especially in the definition of thematic priorities for directed research, and was ultimately criticized within the program as lacking relevance to the most pressing environmental and social problems of the Amazon and Atlantic

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<sup>2</sup> See Alfredo Wagner, "The Growing Pains of an Unprecedented Civil Society-Government Partnership in the Brazilian Amazon: The Case of the Amazon Working Group (GTA)," in *Thinking Out Loud II*, Fall 2000, Civil Society Team, Latin America and the Caribbean Region, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Forest regions. In the case of the forestry management project, which was originally proposed during the first years of the Pilot Program, a series of workshops and meetings brought together a carefully selected balance of environmental CSOs most involved in the project, local populations, the logging industry and government representatives to agree on a revised project design.

In terms of project implementation, civil society involvement has ranged from participation in formal project advisory commissions to direct responsibility for implementing project activities. For example, CSO involvement in the natural resources policy project was initially largely limited to participation on an executive committee for implementation (although, as discussed in more detail below, efforts have increased in recent years to expand civil society involvement). In the case of the community demonstration projects, CSOs have been responsible for implementing most project activities, including involvement in monitoring and evaluation activities.

Given the range of experience in participatory processes over the past ten years of Pilot Program implementation, we decided to commission a study to examine more systematically the nature of civil society participation in the program. Specifically, we wanted to get a sense of how participatory the program really is. To what extent does the Pilot Program reach beneficiary populations, especially traditionally excluded groups? How are participatory processes organized at the programmatic and project levels, and to what extent do they effectively empower CSOs and beneficiary populations in decision-making? We also wanted to try to understand the role of participatory processes in the achievement of project outcomes, both in terms of explicit project objectives and other unanticipated consequences. Lastly, we postulated that by examining this relatively large and rather complex environmental program, we might learn lessons about how to improve participation in environmental projects in general – elsewhere in Brazil and around the world.

## **Findings of the Study**

**Participatory processes have expanded to become more mainstreamed into the Pilot Program over the past decade.** The research revealed that the extent, nature and degree of civil society influence on the Pilot Program has increased since the early years of the program. This is true for a number of reasons. One is that some of the earlier community-driven projects with high CSO involvement were considered to be among the most successful projects in the program. Hence, concepts such as stakeholder involvement, building local constituencies for sustainable development, and respecting and using local and indigenous know-how gained widespread credibility in the program. At the same time, with the *abertura* or political opening of the Brazilian government in the 1980s and 1990s, there was increasing receptivity on the part of the Brazilian government to democratic processes in general, and to the inclusion of civil society organizations in decision-making processes in particular. This paved the way for the co-management of some Pilot Program projects between governmental and non-

governmental organizations, a highly unlikely arrangement in previous decades.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is important to note that during this period, many CSOs and government agencies simply gained more practical experience at working together more effectively.

As the program proceeded, the idea that participatory processes were also important for policy, scientific or institution-building projects gained acceptance. In other words, early in the Pilot Program, civil society organizations tended to be mainly limited to playing a more typical brokering role for traditionally excluded populations. By the second half of the decade, there was growing acceptance of the need for and importance of civil society participation in all aspects of the program. A prime example of this change is the integrated natural resources policy project that initially focused almost exclusively on state governments using a command and control model to improve environmental enforcement. Over time, the project's approach has slowly changed to recognize the importance of building local constituencies for improving environmental management, as well as the need for local involvement in fire prevention or other environmental education and outreach activities, and the important role of municipalities and other local groups. In sum, a comparison over time shows the progressive expansion of CSO influence and involvement in the Pilot Program, both at the project level and the program level.

**The ability of Pilot Program activities to reach beneficiary populations has also increased over time, as has the breadth of their portfolio.** From its inception the Pilot Program included projects that clearly targeted traditionally excluded populations in the tropical forests. Two of the earliest projects to come on stream have focused on producing local community benefits - one financing some 160 community-driven sustainable development subprojects, and another financing assassinated rubber tapper leader Chico Mendes' dream of establishing extractive reserves for local forest populations. Over the decade the program rapidly expanded its portfolio of activities designed to reach a broad range of local beneficiary populations. To cite just a few examples, both the forest management project and the floodplain project included components to support community management subprojects, the fire prevention activities were implemented by the GTA in cooperation with local organizations, and more recently a project was appraised to fund community development projects with indigenous groups.

We posit that this outreach to beneficiary populations occurred in part because of: (i) a growing recognition of the importance of building local political constituencies for sustainable development; (ii) increasing respect for local knowledge systems; (iii) a greater understanding of the linkages between reducing poverty and improving natural resource use and management; (iv) governmental agencies' growing experience in working effectively with various types of CSOs; (v) CSOs' increasing experience in managing program and project practicalities; and, as noted above, (vi) the positive results of the more participatory projects. It is worth emphasizing that a fundamental assumption in the Pilot Program is that many local and indigenous populations already

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in recent years the Brazilian government has supported legislation making it easier for CSOs to receive government funding for projects.

have sophisticated understandings and methods for sustainably using and managing natural resources, and that these need to be respected and harnessed in the overall search for sustainable development of this ecosystem.

Furthermore, over time, early projects with relatively little participation have expanded to include more CSO and beneficiary involvement. For example, the indigenous lands project was originally designed with relatively little direct indigenous participation, yet it progressively incorporated participatory methodologies, including direct control by indigenous people over land demarcation and boundary protection decisions, so that many of the project's field activities are increasingly managed in whole or in part by local indigenous organizations. Other examples of this trend include current efforts to incorporate civil society more adequately in the integrated natural resource project and the new science project.

As one might expect, the more detailed case studies of projects reveal that the path toward improved participation has rarely been smooth. For example, the study noted tensions and sometimes conflicts among CSOs, debates about CSO representativeness, and occasional conflicts between government agencies and CSOs, among other thorny issues. Nonetheless, it seems fair to conclude that the Pilot Program has progressively expanded its reach to beneficiary populations over the past decade.

**Although there has been a wide range of participatory processes in the program, over time civil society has generally gained decision-making power in the Pilot Program.** Given the diversity of pilot program activities, it is not surprising to find a continuum of the degree of CSO involvement, from simple information-sharing and consultations, to integral involvement and control of project activities. In examining this diversity, the study concluded that in general it was critical for CSOs to be actively involved in project preparation in order to maximize the chances of their active involvement in implementation. This has not always been the case: the indigenous lands project, for example, was prepared in the early years when the political climate was less hospitable to indigenous participation. However, the implementation of the project has led to a steady increase in the involvement and decision-making power of indigenous groups.

Another interesting point highlighted by the study was the presence of both formal and informal mechanisms of participation at the programmatic and project levels. Civil society involvement in Pilot Program activities takes place both through formal mechanisms – such as seats on committees and the like – and also through informal mechanisms derived in part from increased interactions of the players and increased access of CSO representatives to decision-makers, particularly in the capital (Brasilia). The study also observed that the degree of influence on decision-making is not always well correlated with the extent of participation in formal mechanisms. For example, some project advisory committees without formal decision-making power may have more influence than others with assigned authority, apparently due to less tangible factors such as the receptivity of government agencies to such input and the usefulness of committee recommendations.

Lastly, a common indicator of CSO power in decision-making is the degree of control over funds. In this area, the Pilot Program has moved over time to provide greater decision-making power to groups implementing subprojects. However, the study also found that simply transferring money to CSOs is not always the most beneficial strategy. In the case of the community demonstration projects, while most of the funds were transferred directly to the local groups managing the 160 community projects, some critics argued that this was done at the expense of providing adequate technical support to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of local implementing organizations. Conversely, in the extractive reserves project, where much more effort was expended by the government agency to strengthen local reserve organizations, the project has been criticized by the beneficiaries for not giving enough decision-making power and autonomy to local groups.

**Effective participatory processes contribute to improved project results.** In numerous Pilot Program projects one can repeatedly observe that the participation of local groups is often a critical means to the end of achieving key project objectives. This is true, for example, of the extractive reserves project where strengthening the ability of local organizations – reserve associations and local neighborhood organizations – to sustainably manage the natural resources, while helping to improve the well-being of the population, were project objectives. Numerous evaluations of the first four-year phase of this project showed considerable success in performance indicators which is directly correlated with the high level of local participation in the project. With respect to the indigenous lands project, there is also little doubt in most observers’ minds that highly participatory demarcations of indigenous lands provide project outcomes that are better, in terms of accuracy of information, local ownership and longer-term sustainability.

In addition, another important aspect of highly participatory projects are their unanticipated benefits. For example, while some evaluations noted the success of numerous community-driven PD/A subprojects, various evaluations noted that other subprojects fell short or even failed in their final objective. Nonetheless, evaluators also noted that the experience of working on a subproject made significant local-level contributions to technical and operational skills, confidence and experience with organizations and joint undertakings, and so forth.

In summary, the link between participation and improved outcomes is generally well supported in the Pilot Program.

## **Lessons Learned**

**There is no “one size fits all” recipe for participation in environmental projects.** Rather, our analysis supports the notion that prior to attempting to design participatory processes that it is important to consider empirically three sets of factors, (i) the relevance of the objectives of the project to the target population, and especially to traditionally excluded populations. That is, what a project is for, and the possible benefits to local people is a critical variable to consider in planning participation; (ii) the level of interest

and degree of experience and capability of pertinent CSOs and beneficiary groups; and (iii) the level of interest, degree of experience and ability of the pertinent government agencies with regard to participatory processes.

**It is critical that appropriate institutional strengthening of CSOs and beneficiary groups be included in project design when CSOs and beneficiaries are given significant implementation responsibilities.** To this end, it is important to adequately evaluate the CSOs and groups who will play active roles in facilitating or implementing projects or subprojects, particularly in terms of their specialized skills and knowledge, as well as their technical and operational experience, in order to provide technical assistance or training as needed. In our study, it was clear that while CSOs often had numerous comparative advantages for working with beneficiary populations, they sometimes lacked specific technical know-how and/or administrative skills in, for example, financial management.

**The experience and capacity of government agencies to promote effective participation must also be evaluated, and strengthened if required.** Many government agencies that participated in the Pilot Program had, especially at the beginning of the decade, virtually no experience or track record of collaboration with CSOs or beneficiary populations, and some government agencies were viewed quite negatively by local populations. The study noted several times that the best participatory practices were linked to smaller sub-groups of particularly dedicated and experienced governmental staff.

**Additional financial costs of participation are worthwhile, and it is important to use a more nuanced approach to thinking about the costs of participatory processes.** In other words, while participation can obviously increase project costs, for additional meetings, travel, technical assistance and training, for example, the costs must be viewed in terms of the gains – such as errors avoided or increased local ownership – which are difficult to assign a monetary value. In addition, monetary costs of participation are frequently counterbalanced by considerable contributions in kind, which are also rarely priced.

Both formal and informal participatory processes have a role to play, although the correct balance between them may be difficult to predict. While it is important to mandate formal processes, such as advisory committees and the like, such formal mechanisms can be relatively easily distorted or undermined, such as in projects which virtually ignore advisory committee recommendations. Similarly, informal mechanisms also have drawbacks: for instance, they can allow greater access of some individuals and organizations over others.

## **Conclusion**

We conclude that the Pilot Program has indeed been exemplary in terms of the high level of participation of CSOs and beneficiary populations. It is also clear that participation in the program has increased and become mainstreamed over the past decade. Because of

the diversity as well as the innovative nature of this pilot program, it can be viewed as a laboratory that has tested out various approaches. Earlier successes were obtained in projects focused on beneficiary communities and were further maximized by the existence of capable CSOs as well as government agencies willing and prepared to collaborate with civil society. The Pilot Program has moved further into experimentation with participatory processes into what might be called “non-traditional” areas of involvement with the program and with projects dealing with policy issues. These constitute the challenges for the future.

In our analysis we tried to generate lessons learned that go beyond the Brazilian Pilot Program. As such, we conclude that participation should not follow set formulae but rather that certain key dimensions (as discussed above) must be empirically examined in order to design the most effective methods for participatory processes.

## ANNEX

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### **Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest**

#### **Completed Projects**

Science Centers and Directed Research Project  
Science Centers and Emergency Assistance  
Fire Prevention, Mobilization and Training Project  
Direct Support to Rede Mata Atlantica  
Direct Support to GTA

#### ***Ongoing Projects***

Natural Resources Policy Project  
Demonstration Projects (PD/A)  
Indigenous Lands Project  
Extractive Reserves Project  
Forest Resources Management Project  
Floodplain Resources Management Project  
Directed Research – Second Call for Proposals  
Monitoring and Analysis Project

#### **Projects in Preparation**

Program Coordination by Government Project  
Ecological Corridors Project  
Indigenous Peoples Demonstration Projects (PDPI)  
Demonstration Projects (Type B)  
Fire and Deforestation Control  
Support to Sustainable Business Practices  
Science Subprogram, Phase II  
Additional Direct Support to Rede Mata Atlântica  
Additional Direct Support to GTA



# **“Mejoremos Nuestro Barrio”**

## **Neighborhood Participatory Planning in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico**

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**Abstract:** *This note describes the neighborhood-based participatory planning process undertaken in two low-income, informal settlements in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico in 2000. The process represents a breakthrough for the city on several levels. First, it is the first experience of integrated participatory planning on a neighborhood level that has ever been undertaken in Ciudad Juárez and serves as a departure from the one-off investments typically made in these areas. Second, it represents the possibility of more effectively and efficiently allocating municipal funds for the financing of basic services and infrastructure in the informal settlements, based on the expressed demand of the beneficiaries themselves. Finally, as nearly 40% of the total population of Ciudad Juárez lives in informal settlements, the pilot project serves as a basis for scaling up the use of participatory planning by training a critical mass of technicians and community members in participatory methodologies.*

### **Background and Objective**

With growth rates reaching between 5 and 7% per annum during the 1990s, the cities of Mexico’s northern border region are experiencing explosive population growth. Fueled by the prospect of employment in the area’s export processing zones (*maquiladoras*), and its proximity to the United States, the northern border region of Mexico continues to experience growth pressures due to high rates of migration. As a result of this rapid growth, the region has witnessed increased demand for land, housing and urban services, particularly from low-income populations. With demand far outstripping supply, the result has been a proliferation of informal human settlements where myriad social problems exist and urban services, infrastructure and housing are frequently deficient, often severely so. The areas occupied by these low-income families are known locally as *colonias*. Ciudad Juárez, in the state of Chihuahua, is one of the fastest-growing cities in the northern border region and one in which more than 40% of the population live in colonias. Table 1 shows the growth of Ciudad Juárez between 1950 and 1995.

**Table 1: Ciudad Juárez: Urban Growth**

Year	Population		Urban Area	
	Population	Population Growth Rate	Hectares of Occupation	Percent Increase
1950	131,308		800	
1960	276,995	7.7%	1,894.00	136.8%
1970	424,135	4.5%	5,606.00	196.0%
1980	567,365	2.8%	9,385.00	67.4%
1990	798,499	3.6%	14,049.27	49.7%
1995	1,010,553	4.7%	19,006.01	35.3%

Source: *Instituto Municipal de Investigaciones y Planeación, 1999*

Since the 1960s the urban area of Ciudad Juárez has grown by more than 250%, while the population has more than tripled during this same period. Today, more than 36% of the population of the state of Chihuahua lives in Ciudad Juárez. Of this population, more than 45% live in marginal settlements, mostly in the *Zona Poniente*, representing more than 460,000 people.<sup>4</sup> The living standard and socioeconomic conditions in this area are notoriously poor, despite relatively high levels of employment available in the *maquila* and service sectors of the economy. In fact, nearly 40% of the population of the Zona Poniente lives in extreme poverty. Table 2 shows the various dimensions to the Zona Poniente's marginality.

**Table 2: Factors of Marginality**

<b>Factors of Marginality</b>	
<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A physical separation by railroad tracks demarcates an economic separation from the "formal city."</li> <li>• The topography (hills and valleys) renders the cost of providing infrastructure and services very high.</li> <li>• Given the large geographic expanse of the area, successive local governments have continually provided only stop-gap investments, forgoing comprehensive planning and progressive investments.</li> </ul>
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The problem of unclear title to occupied land has hindered the local authorities' ability to provide public services.</li> </ul>
<b>Socioeconomic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been minimal economic investment in this area; other areas have been a higher priority for economic development.</li> <li>• The area has the highest concentration of drug use and drug activity, and the highest proportion of juvenile delinquency.</li> <li>• Education levels are among the lowest in the city.</li> <li>• Over 45% of the population lives in poverty: 36% of the poor are children and 30% adolescents and young adults.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The infant mortality rate is 22/1,000.</li> <li>• At least one third of the population suffers from inadequate nutrition.</li> <li>• Diarrhea and infectious diseases are common due to poor hygienic conditions, including lack of sanitary services.</li> <li>• A lack of road paving (50% of roads are unpaved) causes severe respiratory problems, due to high levels of dust.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are limited formal mechanisms in place to coordinate community involvement with government actions.</li> <li>• There are no processes in place to develop a medium- and long-term integrated action plan for improving living conditions in each of the settlements in the area, moving from the large scale of the <i>Plan Parcial</i> to the neighborhood level.</li> </ul>

In coping with explosive urban growth, Ciudad Juárez has a key institutional advantage over other cities in similar situations: IMIP, the Municipal Research and Planning Institute, a semi-autonomous organization modeled after the planning institute established in the 1960s in Curitiba, Brazil. Having a technically competent institution that regularly collects and analyzes information and produces plans and projects for the city is a valuable asset, not least because it encourages other municipal departments to adopt a longer-term perspective.

<sup>4</sup> As of 1995. This number has in all likelihood increased since then.

Around 1995, the IMIP prepared the *Plan Parcial de la Zona Poniente*, the first attempt by the municipal government of Ciudad Juárez to systematically study the area and propose a series of investments aimed at physically and economically integrating the area with the rest of the city. Despite successful preparation of the plan, the institute lacked the tools for further devolution to the community or neighborhood level, as it had no history of operating at the micro-planning scale. The IMIP understood that for the plan to be considered legitimate, it had to initiate a process of community planning that could be used to prioritize smaller-scale investments at the neighborhood level. The Bank, with financing from a Japanese grant, helped the IMIP to develop and carry out a pilot neighborhood planning process. The Brazilian consulting firm of *Diagonal Urbana Consultores Ltd.* provided the IMIP with technical assistance in designing, carrying out and evaluating the pilot.

The objective of the pilot was to develop a planning process that could be adapted to local conditions, starting from the participatory area development planning experience acquired in urban upgrading processes in Brazil. The planning process was designed to be participatory and integrated, identifying principal problems and potential solutions to social and physical infrastructure and urban service deficiencies at the neighborhood level. As a planning tool, the participatory planning process was intended to feed into the municipal budgeting process so that investments in areas such as infrastructure could be programmed according to priorities identified in the planning process, allowing for the most efficient use of limited public resources. Likewise, it was to be used as a means for other municipal agencies, such as those dealing with health and education, to better target their programs and resources. Importantly, it was also intended to change the process of undertaking “one-off” investments in these poor neighborhoods in favor of a system of phased, integrated, prioritized and planned investments as articulated by the community residents, and vetted by planning professionals.

### **The Pilot Program Process**

In 1999, the IMIP undertook another planning exercise in the Zona Poniente to supplement the Plan Parcial. This time, the planning included a series of thematic workshops involving public sector institutions, civil society organizations and members of the general population. This process resulted in a series of macro-level recommendations aimed at ensuring the Zona Poniente’s environmental sustainability, appropriate urban structure, improved social development and economic viability. The process also revealed the need to bring the participatory planning approach down to the neighborhood level. Thus in 2000, the neighborhood-based pilot program was implemented.

The pilot program supported by the Bank resulted in the adoption of a Community Strategic Plan (*Plan Estratégico Comunitario*) for two low-income neighborhoods: López Mateos and Díaz Ordaz. Together these contiguous neighborhoods comprise about 1,600 families. The plan lays out an integrated approach to improving the living conditions in these two colonias, and is based upon a year’s worth of work that included surveys, focus groups, interviews and community fora leading to the development of the plan. The focus of this paper is the process behind completion of the neighborhood strategic plans.

*Selecting the Pilot Area:* The Zona Poniente consists of 14 *Centros de Barrios*, or agglomerations of urban neighborhoods. The first phase of the pilot was to select the pilot area. To do this, IMIP used three criteria, each weighted differently: social consolidation, urban consolidation and risk (as shown in Table 3). Urban consolidation evaluated variables such as potable water coverage, drainage, electricity service, paving of roads, and land tenure. Social consolidation looked at whether there were social organizations like neighborhood associations and NGOs present and active in the area, while risk considered natural and environmental risks. Other considerations were the presence of government institutions, schools and public security.

**Table 3: Selection Criteria for Pilot Area**

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>		
Urban Consolidation (Weight = 1)	High Urban Consolidation Low Urban Consolidation	+2 0
Social Consolidation (Weight = 1.5)	High Social Consolidation Low Social Consolidation	+2 0
Risk (Weight = 0.5)	High Risk Low Risk	0 +2

It was decided that the pilot area should be less complicated than other areas, since this was the first attempt at local participatory planning. Accordingly, social consolidation factored highest in the criteria, as it was felt that it would be easiest to work with a well organized and represented community. The area known as Sector CASA, namely the colonias of López Mateos and Díaz Ordaz, was selected for the pilot program, scoring highest (or lowest) in most of the evaluation criteria. Data on these settlements is shown in Box 1 below.

**Box 1: Pilot Area Characteristics**

<b>Some Data on Colonias López Mateos and Díaz Ordaz</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area = 78.15 hectares comprising 1,684 lots; population = 6,064 people</li> <li>• They follow settlement patterns typical of informally subdivided land</li> <li>• There is a strong civil society presence, especially community-based organizations and NGOs active in community development</li> <li>• 33% of the population is under 14 years of age</li> <li>• The illiteracy rate is 8% and only 32% of the adult population has completed primary education</li> <li>• Roughly 20% of the population is from outside of Ciudad Juárez</li> <li>• 45% of workers work in the maquiladoras and 20% work in the informal sector</li> <li>• 50% of households earn between 1-3 minimum salaries and 40% earn less than 1 minimum salary</li> <li>• Major risks include poor access, unstable hillsides and potential problems with flash floods</li> <li>• About 10% of water connections are illegal and water service quality is poor</li> <li>• Only 15% of the roads are paved</li> </ul>

One of the key criteria for the selection of the area was the presence of NGOs, such as CASA (which lent its name to the area), *Juventud con Visión* (Visionary Youth) and others, which are funded by a variety of Mexican and international sources and provide a range of social services to the population of the area. These NGOs took active part in the IMIP-sponsored series of thematic workshops on the development of the Zona Poniente in 1999. They also employ some of the most skilled social sector operators in Ciudad Juárez.

As it turned out, however, the strong presence of social support NGOs in the selected area and their active involvement in the pilot program proved to be a mixed blessing. Advocacy is one of the main roles that such organizations traditionally play, and their capacity to provide socio-technical support to a participatory planning process proved limited. Additionally, political circumstances in Mexico have led them to rely on private and foreign sources of funding and a confrontational attitude towards government has developed, making it difficult to form meaningful partnerships. As well, they tend to present themselves as the “true” representatives of the poor, even though the mechanisms of representation do not guarantee that the process is reaching the poor. Despite the genuine efforts made by the organizations of the CASA sector, and the important contributions they made to the project, it was necessary to establish direct participation mechanisms with the poor to help overcome the perceived shortcomings.

In adapting the Brazilian participatory planning experience to the conditions in Ciudad Juárez, several obstacles specific to the local situation had to be overcome. In Brazil, experience has led to the use of integrated interdisciplinary teams, composed of urban sector professionals (engineers, architects) and social sector professionals (sociologists, social workers), to provide social and technical support to communities involved in participatory planning. Such teams are usually either part of a municipal departmental structure or part of a social intermediation contractor’s team. The key point, though, is that these are *integrated* teams that undergo training together and have developed a habit of collaborating and understanding each other’s language and approach. In Ciudad Juárez, the lead institution for the work was IMIP, whose staff is composed mainly of architects and planners. This meant that while the planning part was accounted for, the social dimension required outsourcing. IMIP solved this by hiring social sector professionals linked to local universities and active in the various NGOs that are part of the social support network of the Zona Poniente.

While this was probably the only available means of completing the skill set necessary for the project, it also meant that professionals with distinct backgrounds and organizational cultures were working together for the first time. This led to difficulties as each disciplinary team, which received specific training from the consultants, had to adapt to the requirements of interdisciplinary work. While in the case of the planners the main challenge was to adapt to the micro-scale of the exercise and to the requirement of building the process around consultations with residents, for the social sector personnel the challenge was a greater one. They had in fact to adapt to a wholly different logic and set of criteria for community representation, which went much beyond the groups with which they usually work to provide social services. The end result of this was that activities flowed more smoothly and the Brazilian methodology proved easier to replicate on the planning side of the initiative. While this was addressed during the pilot by increased emphasis on social sector technical assistance, it is clear that special emphasis will need to be placed on the training of social sector professionals for the scaling-up of the participatory planning approach in Ciudad Juárez.

*Participatory Planning Process:* The pilot proposed several phases of participation, including a diagnostic phase, action planning, development of a hierarchy of actions and works and a strategic action plan. The follow-up pilot will result in the execution of the

strategic action plan and the development of a program of monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the second pilot will focus on institutionalizing and refining the first experience.

The *diagnostic* phase engaged civil society through a variety of mechanisms, with the aim of linking community perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of their neighborhoods with more formal studies undertaken by experts in various urban disciplines. In that regard, the project team, which consisted of urban planners, architects and sociologists, among others, engaged the community through:

- A survey of 1,476 households in the two colonias, identifying socioeconomic characteristics of the population, housing conditions, urban service coverage and identification and recognition of community organizations and community leaders;
- A series of focus groups and interviews with community members, activists and leaders which were used to identify the historical process of occupation of the area and formation of community organizations and leaders, as well as to gain knowledge of the community's perception of the major issues affecting quality of life in the colonias;
- A series of urban workshops in seven different geographical areas of the two colonias which focused on identifying the physical and territorial problems as perceived by the community members;
- A series of technical studies which analyzed the natural environment of the area, drainage systems, potable water systems, land use, population density, incompatible uses, potential uses and areas of natural risk.

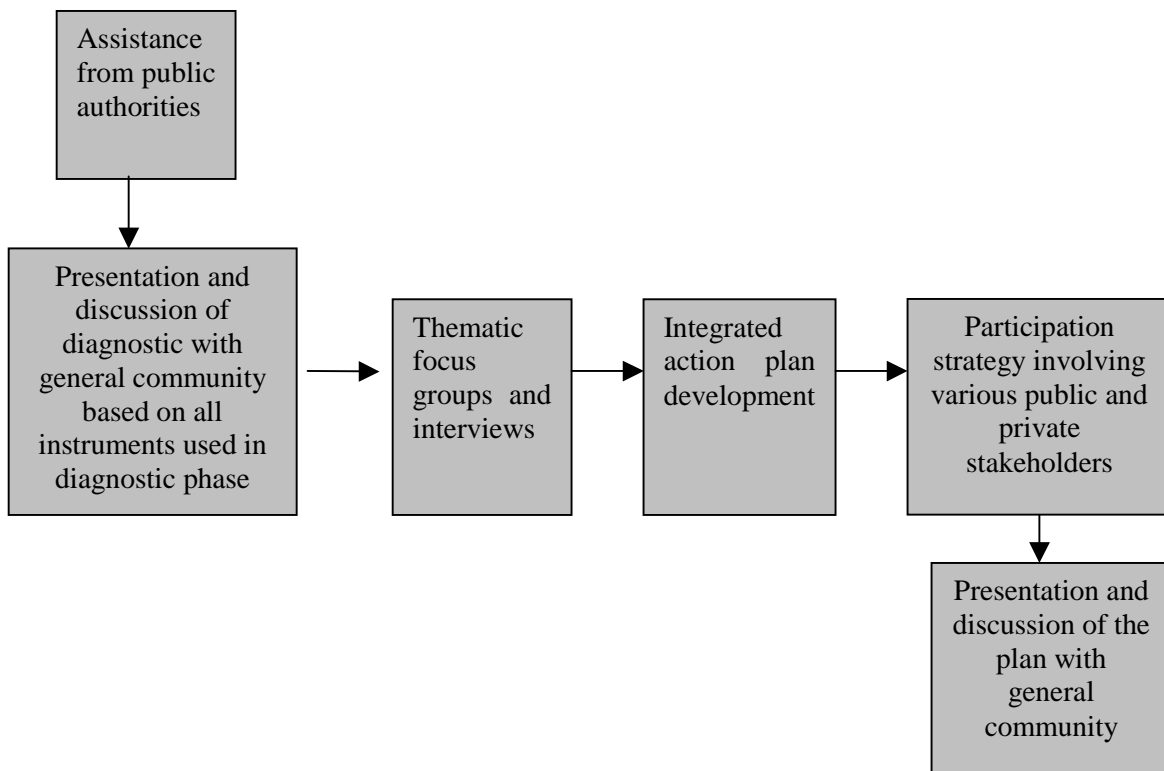
NGOs were chosen to participate according to two criteria: (i) those already active in the community; and (ii) the largest NGOs operating in Ciudad Juárez. Initial workshops were held with them to gain their interest and support. In the case of the former, they participated in the workshops because of their active involvement in the community. However, they were reluctant to fully engage in new modalities of participation, preferring to adhere to the mechanisms they had been using for years. They were most helpful in addressing thematic issues related to their specialty areas. Some of the latter group of NGOs were not interested in participating, in some cases because of their secrecy about their methods, clients, systems and the like. Others did not participate in the initiative because they considered themselves service providers rather than promoters of participatory processes.

The diagnostic phase led to the development of an integrated diagnostic and a guide for intervention in the area. Community participation in information-gathering and analysis, a key feature of the diagnostic phase, allowed local residents to contribute first-hand local knowledge and benefit from the analytical skills of the technicians who took part in the process. Indeed, this interaction is a key feature of the methodology, which explains why the whole process is built around it. Each output of the process is a product of an organized set of discussions between planners and community. These discussions take place between the technicians of the interdisciplinary team and community groups that are formed on the basis of a specific thematic interest (such as a mothers' group or an environmental sanitation group) or a geographic focus (such as the residents of a

particular sector of the community). Selecting participants for these groups and ensuring that the groups are representative is perhaps one of the trickiest and most important parts of the whole process. Studying the dynamics of leadership in the area, and making sure that all the people and organizations with a recognized leadership role buy into the process, by involving them in the different aspects of the process, is a difficult but essential task. The Brazilian experience provided a blueprint for this, which had to be adapted to Ciudad Juárez needs. This was the initial focus of much of the social sector technical assistance provided by Diagonal Urbana.

The diagnostic phase was followed by *action planning*, which set out to define the actions necessary for providing solutions to the problems discovered in the diagnostic phase. The action planning phase consisted of more focused urban environmental studies, coupled with thematically specific focus groups comprised of participants from the community who were dealing personally with relevant issues, such as health, employment, education, urban services, and so on. In addition, the technical team, together with the focus groups, analyzed the possibilities for public sector participation and partnership in solving problems related to these issues. Figure 1 sets out the strategy employed in this phase.

**Figure 1: Integrated Action Planning**



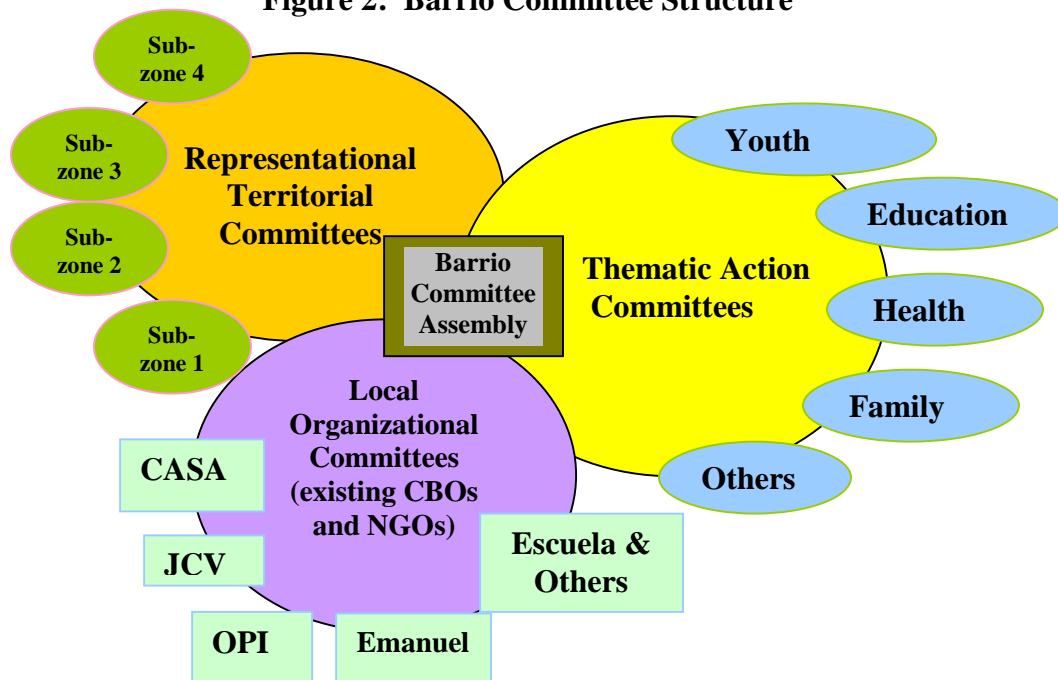
The third phase consisted of developing a *hierarchy of actions and works* aimed at improving the quality of life in the areas mentioned above. These actions were developed from the participatory diagnostic and action planning phases and included short-, medium- and long-term actions. In addition, public, private and community-based

institutions were identified as possible partners in carrying out these actions. The neighborhood's *strategic action plan* proposes actions in the areas of health, education, housing, risk management, environment, infrastructure, roads and transport, territorial reserves and public security.

This is the phase reached under the pilot program. The next step will be the plan's implementation, as well as the replication of the methodology in two further areas in the Zona Poniente. These activities will be the object of a second Bank-supported pilot, which started in June 2001. It is proposed that the monitoring and evaluation of the plan's execution be done through the formation of local *Barrio Committees*, that would be geographically, organizationally and thematically focused (as shown in Figure 2).

By adopting this structure, a broader range of civil society organizations can be brought into the planning process by incorporating existing organizations into the process. In the pilot area, for example, there are a number of community-based organizations with thematic expertise, such as youth associations, youth sports groups, and parent-teacher associations. In addition, the area has a number of geographically-based organizations, such as neighborhood associations, that cut across a number of thematic areas. These community-based organizations are complemented by a number of important NGOs active in the area with a history of working with the community on a variety of issues. This approach is expected to bring balance to the participation process and further open the process by applying equal weight to the various stakeholders in decision making. The proposed barrio committee structure, however, will require further testing and evaluation.

**Figure 2: Barrio Committee Structure**



Another key aspect of the second pilot is that it will provide an opportunity and a basis upon which to institutionalize participatory area development planning in Ciudad Juárez. Other municipal departments, such as Public Works, Social Development and Municipal

Planning and Coordination, were initially skeptical of IMIP’s initiative, but have come to recognize the value that the new instrument can add to their own activities. Accordingly, they will be much more involved in the activities of the second pilot.

## Lessons Learned

The participatory planning process followed in the Ciudad Juárez pilot challenges existing sector-based institutional frameworks. The process has its short-term costs on both the demand and the supply side, which are superseded by benefits in the long term (see Table 4 below for a cost-benefit analysis of the process).

**Table 4: Costs and Benefits of the Participation Process**

<u>Costs</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
<p>The participation process rejects traditional sector-based approaches to planning, by involving the community in integrated development planning. This threatens sector department heads, and has potential political costs.</p> <p>Areas with strong political groups or advocacy NGOs can actually hinder the participatory process if it is not managed well. This was the case in the two pilot areas of Ciudad Juárez where certain NGOs operated on the notion that they alone represented the community.</p> <p>Mobilizing a strong cross section of civil society takes time and resources. One of the actors not well represented in the Ciudad Juárez pilot was the private sector. This is an important absence, given the high percentage of the population employed in the maquila industries, and should be redressed in the program.</p> <p>The costs of mobilizing the community are high. The financial cost of the first pilot is estimated at about US\$200K for a one-year planning process. Taking the pilot to scale requires more resources, training a critical mass of interlocutors, and empowering communities to provide horizontal support to other communities. This takes time in the face of short (three year) political terms at the local level.</p>	<p>In the long term, the participatory process forces public officials to be more accountable and make investments that are demand-responsive, rather than politically expedient.</p> <p>IMIP’s position as a semi-autonomous planning agency can improve the chances of coordinating the process with municipal officials from other departments as well as involving locally-based stakeholders.</p> <p>Broadened participation enhances the sustainability of investments and can potentially increase cost-recovery at the municipal level. It also empowers residents and has the potential to build their social capital and capacity to interact with public authorities, making them more accountable.</p> <p>When the program is fully implemented, mobilization costs will decline. In addition, in the case of Ciudad Juárez, the private sector has expressed interest in capitalizing a community investment trust fund, provided they have assurances that funds will be used transparently and in accordance with expressed demand. Thus the process has the potential to leverage additional financing.</p>

**Much of the success of participatory approaches depends upon the ability of the supply side to coordinate its various institutional partners and present itself to the community as a unified interlocutor.** This process has shown that the poor do not separate their experience of poverty into compartments; rather, their demands for improvements in their quality of life are expressed on a continuum. Therefore, participatory methodologies are forced to incorporate the different sectoral and technical perspectives in a more holistic way. The coordination effort could be seen then as one of the costs of the process, but it certainly yields a long-term benefit, since the ability to work in an integrated manner is a very important asset in urban upgrading.

**Provision of socio-technical support to the community becomes a benefit in the long run.** This helps structure the demand side, and yields long-term benefits by making projects demand-responsive and more sustainable, and by improving community capacity to interact with development agents.

**Government institutions are not necessarily always willing to suffer the initial costs.** This is clearly seen in the Juárez example, in which departments such as Public Works and Social Services have great coordination difficulties, lacking the proper tools and experience to institute programs that call for meaningful participation, and often choosing not to engage in the more costly proposition of undertaking real inter-institutional coordination and providing adequate socio-technical support.

The case of the Municipal Planning and Coordination Department of Ciudad Juárez (COPLADEM), on the other hand, presents some novel elements, and is a promising development. This recently constituted municipal department has begun to explore participatory mechanisms in earnest, and, although it has not yet faced up in full to the need to shoulder the short-term cost, it is looking seriously into the possibility of using the participatory area planning methodology being formulated by IMIP as a means of developing its own project pipeline. One of the obstacles to the institutionalization of the approach is that while IMIP has planning as its central mission, the incentive structure for other municipal departments is more linked to short-term gains, which makes the “short-term cost for long-term benefits” logic of participation less palatable.

**Not all civil society organizations may be willing to participate.** The willingness to become involved in initiatives will depend on the organization’s own agenda, structure and *modus operandi*. However, it is still important to offer the option of participation to as wide a selection of civil society organizations as possible, in order to foster an atmosphere of openness and inclusion. Partnering with civil society organizations to entrust them with the execution of participatory area development planning activities, however, may present problems if such organizations are not willing or able to adopt an inclusive logic of participation, and to use and contribute to a proven methodological base. Some civil society organizations, while good at providing services, have no experience with planning, and have difficulty adapting to the new requirements that participatory planning presents. It is thus essential to assess the kinds of contribution that each organization may bring to the process, before making decisions on the assignment of tasks to partner organizations.

**Careful selection of CSOs for participation, using pre-determined criteria, is important for the success of any participatory initiative.** In order to encourage the most productive participation possible, it is necessary to establish pre-defined criteria for selection of CSOs for participation. This example suggests two such criteria: technical capacity and willingness to collaborate.

### **Implications for Bank-Financed Projects**

Participation has become a cornerstone of Bank-financed urban projects, particularly those that focus on the improvement of urban slums. The experience in Ciudad Juárez adds to our understanding of the impact of participation and will allow us to better design future projects. This is particularly relevant to the case of Mexico, where the Bank and Government of Mexico are currently discussing the prospects for a national program of urban upgrading and housing. In the context of civil society participation, the case of Ciudad Juárez can serve as a model for other municipalities in developing similar processes. The interest of COPLADEM in adopting the IMIP process of participatory planning indicates that there is the potential for political acceptance. COPLADEM is the primary agency responsible for investment of RAMO 33<sup>5</sup> funds, one of the largest of the federal government transfer programs to municipalities. Adopting an integrated and participatory planning process in the allocation of those funds will improve the efficiency and transparency of the allocation process.

Similar methodologies could be adopted in Bank-financed social funds. One of the primary criticisms of such funds is that they tend to finance projects without regard to broader sector issues. The methodology used in Ciudad Juárez combines the notion of demand-driven, with an integrated sector approach to determine the most logical sequence of investments that should be undertaken considering short-, medium- and long-term time horizons. Thus investments are based on a rational investment plan, rather than selected through an ad hoc process. Adopting a similar approach in social funds projects might improve their effectiveness. Similarly, the participatory process can serve as a condition for programmatic approaches to Bank lending. In the urban sector, several cities in Latin America condition the application of project funds on ensuring that there is meaningful community participation to determine the best use of funds. In considering, for example, a possible urban adjustment or urban poverty programmatic loan, a condition for disbursement could be ensuring that effective participation processes are in place that guarantee transparent use and flow of resources to poor communities.

Finally, the Ciudad Juárez experience served to improve cross-country linkages in the region. The experience in Ciudad Juárez is a modified version of participatory planning used in such Brazilian cities as Belo Horizonte, brought to Ciudad Juárez by the consulting firm that provided IMIP with technical assistance. During an evaluation of the pilot, which involved a number of stakeholders, several public officials who had initially been skeptical of the process expressed their new-found appreciation for participatory planning. As the Mayor of Ciudad Juárez explained during the official presentation of the finished plan to the Sector CASA community, “in the beginning this was an abstract idea that seemed not to have relevance to the local context. It was Brazilian. By the end of the process however, the participatory planning process became that of Ciudad Juárez.” This kind of cross-country linkage strengthens Bank-financed projects.

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<sup>5</sup> RAMO refers to the line item of the budget.



# **Civil Society Participation in Harnessing Information and Communication Technologies: A Comparative Analysis of MSME Support Programs in El Salvador and Mexico**

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***Abstract:** With the dramatic improvement in communications access and the declining cost of personal computers, the 1990s saw a renewed belief among many international assistance agencies in the role of technology in poverty alleviation. In particular, information and communications technologies (ICTs) are assumed to lower the transactions costs for micro-enterprises and small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) of accessing market intelligence, sourcing inputs, marketing outputs, and obtaining training services and other information. It is also recognized that ICTs can help develop and disseminate “knowledge products,” whose benefits can be shared among the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs). In this context, civil society participation is also increasingly considered a critical determinant of whether the “collective goods” necessary to ensure sustainable outcomes with ICT-enabled poverty reduction strategies can be achieved in project design and implementation. This paper analyzes and compares two Latin American experiences with civil society participation in the formulation and implementation of projects aimed at supporting the development of MSMEs using ICTs. The paper suggests that in order for ICT-based interventions to enable MSMEs to benefit from or produce new goods and services, civil society participation is needed to ensure that ICTs are used to generate relevant content for which there is sustainable demand.*

## **Projects’ Objectives and Activities**

Overall enterprise competitiveness and integration into global markets are key objectives pursued within specific preparation or implementation activities of the two projects – the *Competitiveness Enhancement Technical Assistance Project* in El Salvador (under implementation since 1995) and the *Mexico Southeast Regional Development Project* (under preparation since 1999). Micro-enterprises and small and medium enterprises’ (MSME) competitiveness is also a major part of these objectives.

Both projects have featured participatory activities in their preparation or implementation phases that harness information and communication technologies in order to improve access to local, regional and global markets, as well as to facilitate learning and knowledge transfers. Notwithstanding these broadly similar objectives, the contexts, approaches and specific activities of the two projects have differed in the following respects:

- In El Salvador, in the wake of major economic reforms following the 1992 peace agreement, an innovative national-level initiative called the “Learning Society”

was established, coordinated by a specially-created tripartite organization affiliated with the Ministry of Finance for administrative purposes and comprising government, the private sector and civil society, called *Conectándonos Al Futuro* (“Connecting us to the Future”). The national policy environment was ripe for the acceptance of new global initiatives to better harness knowledge and information to aid development. The learning society scheme entailed the creation of “learning circles” in six thematic areas: municipal and community development, migration, learning organizations, education, MSMEs, and rural development. In the MSME learning circle, representatives from national and local governments, NGOs, other CSOs and the private sector collaborated in the identification of: (i) constraints to MSME productivity caused by inadequate access to information, and (ii) new and sustainable mechanisms for alleviating these problems through improved “social learning.” The result of this initiative – a national association of telecenters to help improve connectivity, access and the dissemination of information and expertise – was initially funded with the proceeds of the privatization of the national telecommunications operator.

- In Mexico, several studies had shown that MSMEs, especially those in the southern states, had not benefited from trade liberalization under NAFTA. In response to a study financed by a World Bank grant, an effort was made to consolidate and improve the effectiveness of nearly two hundred federal MSME support programs through greater involvement of local government, community and private sector organizations. This was the basis of the innovative project described in Box 1. A specific effort was also made to identify mechanisms through which information and communication technologies could be used to support new mechanisms for delivery of information, knowledge and learning to MSMEs. In three states – Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo – different initiatives embodying these decentralized approaches to MSME development have been identified, and are expected to be funded primarily by local governments and the private sector.

### **Box 1**

#### **Mexico: The Southeast Regional Development Project**

The liberalization of trade and investment begun in the mid-1980s, together with Mexico's entry into NAFTA in 1994, were intended to stimulate economic growth by expanding the country's participation in dynamic external markets and facilitating access to high quality inputs and technologies. It was hoped that this greater outward orientation and its associated efficiency gains would extend to a large share of productive sector firms. However, Mexico remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America. Some states in the south are still suffering extreme poverty, excluded from the benefits of trade integration.

Regional and local economic growth led by the private sector is critical to development in Mexico. The proposed project is expected to help remove obstacles to sustainable growth, thereby clearing the way for private sector growth and competitiveness. This situation is most crucial for the states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatán, which have not developed substantial entrepreneurial capacity. Campeche's economy is based on oil exports, Quintana Roo's on tourism and Yucatán's on primary products (honey, etc), meaning that they have few or no linkages with the rest of the local economy. These three states are characterized by a high proportion of microbusinesses, which suffer from lack of access to affordable, reliable, appropriately designed financial and non-financial services, and timely market information.

The project will test the use of ICT to provide Business Development Services (BDS) to MSME in the southeast states. IT-based BDSs are available only in modest quantities and are concentrated in the modern sector and larger cities (D.F, Guadalajara, Monterrey, for example). The generally accepted view is that properly deployed IT can reduce operating costs, improve operational efficiency, and provide a broader access to knowledge and markets. So far, the benefits of ICT have been confined to industrialized nations and the largest firms in the developing world. To spread the benefits more widely in Mexico, the proposed project will pilot three information centers (one in each state) to help micro and small firms in the Yucatán peninsula to make better use of the Internet and new communications technology.

In both initiatives, the contribution of the World Bank ranged from mobilizing and administering necessary external resources to providing expertise based on its ability to broker knowledge globally.

### **Civil Society Participation**

Along with differences in national context, the experiences in El Salvador and Mexico differed in terms of duration and timing of activities, the roles, scope and methodology of civil society participation, and measurable impact and follow-up.

#### ***El Salvador***

The role of civil society participation in building a learning society was itself part of an overall learning process in participatory development. The initiative, begun in 1997, did not start with a clear blueprint. It evolved in a context where all partners worked together in a trial-and-error mode of collective action through initiatives which, although small-scale and of relatively low risk, were broad enough in their sectoral and geographic scope to eventually elicit national recognition.

Critical to the learning society initiative was the stimulus provided by the 1992 peace agreement for a rapid "catch-up" in the economic and social spheres after an extended period of conflict and disruption of development efforts. As a result, macro-economic and structural reforms provided a favorable environment for success of the

initiative. Moreover, ensuring broad-based participation was seen as one means of consolidating the process of reconciliation sought by the peace agreement.

A strong tradition of participatory dialogue had thus already been nurtured in El Salvador through these reforms, and laid the foundation for the learning society strategy. The formation of six learning circles was a watershed event in the process. The thematic areas addressed by the circles were chosen as the most important points of departure for the collaborative development of a learning society strategy. Each circle was financed by grant funds and coordinated by a local leader familiar with the theme.

The decision to form the learning circles also symbolized an early and important resolution not to confine the learning society strategy at the outset to a major external study, an option that was being considered at the time.<sup>6</sup> Strategy development therefore shifted from foreign expert research to the awareness-raising of stakeholders through highly participatory exercises driven by local input. Experimentation and collective learning occurred within and across the learning circles as they began to develop and use a methodology for identifying impediments in the acquisition, use and dissemination of knowledge in each of the thematic areas represented (see Box 2).

### **Box 2**

#### **Learning Circles Methodology**

The participatory approach in the preparation phase of the learning society process was based on learning circles which tackled thematic areas widely recognized as priorities for national development. Each circle was comprised of 10-12 representatives of private, public, and academic institutions, NGOs, municipalities, and producer associations, all of which shared a vision of continuous learning among all social and economic sectors. The goal of the circles was to tackle development problems by taking advantage of local and global knowledge and information.

A facilitator, whose services were financed by a World Bank grant, directed each circle, encouraging participation and systematizing the results of discussions. The two coordinators of the tripartite forum *Conectándonos Al Futuro* played a key role in ensuring that these facilitators were recruited according to their competence and credibility in the eyes of stakeholder groups. Some facilitators conducted fieldwork and case studies as part of the learning circle activities. The learning circles met regularly between July 1998 and April 1999, with the following agenda:

- 1) Introduction to the concept of the Learning Society and its application to El Salvador; development of a methodology and goals.
- 2) Development of a vision.
- 3) Diagnosis of the main issues to be addressed in seeking to promote a learning society, and the barriers to knowledge flows among different participants.
- 4) Analysis of critical issues to determine their causes.
- 5) Preparation of a strategy document and proposals of activities. The circles tried to identify issues that could be dealt with in a project, and those to be considered as a part of a broader and longer-term strategy.

Ideas were exchanged among circles in a seminar in December 1998. In April 1999 each circle presented their proposals in order to: (i) assess the reactions of the major groups of stakeholders and (ii) establish working groups to elaborate on the strategies presented.

The highly experimental, trial-and-error approach to developing the learning society strategy was illustrated in the evolution in the conceptualization of community

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<sup>6</sup> Consideration was being given to undertaking a “knowledge assessment,” for which a methodology had been developed and presented in El Salvador by the National Research Council of the United States with support from the World Bank.

information centers (see Box 3). Prior to the formation of the learning circles, the community information center development strategy comprised small-scale pilot experiments in four separate localities. This concept evolved – through the sharing of experiences with other countries – into a national network of centers. This conceptual shift also signaled a shift in emphasis away from basic connectivity towards the development of applications and content relevant to local development. Determining which applications and content to target was a focus of discussion within the circles.

The concretization of the community information center strategy in an August 1998 national workshop was another watershed in the learning society strategy. These discussions allowed stakeholders to see the results of an extended process of dialogue that had focused heavily on abstract concepts of learning and knowledge. Government responded favorably to the information strategy and earmarked part of the proceeds of the sale of the national telecommunications operator for the development of the strategy. A series of targeted marketing campaigns was launched to explain to various business and community groups throughout the country the opportunities for developing and sharing relevant local content through the use of computing and communications facilities at these centers. This culminated in the formal establishment of a non-profit membership association to spearhead the community information center strategy through the development of a national franchise.

### **Box 3**

#### **Developing a community information center strategy in El Salvador**

An early focus of the learning society initiative was the formulation of a strategy to improve nationwide access to communications and information services by telephone, facsimile, the Internet and other means. Affordability was a major concern, given that the typical initial investment of approximately US\$1500 for a basic Internet access platform was about eleven times the minimum monthly wage, and the \$30-\$60 of monthly payments between 20-45%. Only 15,000 Internet accounts exist in El Salvador, which, assuming a typical pattern of four users per account, represents coverage of less than 1% of the population. Concluding that dial-up connections from individual households was not a financially viable strategy for ensuring widespread Internet access, stakeholders began mapping a strategy to provide connectivity through community-based institutions.

However, it was also recognized that without a critical mass of relevant local content, large-scale development of community information centers would not be viable. This conclusion drew on Peru's seven-year development of a national network of community information centers linked to the Internet. A non-profit Infocenter Association was created in El Salvador in December 1998 to manage a national franchise for community information centers which would help capture economies of scale in equipment purchase, technical support, content development, marketing, and other areas. The start-up costs of the non-profit membership association will be substantially covered by a major government subsidy (equivalent to US\$10 million) drawn from part of the interest generated by investing the proceeds of the privatization of the national telecommunications company. A contract was signed with the Peruvian Scientific Network (RCP) to provide technical assistance for implementation.

For a monthly fee, franchisees in local communities will receive leased hardware and software including computers, servers, printers and modems, as well as technical and business training and support. About 100 community telecenters and a major local content development effort are planned for an initial three-year period. Underlying the government subsidy is the expectation that the community information centers, in addition to being commercially oriented, will give priority to servicing the needs of government agencies.

## Mexico

Civil society participation was organized differently in Mexico (see Box 4). Organizational approaches varied in each of the three states. In Campeche, an existing tripartite initiative (state government, private sector and civil society) called *Transformando Campeche* (“Transforming Campeche”) became the platform for initial discussions on the use of ICTs to support MSMEs as part of an overall effort to improve competitiveness. In Quintana Roo, where tourism is a major economic activity, the local office of NAFIN (a second-tier national development bank) played a key role in catalyzing and organizing a series of joint initiatives among major hotels and the MSMEs that were their major suppliers, in order to better integrate key parts of the supply chain into the tourism industry.

There were two distinct ICT-based initiatives for content development in Yucatán, which drew heavily on the experiences in Quintana Roo and Campeche. The first initiative in Yucatán was aimed at improving the competitiveness of honey production for export markets. The local Association of Beekeepers developed a plan for sharing existing phytosanitary knowledge and information, particularly in key areas of diseases encountered in beekeeping, by putting expert phytosanitary information into a database accessible to association members. The second initiative was the development of a knowledge portal linking key websites and databases on market access, business intelligence, and job markets, in order to benefit members of the *Consejo Empresarial*, an umbrella organization of universities, chambers of commerce, producers’ associations, and NGOs in the state.

### **Box 4**

#### **Civil society participation in ICT initiatives in Mexico**

Civil society, particularly universities, private associations and NGOs, has been more successful in developing locally oriented IT programs than donor- or central government-driven initiatives. Given this, Mexico’s Southeast Regional Development Project focused on civil society and local communities, providing a mechanism for the development of an infocenter in each of the three states.

An infocenter is a physical space that provides public access to information and communication technologies, notably the Internet, for educational, personal, social and economic development. The specific design of the infocenter will be based on the market research study and the business plans developed by the management teams of each infocenter. The three infocenters will have strong links to existing community infrastructure in order to ensure local involvement. Local businesses will form partnerships in order to manage each infocenter. There will be a strong staff-training program, and a well-defined implementation and marketing strategy to reach new clients.

#### **Expected Outputs**

*Market information networks (local, regional, national):* the infocenters will create local information resources and distribute them across the country. It will also provide access to shared local databases.

*Distance-learning programs:* the infocenters will identify and select training courses according to the market research survey of training requests. Over the first year, the management of the infocenters will identify and establish contacts with a variety of other training institutions capable of providing training at the different infocenters.

*Micro-, small and medium enterprise development networks:* the infocenters will develop applications to allow small producers, suppliers and micro-enterprises to sell their products.

*Indigenously developed learning tools:* informative networks (interactive and collaborative) will share local news and provide email discussion groups.

or, in the case of El Salvador, national, workshops in which international best practices were shared and discussed among all interested parties (international experts, national and local NGOs, private businesses, various CSOs, municipalities and state governments). In Mexico, the first-ever regional seminar took place in Campeche with 500 participants from different states and international speakers. In August 1997, project coordinators in El Salvador and World Bank staff brought together about thirty regional and international panelists to discuss the learning society strategy (see Box 5). Various stakeholders for the initiatives in Mexico later drew upon this conference for their own work.

**Box 5**

**The results of a global Internet conference on the El Salvador Learning Society**

Between February 12 and March 5, 1999, over 50 individuals from a dozen countries, including Salvadoran stakeholder representatives, participated in an on-line conference to exchange countries' experiences and ideas on thematic issues of concern to the six learning circles. The discussion yielded over 190 panelist submissions, available at <http://www.vita.org/technet/esls>, ranging from teacher education and migrant networks to rural and enterprise development strategies and university-firm research linkages. The conference was modeled on a similar on-line conference organized in 1997 for a knowledge assessment supported by the World Bank in the Pacific.

Closing remarks confirmed the importance of "social learning," the sharing of experience through horizontal networks of knowledge exchange between other countries in the region, on teacher training and school connectivity, for example. Second, conference participants confirmed that a diversity of incentives and channels of knowledge transfer was important for this type of learning. Examples cited ranged from university participation in multiple channels of support to small and medium enterprises in Brazil, to innovative capital market mechanisms being developed in Nordic countries (among others) to mobilize alternative financing for innovative small and medium-sized enterprises.

A second common methodological approach was the production of baseline studies and market demand analyses, undertaken in all cases by local consultants familiar with community needs. By providing a clear, and often quantitative, diagnosis of constraints and issues in each local environment, these studies ensured that the participatory process did not degenerate into discussion of generalities and polemical issues. Each part of the studies was discussed by the different stakeholders and presented to civil society for input and comments.

Also in both countries' initiatives was an early recognition that ICT-based programs for the support of MSMEs needed to be grounded in content relevant to business needs, and that they should be delivered through sustainable mechanisms. There was early discussion of issues of pricing and cost recovery for providing services enabled by ICTs. At the same time, owing to the "public good" nature of some of the services being provided and the difficulty of mobilizing seed capital from private sources for ideas and basic facilities, there was also a recognition of the role of state and national governments in providing some element of funding and subsidy, although this was not expected to continue beyond a start-up phase.

**Lessons Learned: Successes**

Although the two cases shared success factors, these factors varied in degree and impact according to the specific context of civil society participation.

**Early high-level support and leadership from government, the private sector and civil society is important for the success of participatory processes.** Leadership

originated in different spheres in each case. In El Salvador, the learning society initiative benefited from the expertise of the Modernization Commission, created in the aftermath of the peace process, by inheriting the experience of broad-based dialogue at a national level from various stakeholder groups that had previously been in opposition. It was especially important that the initiative avoid identification with any single political affiliation. Both the private sector and civil society were able to make significant substantive contributions to this effort by participating in the activities spearheaded by *Conectándonos Al Futuro*. In Mexico, early commitment came from leadership by state government in Campeche and Quintana Roo. Yucatán soon followed – in this state, leadership came from the private sector and civil society.

**Availability of a wide range of individuals at the national and local level with the necessary talent, motivation and experience in broad-based dialogue may contribute to the development of a sustainable process.** In El Salvador, several participants in learning circles already had experience in participatory dialogue, usually through the work of the National Development Commission. The learning society initiative was able to benefit from diversity in representation, across generation, gender, and professional group, and achieved a reasonably good geographic outreach given the level of resources available. With committed participants, it was possible to generate and *sustain* a dialogue, which led to the development of trust, agreement on a common language, and continuity, often a difficult task in typical multipartite bodies which have institutions represented by different individuals at different times.

Experienced leadership was provided in Campeche by three broad-based organizations: *Transformando Campeche*, *Desarrollo Empresarial de Campeche* (Campeche Business Development) and *Consejo Empresarial de Campeche* (Campeche Business Council), all of which had frequent and high-level contacts with state government. In Quintana Roo, the local representatives of several businesses and associations provided the initial leadership: namely, NAFIN and the leaders of the Hoteliers' Association and the Hotel Suppliers' Association. In Yucatán, the leader of the Beekeepers' Association drew on their international contacts and experience (see Box 6), while its Business Council benefited from the expertise of individuals in local universities, chambers of commerce and NGOs.

**Box 6**

**Boosting small-scale honey export production:  
Civil society participation in harnessing ICTs in Yucatán**

World-renowned for its beekeeping tradition, Yucatán has sought to promote honey exports, a trade dominated by small-scale Mayan micro-entrepreneurs. As experience in the United States demonstrates, success in this highly competitive value chain requires a deep understanding of genetic breeding techniques, as well as of major markets' (Europe and North America) phytosanitary requirements. ICTs can play an important role in providing effective extension services, market intelligence, and expertise in bee colony maintenance, as well as disseminating knowledge on labeling and packaging techniques. Active civil society initiatives are leading to the creation of an association of small-scale beekeepers who access, develop and exchange local and global knowledge with the assistance of local universities. Effectiveness of this program depends on developing Mayan language content in addition to designing an effective portal of knowledge.

**Encouraging local ownership may enhance local skills and capacity and lead to greater local relevance of projects.** In both cases a conscious decision was made not to delegate analysis, diagnosis, and facilitation to outside experts. In El Salvador the learning society process abandoned an initial proposal to engage a donor-funded international consultant, and instead established a virtuous cycle of local ownership. This cycle grew in strength as initial skepticism and uncertainty gave way to increasing confidence, and local stakeholders acquired familiarity with concepts of knowledge and social learning, especially as they were applied to local problems and situations. Except for an early study on national connectivity, consultants' studies of the process in El Salvador were commissioned mainly on the basis of perceived needs that emerged from stakeholder dialogue rather than from a pre-determined program or methodology. In Mexico, an additional element of this local ownership was the diagnostic studies' completion by consultants who were based in each of the three states.

**Ensuring the openness of the process, the diversity of areas to be addressed, and a constant exchange of information among groups can enhance the sustainability of participatory dialogue.** Both initiatives shared these features, although they were more pronounced in El Salvador. First, stakeholders were able both to exit and re-enter the process of dialogue. Second, the diversity of thematic areas stimulated discussion and provided results sufficiently useful and interesting to sustain the learning circles' activities. Third, constant exchanges of information among learning circles gave rise to a number of cross-thematic learning initiatives which cut across the themes of migration, rural and municipal development and promotion of micro-, small and medium enterprises, for example.

**Pre-existing infrastructure conducive to participatory dialogue can facilitate the process.** In El Salvador there appeared to be a deeper penetration of participatory dialogue across stakeholder groups, primarily because of their more deeply entrenched institutional infrastructure and experience in stakeholder dialogue, which were much newer to Mexico. In El Salvador, each learning circle followed a process of observing, listening and learning both within and outside its membership, a pattern characteristic of the learning society strategy as a whole. Continual participation and sharing of lessons in the learning circles fostered an increasing sense of trust, often following periods of skepticism and fatigue from perceived lack of tangible results. This sharing of experiences also typified the Internet conference in February/March 1999.

**ICT can be used to enhance the participatory nature of dialogues.** The use of ICT was itself a key success factor, especially in El Salvador. The Internet conference in El Salvador was one of several demonstrations of the active use of ICTs to promote participatory dialogue and develop relevant content for furthering this dialogue. One municipality, Suchitoto, provided an important demonstration effect through its rich set of web-based resources on history, culture, geographical information, events, and other useful data which are expected to become a model for other municipalities and to lay the foundation for web-based information resources on local communities throughout El Salvador. This was the result of the local and municipal development learning circle's early focus on determining relevant content for the community and how to develop that

content most appropriately. Although the initiatives are at an earlier stage in Mexico than El Salvador, the use of ICTs in the participatory dialogue there was also important. In Quintana Roo, for example, hotels and their suppliers developed a pilot portal to match needs and services. In Campeche, a state government portal was enriched with resources identified through the participatory process. These early examples of ICT use in the initiatives in Mexico were coupled with several ideas on how to more effectively deliver existing MSME support services through web-based mechanisms or distance education.

### **Lessons Learned: Challenges**

**Building momentum and commitment is difficult, and may be facilitated by preparation that establishes a common methodology for the process.** In both countries, success depended on constantly countering skepticism, building awareness of concepts and ideas, fostering trust among participants, and dealing with unanticipated social tensions deriving from pre-existing social divisions. In El Salvador it was not possible for administrative reasons to recruit a qualified external consultant to assist the learning circles in methodology until nearly a month after the learning circles began their discussions. As a result, without a clear and structured common methodology, the learning circles began with little focus or direction, creating confusion, frustration, skepticism and false hopes among some members. It is estimated that between 20 to 30% of the original membership of the learning circles left in this first month. Up-front preparation of the learning circles according to a common methodology, therefore, would have avoided loss of time and human capital. The start-up period for a learning society program is critical for the development of credibility. Once a common methodology had been identified and accepted, collaboration within and across learning circles became much easier.

**Creating linkages with existing initiatives may facilitate success of the project; however, it is a difficult process.** Notwithstanding the successes in both cases, there were clear differences in progress and achievements across various initiatives that can be partially explained by a lack of adequate preparation and linkages with other projects. In El Salvador there were varying degrees of commitment within and across learning circles at different points in time to participation in knowledge sharing and the design of new initiatives. In both countries, better linkages with other major national initiatives could have significantly accelerated the processes and improved the quality of outcomes. In El Salvador, while the learning society program and other major national projects were clearly beneficial, a number of constraints may have resulted in some duplication of effort and loss of potential synergies across initiatives. The main reasons appear to have been resource limitations and capacity constraints in *Conectándonos* as well as other major initiatives. There remained untapped potential for developing cross-fertilization across learning society and competitiveness programs, particularly in relation to exploiting the results of a major study of industrial clusters. Bridges between the learning society program and the educational reforms may have been built at an earlier stage had there initially been cross-representation by key players in each initiative. These retrospective observations are a reminder of the benefits of focusing attention at a high level on early dialogue and coordination across major national initiatives.

In Mexico, a similarly inadequate attention to linkages with other initiatives probably resulted in opportunity costs. The over 200 national-level MSME support programs, as well as the multiple initiatives to promote use of ICTs, compromised synergy and consolidation of resource use across these programs, which could have produced a series of effective ICT-enabled MSME initiatives more quickly and sustainably.

### **Additional Lessons for the World Bank**

The experiences in El Salvador and Mexico suggest both general lessons for civil society participation in order to enhance effectiveness of second-generation economic reforms aiming at poverty reduction through private sector development, as well as a specific lesson on making ICTs effective in poverty reduction.

**Achieving broad and deep reforms requires civil society participation, which can create linkages among local businesses and lead to increased local awareness of global economic issues.** There has been a realization in Mexico and El Salvador that macro-level trade and financial integration alone will not reduce income disparities across regions, firms, and individuals. Micro-economic reforms necessary for the removal of barriers to the integration of specific regions and MSMEs into national and global markets require civil society participation for their proper design and implementation. Specifically, participatory efforts by civil society can motivate local producers to become attuned to changing market trends, consumer preferences and overseas production practices. They can also encourage inter-enterprise knowledge exchanges through foreign direct investment (particularly intra-firm knowledge transfers within multinationals and through spillovers) and other linkages such as strategic alliances, sub-contracting, and strengthening of relationships with suppliers and distributors.

**Civil society participation can foster an integrated approach to project formulation and implementation.** Civil society participation can help avoid the pitfalls of traditional interventions, which have sought to provide infrastructure, finance, or technical assistance without adequately responding to the specific needs of disadvantaged groups or regions. Giving voice to civil society at the local level helps ensure identification of specific obstacles and needs in order to then develop a responsive strategy for local economic development.

**Local leadership and guidance is needed to sustain civil society participation.** In order to achieve the benefits of civil society participation, experienced individuals familiar with local conditions are needed to coordinate or perform analyses, stimulate exchanges and trust-building, and disseminate results. Without focused effort, there is a risk that early efforts may founder. Skepticism may set in among local actors, who fail to see the relevance of the approach to their well-being or are suspicious of their fellow participants.

**Infrastructure-driven ICT projects conducted without civil society participation risk unsustainability.** Civil society participation can lead to an emphasis on development and dissemination of content relevant to local needs, which in turn can

make ICT use sustainable and self-financing in the long run. Even local actors unfamiliar with ICTs understand their information needs, which must be matched with self-sustaining delivery mechanisms (e.g. telecenters, web sites, portals, etc.). Civil society participation in this process is relatively inexpensive, and although time-intensive, can prevent mistakes down the road, particularly when there are pressures for donor-driven or “showcase” projects. Private sector investment – from local and foreign sources – will probably be more easily attracted once communities can signal their needs and willingness to pay for relevant services based on self-generated assessment and dialogue.

# Government Social Funds in Brazil Bolster Civil Society Grassroots Initiatives

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***Abstract:** The social development landscape in Brazil is being significantly altered by an important phenomenon that can have broad implications for poverty reduction in that vast country. It is the growing transfer of monies from the government to the civil society sector to carry out local development initiatives. This new and unprecedented flow of development monies is being channeled through dozens of Social Funds to thousands of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)<sup>7</sup> throughout the country. These funds support independently designed and managed development efforts in such area as rural development, education, natural resource management, health, urban development, and environment. The World Bank (WB) has been playing an increasingly important role in this bottom-up development approach – recently defined as Community-Driven Development within the Bank - by financing 14 social funds in the areas of rural poverty, AIDS, and environment. While this demand-driven modality was first piloted within a rural poverty alleviation program in the Northeast section of the country in the mid-1980s, today it has grown exponentially to encompass projects in the entire country and represent 12.5% of the WB’s Brazil portfolio. This article will highlight the findings of an independent and participatory study undertaken by the WB to better understand the nature and operational results of these funds, as well as analyze the civil society participation approach adopted by each of them.*

## **Study Objectives and Scope**

The “Participatory Portfolio Review of World Bank Funded Social Funds in Brazil” was undertaken over an eighteen-month period from June 1999 to November 2000. The purpose of the study was five-fold:

- ❖ Map out, for the first time, the operational characteristics of the Community-Driven Development (CDD) component of the Brazil portfolio;
- ❖ Weigh the operational advantages and drawbacks of the various funds and analyze their implementation results;
- ❖ Document and analyze the effectiveness of the civil society participation mechanisms and approaches adopted by each fund;
- ❖ Raise hypothesis and propose a methodological approach to measure the social impact of these funds for a possible follow-up study; and
- ❖ Disseminate the lessons learned from these experiences in order to improve the overall performance of the funds.

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<sup>7</sup> For purposes of this article, Civil Society Organizations comprise community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) social movements, charitable organizations, church agencies, professional associations, and foundations.

The study focused on 14 leading small-grants funds (which for the purposes of this study are being called “Social Funds”) operated by the Brazilian government at both the national and state levels. (see list below)

<b>FUND NAME</b>	<b>THEMATIC AREA</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Rural Poverty Alleviation / Paraná	<i>Rural Poverty Alleviation</i>	Paraná state	<b>\$157.2 million</b>
Rural Poverty Alleviation Project / Rio Grande do Sul (RS)	<i>Rural Poverty Alleviation</i>	Rio Grande do Sul state	<b>\$103 million</b>
Agrarian Reform Pilot	<i>Rural Poverty Alleviation</i>	Pernambuco and Bahia states	<b>\$84,3<sup>8</sup> million</b>
PED / National Environmental Program	<i>Environmental Protection</i>	National	<b>\$61.2 million</b>
Northeast Rural Poverty Alleviation Project (RPAP)	<i>Rural Poverty Alleviation</i>	Pernambuco state	<b>\$52 million<sup>9</sup></b>
PADIC / Mato Grosso Natural Resources Management Project	<i>Natural Resource Management</i>	Mato Grosso state	<b>\$40 million</b>
Northeast Rural Poverty Alleviation Project (RPAP)	<i>Rural Poverty Alleviation</i>	Rio Grande do Norte state	<b>\$32 million</b>
FUNBIO / National Biodiversity Foundation	<i>Environmental &amp; Biodiversity Protection</i>	National	<b>\$25 million</b>
PAIC / Rondônia Natural Resources Management Project	<i>Natural Resource Management</i>	Rondônia state	<b>\$22 million</b>
PDA / Rainforest Pilot Program	<i>Environmental Protection &amp; Community Development</i>	16 states in the Amazon and Atlantic Rainforest regions	<b>\$22.2 million</b>
PROBIO / National Biodiversity Program	<i>Biodiversity Protection</i>	National	<b>\$20 million</b>
AIDS	<i>HIV / AIDS Prevention &amp; Treatment</i>	National	<b>\$18.7 million</b>
RESEX / Rainforest Pilot Program	<i>Extractive Reserve Protection &amp; Community Development</i>	Acre, Amapá, Rondônia states	<b>\$9.7 million</b>
FAP / World Bank Small-Grants Program	<b>Government – Civil Society Collaboration</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>\$85,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$647,3</b>

<sup>8</sup> Includes the value of funds in five Northeastern states, although the study only covered the program in two states (Pernambuco and Bahia). This amount does not, on the other hand, include the funds (\$65.7 million) used to provide loans for land purchases.

<sup>9</sup> Only two (Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte) of the eight Northeastern states where these social funds are being implemented were included in this study. The total value of the funds in all eight states is over \$300 million.

The 14 funds included in the study were from four broad areas: rural poverty alleviation, natural resource management, environmental/biodiversity protection, and AIDS prevention/treatment. It is estimated that these funds supported over 10,000 thousand projects – each ranging in value from \$50,000 to \$80,000 a year -- during the seven years studied. The sum total of all 14 funds is **US\$647.3 million** over a seven year period (FY 1993 - 2001) or **9 %** of the overall country portfolio (US\$7.6 billion in FY 1999). The value of the social fund component climbs to **\$955 million or 12.5%** of the overall portfolio if all 8 RPAP state-level projects are also included. Of this amount \$888.1 (93%) was provided to the GOB as loans and \$66.9 (7%) was provided as grants from a variety of sources (World Bank, Global Environmental Facility/GEF, and G7 industrialized countries). While some of the social funds constituted nearly the entire loan -- such as the case with most of the rural poverty projects and two of the environmental funds (FUNBIO and PROBIO) – the others represented only a relatively small component of much larger loans. Overall, these 14 Funds represented 36% of the total value of the larger loans in which they were imbedded. Below is a short description of each cluster of funds listing their overall value, activities undertaken, and types of organizations funded:

*Rural Poverty Alleviation This cluster of five funds represents the largest in terms of monies, \$428.5 million or 66% of the total value of the 14 social funds studied. Three of the rural poverty projects are located in the Northeast (RPAP and Agrarian Reform) and two in the Southern region of the country. All five of these funds are managed locally by state governments, although the agrarian reform fund also has the close involvement by the Ministry of Agrarian Development in Brasilia. The two Northeast Rural Poverty Alleviation funds are part of the first social funds supported by WB in Brazil starting in 1985. The lessons learned from the RPAP experience influenced the design and approach adopted by many of the subsequent social funds supported by the WB in Brazil. These funds are geared to promoting rural development through the following activities: building infrastructure (rural electrification, water systems), land purchase (market-based agrarian reform approach); increased agricultural activity (production and marketing); greater access to social services (building schools and health clinics); higher income (productive enterprises). Local beneficiary organizations include producer's associations, rural cooperatives, trade unions, and women's groups.*

*Environmental & Biodiversity Protection The five environmental funds (PED, FUNBIO, PROBIO, PDA, and RESEX) are among the newest funds and most have a national coverage. These funds represent \$138.1 million or 21% of the total. They support the following activities: environmental conservation (creating/maintaining natural reserves, climate change analysis, watershed management); biodiversity protection (biological research, establishing biological corridors); extractive reserve management (forest management, marketing extractive products); and community development in the Amazon (agroforestry production, education/health services, fishing). Grantee organizations have included national movements of traditional*

*populations (rubber tapper, indigenous) regional environmental networks, research NGOs, municipal governments, and local producer's associations.*

#### Natural Resource Management

*This cluster comprises two funds (PAIC and PADIC) with similar origins and characteristics located in adjoining states within the Western Amazon. They account for \$62 million or 10% of all social funds expenditures. Both of these funds were established to streamline and improve the impact of much larger natural resource management projects (Planflora and Prodeagro) experiencing implementation problems, by ensuring that project moneys reached local beneficiary populations directly. Grassroots initiatives supported by the funds included: agricultural*

*production/marketing, rural productive enterprises, food production, education and health infrastructure, environmental protection, women's empowerment, and extractive reserve management. Organizations receiving support include rural cooperatives, producer groups, associations of indigenous and rubber tappers, trade unions, environmental NGOs, and women's organizations.*

AIDS *One of the Funds - worth \$18.7 million or 3% - was geared to fighting the AIDS epidemic in Brazil by supporting the work undertaken by AIDS/CSOs in the areas of prevention (condom/needle distribution, HIV testing), care (children's homes, outpatient centers), and public education (production and distribution of booklets, media campaigns). Population groups particularly vulnerable to the AIDS epidemic and which directly benefited from these activities include: gay and lesbians, street children, sex workers, construction workers, indigenous peoples, low-income women, and truck drivers.*

### **Partnership Fund**

The only social fund to be operated directly by the World Bank in Brazil was the Partnership Fund (FAP) created by the Latin American and Caribbean VP. This is a local version of the global Small-Grants Program maintained by the WB in some 50 countries. In Brazil the program is geared to promoting government – civil society partnerships. While the FAP is much smaller than the other Brazil social funds – **\$85,000** over two years covering 20 grants – it was used strategically by the WB's Brazil Program to support unique partnerships, reach out to civil society, and support cutting-edge initiatives.

The program selection committee, for instance, was composed of representatives of three institutions - Rede Brasil (CSO network which monitors WB activities), Planning Ministry, and the WB – which are often at odds over Bank policies and programs. The fund allowed the Bank to fund themes (and organizations) not generally contemplated in large Bank loans such as: crime/violence (human rights groups); race/discrimination (Afro-Brazilian and gay rights organizations); and citizens-government policy.

The portfolio review documented and analyzed the origins, operational characteristics, implementation results, and civil society participation approaches adopted by each of the funds. The study also had an international comparative component that analyzed the WB's experience in financing social funds worldwide in relation to its experience in Brazil. The study was undertaken by a group of independent consultants with long term

experience evaluating development activities at both the macro program level as well at the community setting.<sup>10</sup> The study methodology comprised four distinct activities: i) extensive bibliographical research of WB, government, and civil society project documents and evaluation studies; ii) visits to 6 states (Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Rio de Janeiro) and Brasília; iii) interviews with over 50 government managers, civil society leaders, WB staff, project beneficiaries, and social scientists; and iv) a national seminar to present and discuss research findings.

The final version of the study contained the following sections: an **Executive Summary**; **Preface** (introduction and considerations by the WB); **International Comparative Report** (WB's experience with social funds internationally); **Brazilian Social Fund Report** (overall findings, conclusions and recommendations on the 14 social funds operating in Brazil); and the **Seminar Report** (summary of main issues discussed at the national seminar as well as the agenda and list of participants). The Brazil report contained useful comparative tables on the budgets, policy links, operational characteristics, administrative requirements, supervision methodology, and participatory mechanisms of each of the funds. The study also produced 10 Sub-Chapters (several of the "sister funds" were presented in the same chapter) with detailed analysis and information on each of the 14 funds. The final version of the study<sup>11</sup> was completed and distributed in August 2001 to the government, civil society, and WB staff who had been interviewed during the study, as well as to a wider audience.

## **Study Findings**

The portfolio review produced valuable comparative findings about the nature and results of the 14 social funds financed in Brazil, and how they compare with social funds in other countries and regions. Here is a summary of the key findings:

### ***Comparative International – Brazil Experiences with Social funds***

The WB's experience with social funds throughout the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, differs in several important ways from the approach undertaken in Brazil. First, while social funds in most countries (including Central America and the Andean region in Latin America) have been associated with traditional economic structural adjustment programs (often serving as compensatory social safety net mechanisms), in Brazil these funds have been largely geared to combating chronic poverty and/or decentralizing social services. Second, in most countries, social funds tend to be national in focus, while in

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<sup>10</sup> The researchers were social scientists (sociologists, anthropologists) who either worked as independent consultants or were professors affiliated with leading Brazilian universities: Joe Weiss, Maria Clara Couto Soares, Carlos Alberto Steil, Isabel Carvalho, and Gabriela Scotto; Two other consultants assisted in facilitating the national seminar and writing the seminar report: Ilka Camaroti and Marcus Melo.

<sup>11</sup> The final version of the report can be downloaded from the WB's Brazil program website (<http://www.bancomundial.org.br>) and copies of the individual fund chapters can be obtained by contacting the Information Officer at the WB's Brasilia Office

Brazil the programs have been largely limited to a particular region or even state due to the continental size of the country. Third, social funds in many countries tend to be geared to job creation and income generation through micro-credit provision or financing of productive enterprises. However, employment has not been the focus of Brazil's social funds (more geared to infrastructure installation and social service provision), although there has been growing demand within the rural poverty (RPAP, RS and Paraná) and environmental (PDA) funds for income generation projects.

### *Three Distinct Types of Funds*

In terms of social fund experience in Brazil, the study identified three distinct groups of funds in terms of their origins and rationale:

- ◆ **Extending Social Safety Nets** (early 1980's – mid-1990's) This first group was characterized by the 5 rural poverty alleviation Funds established to address chronic rural poverty caused by land concentration, uneven investment policies, and in the case of the Northeast region of the country - recurring droughts. Project documents also described these Funds as social "safety nets" to counter growing unemployment and decreasing incomes among rural poor brought on by modernization of agriculture and other economic adjustment trends. While the agrarian reform project was funded later, it reflected the same objectives and rationale as the rural poverty alleviation funds.
- ◆ **Streamlining Program Implementation** (early - mid 1990's) This second cohort constituted projects facing significant implementation problems, in which the funds were established to help streamline and improve project outcomes. These included the two natural resources management projects (PAIC and PADIC) and the first environmental project funded by the WB in Brazil (PED). In all three cases, social funds were introduced to allow project funds to flow directly to community groups.
- ◆ **Promoting Sustainable Development** (mid 1990's) This last group of funds reflected a shift in paradigm as they adhered to new trends in development that called for promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation policies as well as greater civil society participation. The newer environmental, AIDS, and the WB's small-grants fund comprise this group of funds.

### *Commonalities and Differences*

The study found that there were several characteristics which were common to all 14 funds: they were largely demand-driven (none were purely demand-driven as all funds had some degree of programmatic focus related to thematic areas, beneficiary populations, activities, etc.); all transferred funds directly to CSOs who managed these monies themselves; all funds were provided as grants (with exception of the Agrarian Reform which provided monies for land purchase in the form of loans); nearly all funds were targeted to low-income groups (with the exception of some of the environmental funds whose rationale was more environmental than social); and all funds only funded legally-established organizations (informal groups or individuals were not contemplated).

A final similarity found was that the funds tended to be largely divorced from macro Brazilian government social programs in such areas as employment (FAT) and regional development (Avança Brazil). Further, with the exception of the RPAP (which had been in operation for 15 years and thus has had some measurable regional impact), most of the funds don't claim to have had large scale impact on poverty.

The study also found some important difference among the funds related to operational procedures and policies. These include: differing fund management approaches; varied financing (disbursement mechanisms, counterpart requirements) and reporting (formats, regularity) requirements; and different sub-project monitoring, evaluating, and results dissemination approaches. The funds also had contrasting approaches to promoting institutional capacity building. While many of the funds had provision for technical assistance geared to improve organizational capacity of the grantee organizations, the PDA and RESEX went a step further by providing “institutional support” to the civil society networks involved in the promotion and monitoring of the funds.

The funds also had different mechanisms and approaches to technical assistance provision. While some funds (RS, Paraná Rural Poverty, RESEX, AIDS) relied on government agencies (such as the national rural extension agency EMATER) to provide technical assistance and the monies were controlled by the

### **Varying Levels of Decentralization**

The 14 funds reflected varying degrees of decentralization on the continuum from the federal to the local level. Here were the major clusters identified:

- ◆ **Federal Level** The PDA, RESEX, AIDS, FAP, PROBIO were all managed at the federal level. An interesting feature of these Funds is that their intervention was direct from Brasília to the local level often bypassing state and local governments. While some of those interviewed felt that this direct federal role was needed due to distant (and at times antagonistic) civil society – government relations at the local level, others considered that this modality was delaying the needed civil society - government integration at the local level.
- ◆ **State Level** The RPAPs, Agrarian Reform, RS and Paraná Rural Poverty, PAIC, and PADIC are all managed by state governments. In many of these funds (with the exception of the PAIC and PADIC), a portion of the decision-making authority over allocation of funds is further decentralized to the municipal level through the Municipal Councils.
- ◆ **National/State/Local Levels** The PED is the only one that incorporates a federal, state, and municipal level partnership in its approach. Many felt that this is a preferred modality since it encourages the strengthening of government management capability at all three levels and preserves the role of the state as a direct service provider. It should be noted that the AIDS project followed this model, having decentralized its federally managed social fund to 6 states.
- ◆ **Non-Governmental Sector** The FUNBIO is the only Fund that operates outside the WB/Government sphere. It is an independent entity and has a multi-stakeholder Board of Directors composed of: government, private sector, civil society, and academic representatives. It supports local organizations throughout the country from its Rio de Janeiro office.

Fund, others (RPAP, Agrarian Reform, PDA, PAIC, PADIC) provided the monies to the grantee organizations who themselves contracted government, CSO, or private sector service providers. While this latter mechanism was seen as positive since it provided autonomy to the grantee organization, it also seemed to encourage the emergence of a “consultants industry” which, in some cases, seemed to artificially drive sub-project design and outcomes. Finally, the study found that three funds (PROBIO, FUNBIO, FAP) didn’t have any provision for technical assistance.

### *Civil Society Participation*

While the portfolio review found that all 14 funds allow for some measure of civil society participation in their execution, and for this reason represent an important trend within the Brazil portfolio, there are distinct conceptual approaches and operational methodologies adopted by each of the funds geared to participation. Researchers documented three broad levels of participation that are related to such factors as: longevity; level of civil society activism; and nature of the thematic areas. Researchers found, for instance, that the “safety net” group of funds tended to be characterized by more limited participation (largely restricted to community-based organizations) while the more recent “sustainable development” funds welcomed participation by a broader array of CSOs (going beyond CBOs to include intermediary NGOs, CSO networks, and national social movements). This movement towards broader participation as new social funds came on line and existing funds expanded their participatory approach, evidences the evolving and cumulative nature of participatory processes. Some thematic areas such as the environment and AIDS (due to their more universal appeal/impact and less ideological background) seemed to encourage improved government – civil society relations, while other areas such as agrarian reform and rural poverty (which has long been characterized by a polarization and confrontation) witnessed less advancement.

The study found that the quality of civil society participation in these social funds seemed to be conditioned by what kinds of organizations are actively participating in the funds, since different types of organizations have different roles and ability to influence decisions. The experience of the more recent social funds demonstrates clearly that where intermediary NGOs, CSO networks, and national social movements (ie. trade confederations, association of rubber-tappers) complement the participation of community groups -- providing policy advocacy, capacity building, and technical assistance -- the breadth and quality of civil society participation improved considerably. The active presence of organizations who can assess macro policy choices, propose alternative approaches, negotiate complex technical issues, and monitor the impact of government spending, helps to “level the playing field” in the generally unequal power relations between community groups and government agencies. Below is a description of each of the three stages.

**Grassroots Participation** The rural poverty alleviation funds, which also happen to be the oldest, were designed to promote widespread participation by community-based groups such as rural cooperatives, women’s organizations, producer’s associations, and other grassroots organizations. CBOs not only participated as

beneficiaries of the social funds (the funds could only be disbursed to legally established CBOs), but were also expected to participate actively on the citizen – government councils that were established in each municipality to select and oversee the projects funded.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, due to long standing animosity between state governments and an activist civil society sector in the Northeast, leading intermediary NGOs and state labor confederations were excluded from receiving funding directly from the social funds or participating in its management.<sup>13</sup> The only exception to this rule was the program in the state of Rio Grande do Norte where, due to singular historical circumstances, a strong rural network composed of the state labor confederation, church agencies, and intermediary NGOs participated actively in the management of the program. It should be noted, however, that several important steps were been taken beginning in 1999 to include the national rural labor confederation

### **Government – Civil Society Join Forces to Fight the AIDS Epidemic**

Today, the Brazil AIDS Program is recognized internationally for its innovative and effective approach to fighting the epidemic. A key aspect to Brazil's success has been the growing partnership between government agencies and AIDS/CSOs. When the first WB AIDS loan was funded in 1994 though, relations between the government and CSOs were distant, if not strained. CSOs did not formally participate in the design of the first AIDS loan or of the social fund established to support civil society activities.

As the AIDS social fund was implemented and positive results from the prevention and treatment activities undertaken by CSOs began to surface, relations began to improve steadily. Today, AIDS/CSOs sit on half a dozen different national AIDS policy councils, provide training and technical assistance to government agencies, and are expected be fully involved in designing a proposed follow-up AIDS loan and its social fund. Further, it is estimated that from 1994 (when the AIDS fund was first established) to the end of 2001, over \$50 million dollars will have been channeled to some 600 AIDS/CSOs throughout Brazil.

Nothing exemplifies more clearly how significant

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<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, 80% of the slots in these municipal councils in the Northeast are mandated by law to be filled by civil society representatives. On the other hand, there have been reports that specific councils were dominated by local political elites such as mayors since the community representatives were not imbued by a strong tradition of civic participation and had not been properly trained for their oversight role. Overall, while the study found that these councils did not work as well as expected at times, they did represent an important step in the direction of promoting greater civil society participation and increasing government accountability. They also noted that these citizen-government councils tended to work better when there was a pre-existent level of community organizing and social capital spurred by church agencies, NGOs, and labor unions.

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, NGOs could and did receive funds indirectly from the social funds when they were hired by CBOs (who were grant recipients) to provide a variety of services through technical assistance contracts.

(CONTAG), Catholic Church (CNBB), and leading NGOs in the management of the RPAP at the state level. CONTAG has even become an active partner of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform in designing and implementing a new rural land credit loan financed by the WB in 2001.

**CBO/NGO Participation** The natural resource management and the oldest environmental protection funds (PED), which comprise the second group of “streamlined” projects, built on the experience of the poverty reduction projects by allowing intermediary NGOs and CSO networks to also receive funding and participate in program management. In the case of both PAIC and PADIC, for instance, the funds themselves were established after leading NGOs and social movements in the states of Mato Grosso and Rondônia negotiated the reformulation of larger loans with the state government, Ministry of Planning, and the WB.<sup>14</sup> While the emphasis of these funds was still geared to funding CBOs, they did allow intermediary NGOs to start receiving funds as well as encouraged their representatives to participate in policy councils and even be hired to analyze project proposals alongside state government technical staff.

**Broad-Based Participation** The more recent or “sustainable development” group of funds seemed to have incorporated the lessons learned from the experience of their predecessors and allowed for a broad array of civil society organizations -- ranging from CBOs and intermediary NGOs to national CSO networks -- to be incorporated as full partners in the social funds. This is especially true in the PDA and RESEX funds where NGOs and CSO networks – in addition to CBOs – not only are grant recipients but participate in nearly all aspects of fund execution (design, sub-project selection, administration, and evaluation). These funds also provided financial support to two major civil society networks (Amazon Working Group/GTA and Atlantic Rainforest Network) to provide technical assistance and monitor fund activities. In the case of two other environmental funds (FUNBIO and PROBIO), CSOs are active members of their governing bodies. Civil society has also been a key actor in the AIDS fund, although it wasn’t always so (see AIDS box).

## Study Recommendations

The portfolio review contained a number of recommendations intended to further streamline and improve the implementation results of the social funds. The most important recommendations include:

- The funds should seek greater integration with macro government policies (i.e. agricultural, health, and environmental policies) and other social programs (rural credit, regional development) to ensure greater consistency and impact of government and WB social investments.

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<sup>14</sup> In Rondônia it was the NGO Forum of Rondonia with over 30 NGO, social movements, church agencies, trade unions, and producer’s associations that negotiated the reformulation of the \$167 million Rondônia Natural Resources Management Project. In Mato Grosso, the Mato Grosso Development and Environment Forum (FORMAD) -- composed of some 25 CSOs – spearheaded the reformulation of the \$205 million dollar loan.

- In light of a generalized concern with the sustainability of productive/marketing projects financed through the funds, it was recommended that revolving loan mechanisms be considered in some cases rather than simply continuing to rely on grants. The researchers also recommended that specialized technical assistance be provided grantees in the areas of business management, quality control, and marketing.
- All funds should improve their project monitoring and evaluation methodologies (adopt clearer results indicators and train sub-project staff to undertake self-monitoring) and increase the dissemination of results.
- The numerous and overlapping municipal councils should be encouraged to merge in some fashion without losing the grassroots nature of the RPAP councils -- perhaps into municipal-wide *Conselhos Municipais de Desenvolvimento* as is being experimented in the RPAP/Pernambuco -- and that training be provided to CSOs to improve their ability to participate more effectively in these important policy-making forums.
- The social funds should allow for repeat grants and generally longer-term support of grassroots initiatives, since these often require long maturation processes before their potential for sustainability can be realized.
- Streamline and simplify some of social funds administrative procedures such as: proposal submissions, financial disbursements, procurement rules, and reporting requirements, etc.

### Participatory Methodology

The study was significant not only for its important findings, but also due to its participatory methodology that actively involved government managers, civil society activists, and WB task managers in all its phases. **First**, key government, civil society, and WB staff were consulted on the design of the study. CSOs that were contacted and consulted on the study Terms of Reference (ToR) during the design phase included FASE, Rede Brasil, INESC, and CONTAG. **Second**, representatives from the three sectors were invited to serve on the Study Advisory Group<sup>15</sup>. This working group met several times to opine on the ToR, review the research methodology, and analyze the initial drafts of the various reports. **Third**, the researchers devised an interview methodology where roughly the same number of representatives from the three sectors would be interviewed within each of the 14 social funds, in order to attempt to ensure balance and objectivity in their findings. When it was not possible for the same number of persons to be interviewed in each of the funds, these were replaced by pre-existing evaluation studies which conveyed the viewpoints of government, civil society, or WB staff.

**Fourth**, the WB Brazil Program hosted the "National Seminar on Social Funds Financed by the World Bank in Brazil" which was held in Brasilia on November 20-21, 2000. The

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<sup>15</sup> The Study Advisory Group was composed of representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPN), and WB.

purpose of the seminar was to present and discuss the results of the study to the same interlocutors who had been interviewed, as well as to other significant government managers and social development specialists. Approximately 60 persons from federal ministries (Planning, Health, Education, Regional Integration, Agrarian Reform), state governments (Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí, Pernambuco, Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul), leading civil society organizations (FASE, CERIS, Fórum de ONGs de Rondônia, GTA, RMA, DESER, FORMAD, ABIA, AACC, Rede Brasil,), WB (Task Managers, consultants) and social fund specialists participated in the seminar. The two-day meeting began with a presentation by the researchers on the study funding, moved into small-group discussion by Fund cluster (i.e. rural poverty, AIDS, environment), and ended with a final plenary discussion. A report on the conclusions of the seminar - which recorded the consensus reached and points of contention – was distributed as part of the final study report.

This was the first time that such a major study of the WB's Brazil portfolio had been undertaken in such a participatory and open fashion. Not only were the researchers independent (for most, this was their first contact with the WB), but the methodology utilized allowed for a balanced assessment of the social funds. While there was some discussion during the national seminar that the study had inaccuracies and that some of the analysis was partial (leading some government and WB managers to feel that certain aspects of several reports were too critical), overall it was felt that these problems didn't outweigh the greater accountability and transparency generated by autonomous assessments of this nature. In short, the independent and participatory nature of the study not only ensured greater objectivity, but assured its acceptance by a broader cross-section of interlocutors.

### **Study Conclusions**

The overall assessment of the portfolio review on Brazilian social funds financed by the WB was positive. The study not only documented the fact that millions of dollars were channeled to thousands of local organizations, but that they have had a strategic role in improving government – civil society relations more broadly in Brazilian society. Further, the funds have supported innovative and effective grassroots development approaches that in turn have improved the effectiveness of the government's poverty reduction efforts.

The study process provided important lessons and opportunities for all three sectors. Government managers were able to exchange technical information and learn from the experiences and best practices (particularly regarding participation approaches) of other funds. CSOs learned greater details about the WB's community-driven development portfolio and also the intrinsic complexities involved in their implementation. Further, it is hoped that this process will encourage CSOs to become even more involved in the social funds, particularly those with less civil society participation. For WB staff, the portfolio review allowed them to compare notes amongst the various funds, and better understand the benefits that greater civil society participation can bring in terms of improved operational performance and implementation results.

Finally, the study documented the many differences that still exist among the Funds in terms of the approaches and procedures adopted and how these impact operational results. There were also difficulties identified which warrant improvements, such as the disconnect between these funds and macro government social policies, recurring problems with disbursement delays, limited technical assistance, and lack results monitoring. There was also consensus that a larger, more comprehensive study to examine the social impact of these funds, particularly at the sub-project level, would be useful and a logical follow-up to this initial mapping exercise of the World Bank's community-driven portfolio in Brazil.



# Making Civic Education a National Priority: The Case of Argentina

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*It is not enough to change the apparatus of a government. Citizens of new democracies must learn to move from being passive subjects of the state to full-fledged citizens of a stable civil society. No democracy can adequately function without the support of citizens who understand its foundations in ideas, institutions and practices and know how to ensure that their problems and aspirations are addressed by the governments charged with representing them.*

Civitas World Congress, Palermo 1999

## Introduction

In the complex task of making a democracy work, education has a vital role to play. The Civic Responsibility Program (CRP), designed by civil society and the government funded by the World Bank, trains teachers in civic education. The CRP develops new strategies and methodologies for working with students in ensuring the adoption of democratic behavior. Trained teachers believe that this type of program helps to strengthen the country's institutions and promote democracy in Argentina. It also enables students to express their opinions freely in a group context, and to learn about their rights and obligations as Argentinean citizens.

*Asociación Conciencia*, a non-profit and non-partisan organization formed in the 1980s, is responsible for implementation of the CRP, in collaboration with teachers' unions, the Ministry of Education, and the World Bank's Civil Society Specialist and educational team. In its first three years of implementation, the program has reached more than 1,500 teachers and approximately 40,000 students. It has also provided the World Bank with a useful toolkit for strengthening civic education content in its projects and with preliminary experience in using civic education in schools as a violence mitigation tool.

## Background

The seeds of an unprecedented transformation in the educational system were sown in 1983 with Argentina's return to democracy. Education featured prominently in the efforts to consolidate the democratic process in the nation. The new government called for a Pedagogical Congress – involving members of civil society – in order to revisit the 1884 National Educational Law.

The result of this Congress was the Federal Education Law of 1994, which comprehensively reformed the national educational system. This law established the Federal Education Council, a body that would be comprised of all the provinces' Ministers of Education, and be responsible for producing guidelines on basic educational issues. These guidelines led to a transformation of the educational system with the creation of three sections (EGB, or Basic General Education)

that comprised the primary school years and the first two years of high school (ages 6 to 14), and one high school cycle (*Polimodal*) accounting for the last three years of high school. Attendance in the three EGB sections was declared mandatory. As well, the guidelines introduced a new approach to civic education that focused on ethics and values, and whose content was made appropriate to provincial and regional contexts.

The 1996 Pan-American workshop “Education for Democracy” provided an impetus for work on civic education in Argentina. The workshop, held in Buenos Aires and hosted by the international CSO Civitas, committed its participants to creating programs that would foster democratization in their countries. As a result of “Education for Democracy,” the government of Argentina, the World Bank, and civil society organizations (CSOs) made a commitment to create civic education programs in Argentina. The Bank’s Civil Society Specialist and educational team were charged with formulating an implementation strategy of the Civitas commitment with Argentinean CSOs, federal and provincial governments and teachers’ unions.

### **The Civic Responsibility Program**

Civic education in Argentina has traditionally been taught with reference exclusively to the Constitution and important historical events. The Civic Responsibility Program begins from a different perspective: it trains trainers to teach Argentineans about their rights and obligations as citizens. The World Bank has defined civic education as that which facilitates “[the learning of] general information about the law, the nurturing of civic virtues and the development of enlightened citizens.” One aspect of the CRP is making students from kindergarten to the ninth grade informed and responsible citizens, in the hope that democratic behavior learned in school will be practiced in other contexts, such as the home, peer groups, and so on. Another is the recognition of the importance of the active participation of the family, the media, and cultural institutions in promoting civic education.

The non-governmental organization (NGO) *Asociación Conciencia* was selected by the Bank to implement the CRP. *Asociación Conciencia*, currently boasting thirty-two chapters and 4,570 members, has worked for twenty years to promote education that focuses on equity and social justice, and encourages citizens to participate in the political process. *Conciencia* also attempts to build the foundations of a just social, economic and political environment throughout the Americas by working with Civitas and other organizations around the world.

*Conciencia* had strengths that made it particularly well equipped to implement the CRP: (i) its extensive experience training teachers, (ii) its network of provincial offices which facilitates nation-wide coordination, and (iii) its links to international civil society networks, which provide access to best practices from all over the world.

### **Program Objectives**

The objectives of the CRP include:

- **Educate and inform citizens in order to promote responsible participation in the country’s political and community life.**

- **Promote “Education for Democracy” among students at all educational levels for shaping the political structures for democracy starting at school level.**
- Incorporate content related to civic, legal, ethic and economic<sup>16</sup> education into the curricula of public and private schools, helping the educational community to understand both the nature of emerging democracies and the fundamental dynamics of the republican system.
- Design and elaborate teaching material for trainee teachers and their students at each formal education level beginning with secondary school.
- Disseminate 10,000 textbooks on civic education to students and teachers. The teachers’ book is a pedagogical guide for teaching civic education, while the students’ book is for group work.
- Creation of high-level training centers for civic responsibility for citizens and teachers in order to involve them in democratic life. There are 24 centers located in schools in various provinces, in which teaching is carried out by volunteer teachers.
- Improve the quality of education by developing new challenges, such as discussions about democratic culture, family values, self-reliance within a democratic framework, global society and its implications at the national level, and the tension between the market and democracy.

### **Program’s activities**

Some of the activities of the CRP are listed below:

- Research into and development of a teacher-training program in civic responsibility at the secondary school level.
- Implementation of a training program for teachers in participatory methodologies (role-playing, simulation exercises, conflict resolution simulations, etc).
- Production of educational materials for teachers and students from all educational levels with special emphasis on the secondary level.
- Re-programming of educational methodologies to include the new subject in the curricula.
- Holding meetings and workshops for the set-up and testing of class materials.
- Organization of work meetings with specialists, educational authorities, teachers from universities and institutes, in order to contribute to the program’s requirements.
- Design of a component for a provincial project under a Bank loan.
- Evaluation through:
  - Meetings with parents, students and teachers to analyze the impact of the program in households and the educational community.
  - Evaluation of program impact at the provincial and national levels with authorities, teachers, unions and CSOs.
  - Evaluation of the demand for extension of the program.
  - Evaluation of the sustainability of Bank-financed projects and regular educational programs.

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<sup>16</sup> This content relates to education about fiscal responsibility and public budgets.

## **Implementation**

*Conciencia* works closely with the Center for Civic Education, an American non-profit organization that develops institutional materials for civic education. In addition to using the standard methodology created by this Center, *Conciencia* has developed a special component focused on ethics and economics. This is particularly important in Argentina, where citizens tend to avoid paying taxes, government budgets are not accessible to the public, and there is no public auditing mechanism to monitor government spending.

In the first stage of implementation of the CRP, training courses were offered to fifty teachers in each province or educational jurisdiction. In selecting trainers, *Conciencia*, the Center for Civic Education, and the national Ministry of Education looked for teachers' ability to learn with their own students. The courses consisted of a brief presentation of the program, followed by interactive workshops to introduce the teachers to participatory methodologies and issues related to civic, legal and economic education. The pedagogical methodology is rooted in a flexible, "learning by doing" approach. It comprises a monitoring and teaching system based on students' participation and the use of instructional material that emphasizes practical examples, definitions and exercises. These materials and textbooks were provided in the workshops for teachers to discuss with their students in the classroom. Trainers were told to encourage teachers to develop their own methodologies for teaching civic education, according to the social, economic and cultural background of the students.

The World Bank funded the production of program materials that were developed for teachers and students in accordance with the Ministry of Education's requirements. The development of materials in Argentina by Argentines resulted in texts that specifically addressed Argentinean concerns.

Several provinces have agreed to collaborate with *Conciencia* in the implementation of the program. The governments of the provinces of Córdoba and Entre Ríos, and La Pampa's, Santa Fe's and Buenos Aires' Ministries of Education, representing over 50% of the total student population, signed a cooperation agreement with *Conciencia* to implement the project.

### **The impact of the program**

The Citizen Responsibility Program trains trainers in order to guarantee a strong multiplier effect. The aim is to develop courses for trainers, who then train teachers at every level of the formal education system, creating a chain reaction and a permanent flow of training courses at the national level. Each trained teacher – responsible for between twenty to ninety students – will ideally share the new methodology with two or three other teachers in the same subject. Box 1 shows the impact of the program to date, in terms of number of chapters of *Conciencia* involved, courses taught, teachers trained and students exposed to the program.

## Box 1

<i>Number of Chapters Involved</i>	<i>Number of Courses (20 hours each)</i>	<i>Number of Trained Teachers</i>	<i>Students Exposed to the Program</i>
23 in the provinces 1 in the City of Buenos Aires	41 (820 hours)	1610 (40 teachers per course)	Between 32,200 and 144,900 pupils (about 20 to 90 pupils per teacher)

### Greatest successes

*Bariloche*, in the Province of Rio Negro, was the first site for CRP training. The course was a success despite participants' initial indifference. The methodology taught in the course helped the local community, trade union and *Conciencia* chapter to reach agreement on reform to the educational system, which had been a bone of contention among teachers and trade unions. As a result of the CRP training, schools in the area incorporated civic education content into their curricula.

Most of the teachers trained in *Tartagal*, in the Province of Salta, worked in schools with a high proportion of indigenous students, who are often excluded from the educational system and discriminated against in the community. The teachers used the experience gained through the CRP to mediate between indigenous and non-indigenous people in several communities, which created a sense of belonging within the two groups.

The CRP was implemented by the teachers' union in *Santa Fe* province. The fact that the course was offered by an NGO was key to success of the program, as the teachers' union would have been less likely to participate if it had been offered by the government. The program's success led the teachers' union to request more courses.

### Lessons Learned

**Formal educational systems can encourage the development of democratic values beyond the classroom.** Despite the rigidity of the Argentinean educational system, the program shows that democratic values can be built within the classroom and used outside it. In addition to its original objectives, the program has taught students skills that they can use in real life situations. For example, in a low-income high school in Buenos Aires, students have used the program to solve gang conflict. This experience suggests that coordination among schools, families and youth programs can help students to develop into committed and active citizens. Parents' and students' participation in education both strengthens the educational system and empowers them as active citizens engaged in public affairs.

**Decentralization provides opportunities for developing tailored services, but cannot ensure comparable outcomes among provinces.** This experience supports the conclusions of the report, “Education and Training in Latin America and the Caribbean” (World Bank, 1999). This report stated that in decentralization reform vis-à-vis education, “the transfer of...responsibility has only rarely been accompanied by aggressive efforts to build local capacity. Strengthening management capacity at the sub-national levels and devolving decision making still further to the level of the schools will require a major effort over the next decades.” Uneven development of the CRP initiative in different communities was partly a result of differences in local capacity. Civic education programs are particularly strong in a small group of provinces where the teachers and *Conciencia* worked with the government to create a locally relevant program.

**Bureaucracy and/or lack of political commitment can create obstacles to the execution of grants and loans.** In Argentina more than a dozen signatures are required for grant or loan approval, and obtaining these signatures can take from twenty-four hours to eighteen months. In the case of this grant (from the Institutional Development Fund), the Country Management Unit had to request several extensions for the implementation of the grant because of the eighteen-month delay in obtaining the federal government’s acceptance of the grant.

**A partnership approach can help avoid bureaucratic barriers.** The teamwork and persistence of the World Bank, the Ministry of Education and *Conciencia* was the main reason the program worked its way through the maze of state bureaucracy without losing the IDF funds.

**Participatory teacher training can lead to participatory classrooms.** The program trained teachers using a highly participatory methodology. In the workshops teachers learned and experienced the advantages of participation, and were then willing to implement the participatory methodologies with their own students. This action-oriented approach is crucial to participation, which lies at the root of citizenship-building.

**The commitments of all stakeholders need to be followed up by action in order to build trust among all parties.** In 2000 the program was presented to the new government authorities, who promised to publish 90,000 text books. However, the government has yet to deliver the books. This undermines the continuity of the program and weakens the fragile trust among actors.

**Belonging to regional networks provides opportunities for greater replicability and “good globalization.”** The CRP was shared with other members of Civitas of the Americas, and the newly developed ethic and economics content was translated into English and is being used in Eastern Europe, Alaska, Canada, Brazil and the Center for Civic Education in the United States. Therefore, networks can contribute to the sharing of information and improve the quality of initiatives on a regional and even international scale. Through the links established among disparate groups, networks can also facilitate the creation of a “global civil society,” which extends beyond national borders and responds to global needs.

**The program could be scaled up and applied to other Bank-Financed projects.** The CRP generated demand far beyond the capabilities of a US\$300,000 grant. The positive response to

the program suggests that there may be opportunities to incorporate this program into other Bank-financed projects. Seed money could help finance innovative pilot programs that could then be implemented on a larger scale with additional funds, such as loans.

**The Bank can help to counteract the lack of trust between government and CSOs, but cannot ensure the sustainability of the program beyond its intervention.** Although *Conciencia* would have preferred to implement the CRP on its own, the Bank acted as a convener of the two parties, recognizing that collaboration with the government could improve the CRP's impact and sustainability. This approach brought positive results in the initial phase of the program, although it is now presenting some challenges. In some cases, the national Ministry of Education has not given the Federal Education Council the funds to implement the CRP, which presents a serious difficulty, since *Conciencia* does not have its own funds.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge of civic education is too great for educators alone. They need far greater cooperation from their own people, governments, and the international community. The collaborative work of a CSO and the World Bank in the design and implementation of this civic education program made the introduction of new methodologies and content, with active participation and consensus between education authorities and the community, possible.



# Using Innovative Technology in Country Assistance Strategy Consultations: The Experience from El Salvador

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***Abstract:** This note discusses preliminary lessons emerging from a broad consultation process in El Salvador that introduced an innovative software tool called “Options Finder.” Options Finder allows virtual ranking of anonymous responses to a survey of focal groups selected from civil society groups, government representatives and donors. Upon careful design by the World Bank’s country team, the survey questionnaire was used to examine the main Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) topics, including the national agenda, the role of the Bank, the priorities of the CAS portfolio and their perceived risks.<sup>17</sup> A comparison of responses from selected representatives of stakeholders facilitates the shaping of the overall framework of the World Bank in-country strategy by incorporating early and detailed input from stakeholders. The new technology proves to be particularly helpful in promoting participation, building consensus and enhancing transparency in a post-conflict country trying to recover from two severe earthquakes and severe political polarization in a long process of democratic consolidation. Lessons from this experience indicate the risks of reduced time for broad debate and limited representation of more informed stakeholders (in particular those able to answer IT/virtual questionnaires), and suggest ways to offset them.*

## Background

In late 2000, when the World Bank’s El Salvador country team began discussing preparation of the CAS, there were a few concerns arising from past experience in engaging civil society organizations (CSOs) around CASs.<sup>18</sup> The 1997 CAS consultation in El Salvador had been among the three pilot Latin American and Caribbean Region (LAC) exercises to first engage non-governmental actors, but it had faced several obstacles. A broad range of CSOs, focusing mainly on NGOs, had been poorly represented, their previous contacts with the Bank had been sporadic or problematic and, despite government agreement to the CAS process, its representatives had not been fully engaged in the planning of the consultations. Prior efforts to involve other CSOs in the Bank’s operational work had been unsuccessful, and NGOs remained skeptical about the meaning of the “consultation” exercise, considering it more of a general “dialogue.” Despite the lack of consensus and problematic relations with NGOs, the CAS dialogue

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<sup>17</sup> The Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) details the level and composition of financial and technical assistance that the Bank aims to provide to a borrower country. The CAS document (i) describes the Bank’s strategy based on an assessment of priorities in the country, and (ii) indicates the level and composition of assistance to be provided based on the strategy and the country’s portfolio performance. Key elements of the document are discussed with the borrower government prior to Board consideration.

<sup>18</sup> A synthesis of this experience is provided by K. Bain and E. Gacitúa-Mario, “Promoting Participatory CAS: Lessons Learned from Colombia, El Salvador and Peru,” in Thinking Out Loud: Innovative Case Studies on Participatory Instruments, LAC Civil Society Papers, The World Bank, 1999.

helped to provide substantive feedback on current development issues, highlighted lack of communication as the main reason for antagonism between the Bank and NGOs, and brought home the urgent need to build a closer working relationship between the Bank and CSOs, including but going beyond NGOs.

The 1997 CAS consultations also illustrated a few operational lessons to take into account in the preparation of future CASs: (i) although consultation objectives were broadly defined, the agenda was open-ended, thus making it very difficult to reach concrete outcomes; (ii) prior dissemination of information about the purpose of the dialogue was limited, which made it suspect in the eyes of NGOs; (iii) no facilitation was provided during the event; and (iv) the Bank's disclosure policy on the CAS elicited additional distrust on the part of participants, as they argued that it limited their ability to monitor CAS inputs and outcomes.<sup>19</sup>

In the late nineties, however, two important developments contributed to a change in CSOs' perceptions of the role of participatory processes in the Bank's work in El Salvador: the *Plan de Nación* (National Plan) and the in-country consultations before implementation of Bank-financed projects. Appointed in agreement with civil society by President Calderón Sol in late 1997, an independent *Comisión Nacional del Desarrollo* (National Development Commission) led nationwide public consultations to formulate a shared development vision in the National Plan. The unveiling of the Plan in 1999 and its endorsement by President Flores in 2000 contributed to a shift in civil society's perception of the authorities: up to this point, civil society had believed that the government was unconcerned about the limited CSO participation and exclusion of the poorest populations from the development process. At the same time, in 1999-2000 Bank staff led an unprecedented number of dialogues in CSO fora, including the network of local development organizations and mayors, the judicial system, the health and education sectors, think tanks, private sector organizations and the legislature. This process modified the widespread perception that the Bank usually conducted its operations unilaterally and with limited CSO endorsement. Both developments laid the foundation for the authorities' consensus-building efforts on key components of its national agenda, as well as for an improved relationship between CSOs and the Bank, which became apparent in the recent CAS exercise. As a result, CAS consultations were not presented to participants as an exceptional dialogue, but rather as a complementary mechanism for setting national portfolio priorities among a series of already on-going sector- and project-specific consultations.

### **The planning and implementation of the consultations**

In accordance with past lessons learned, consultations had to take place before the definition of the CAS policy priorities, and be based on clear rules of the game, including a simple agenda, a comprehensive presentation of the Bank's work in El Salvador, an innovative technology tool, a short survey questionnaire and a participatory dialogue with participants. A written version of the presentation was distributed to participants before

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<sup>19</sup> At this time, 1997, there was a non-disclosure policy with regard to CASs. As of July 1998, however, public disclosure of the CAS is allowed, upon government request.

the survey took place. The questionnaire was designed to solicit opinions on the main CAS topics: the national agenda, the Bank's role in the country, and the priorities of the CAS portfolio and their risks, for example. The use of Options Finder facilitated collection of participant groups' responses in virtual time, thus enabling anonymous group—as well as individual—responses, preventing an open-ended agenda or unconnected views on key issues, and, most importantly, providing quantified outcomes immediately, thereby allowing comparative analysis of responses within and among groups. Subsequent participatory dialogues enhanced understanding of the participants' views on selected topics, and also helped to document their agreements and differences.

**Planning:** The government's early involvement in the planning of the consultations was essential for setting the agenda of the meeting, approving the use of Options Finder as a supporting technology, choosing the number of focal groups, suggesting an initial list of potential participants representing a wide variety of political actors per group, and actively convening meetings directly with the legislature and the Cabinet. One week prior to the meeting, the government also approved full disclosure of CAS consultation outcomes to the media, which would permit participants and the general public to read about them after the meetings. Authorities neither drafted nor provided prior clearance to the survey questionnaire. Other activities developed by the CAS team included sending basic information about the CAS in advance; drafting the main CAS presentation and distributing it to participants during the meeting; preparing the questionnaire; finding two experienced facilitators, one for the Options Finder session and another for the ensuing participatory dialogues; and, finally, setting up a parallel series of events with the media.

**Selection of participants:** Given the limited nature of the consultation exercise, in contrast with the more extensive participation in national consultations in the late nineties by the National Plan, the challenge was to obtain small sample focal groups according to the following criteria: equitable gender and political party representation, and nationwide, broad-based participation. Led by the CAS task manager, the Bank's country team helped draft the initial list of participants per session with inputs not just from the authorities, but from the Commission heading the National Plan, the Social Investment and Local Development Fund (FISDL), judicial project teams engaged in similar consultation exercises nationwide, and several CSO representatives. Several draft lists were circulated, because consensus on some groups (e.g. mayors and congressmen) took longer than expected or because, given the excessive number of potential participants in one meeting, additional criteria had to be applied (e.g. in some cases representatives of NGO networks were chosen over representatives of individual NGOs). Finally, about 200 national representatives of CSOs, the Legislature and the Cabinet took part in the consultations. They were organized into seven focal groups: CSOs (social, environmental, gender, indigenous and church networks), mayors (from all over the country), media (TV, radio and press), private sector (industry, agriculture, banking, construction, commerce and think tanks), bilateral and multilateral donors, the Legislature and the Cabinet. In response to its request, a special session with the FMLN—the leading left-wing group in the fight against the government in El Salvador's civil war, and now the main force in Congress—also took place.

**Implementation:** Each meeting followed a standard, but flexible format lasting about three hours. The agenda started with a summary presentation of the CAS in a draft “Brainstorming Note,” comprising a condensed presentation of the Bank’s portfolio status and options about its future strategic guidelines. It continued with the facilitator-led individual responses to the questionnaire. The group’s responses to each question were projected onto a screen and, as soon as the questionnaire was completed, the answers were printed and distributed to participants. The facilitator then led a conventional participatory discussion on the group’s own responses, mostly focused on a set of open questions previously chosen by the Bank team, although time was allowed to receive additional feedback from participants.

As follow-up the Bank committed itself to producing a summary report of the consultations as soon as possible. Less than two weeks after the consultations the two main newspapers published the report (available on the Bank’s website). The consultation process also received extensive media coverage, which increased its transparency and credibility. Government and FMLN representatives appreciated the Bank’s timely contribution to consensus-building efforts around the nation’s reconstruction and development agendas.

### **A sample of responses obtained by Options Finder**

In general, CAS teams recognize that consultations do not necessarily produce consensus, since different ideological views, perspectives and policy options surface during the process itself. The use of Options Finder, however, not only allowed for the free expression of differing opinions, but for the analysis and comparison of these views, allowing participants to find more common ground among participants than had been anticipated. Below are some of the main Salvadoran findings that help to illustrate the user-friendly format and outcome-oriented nature of Options Finder results.

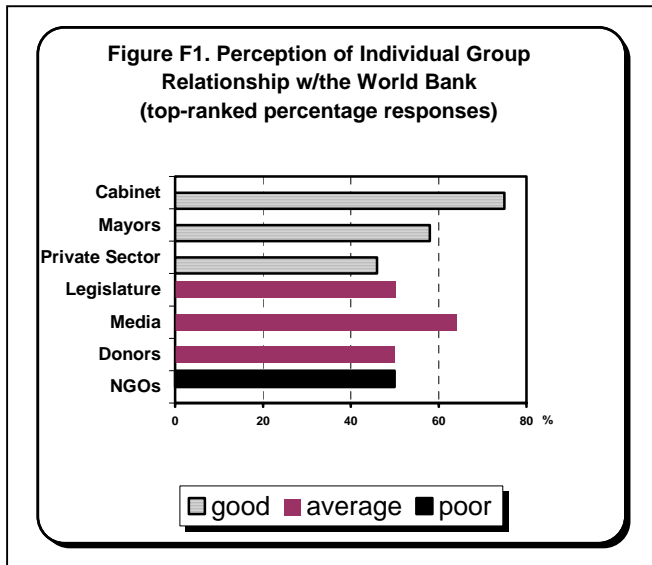
#### **The national agenda**

- *Rising crime and violence and low social investment were the main economic and social problems cited by participants. Slow and inadequate justice administration and insufficient consensus among political actors were considered the main political problems facing the nation.*
- Infrastructure rehabilitation, housing reconstruction, and disaster prevention and mitigation were identified as the highest priorities for the reconstruction process.

#### **The World Bank's 2001-04 role**

- Financing loans (75%), supporting donor coordination (56%) and facilitating national consensus-building (50%) were the main roles that participants said they would like the Bank to play.
- Reducing poverty (91%), promoting employment opportunities (82%) and reducing vulnerabilities against crime and violence, weak land rights and natural disasters (76%) were identified as the main strategic objectives for the CAS. Other objectives that received lower ratings were: supporting stability and faster growth (68%), strengthening participation by local actors and governance (62%) and enhancing private sector competitiveness (62%).

- Respondents felt that the Bank's operations had been executed with high transparency (94%), high efficiency (90%) and broad participation by beneficiaries (79%).



- Respondents had mixed opinions about their group relationship with the Bank: roughly one-third of respondents considered it inadequate, another third average, and the remaining third good. Whereas a bad or regular opinion still prevailed among CSOs, and, to a lesser extent, the media, a much more positive opinion prevailed among the Cabinet, the mayors, and the private sector (see Figure F1). Respondents with negative perceptions added that their views were mainly due to insufficient country knowledge about the Bank

and its policies, as well as to the lack of a liaison office *in situ*.

In addition to responses to the survey's questionnaire, participants provided a rich set of verbal suggestions and recommendations that varied greatly in depth and scope, did not necessarily accord with the Bank's views, and gave input complementary to that revealed by Options Finder:

#### *Special Session with the FMLN*

FMLN representatives in Congress chose not to respond to the questionnaire, preferring to participate actively in the face-to-face consultations. The FMLN delivered an official letter to make sure their views *vis-à-vis* the Bank's strategy were adequately unified and understood. Surprisingly, most of their national agenda and Bank assistance priorities were similar to those identified above, but disagreement prevailed on, for instance: (i) the broad perception that El Salvador's economic model is a successful story, as deep inequalities (with regard to land and income, predominantly) still prevail; and (ii) the perception that the Bank, and not the government, should assume a direct consensus-builder role, instead of a simpler dialogue-facilitator role. At the end of the meeting, the FMLN pronounced the meeting a positive step forward and thanked the Bank for taking the initiative.

#### *Other challenges of the national agenda*

Debates allowed for the identification of the following additional challenges. On the economic front, participants singled out foreign investment and tourism promotion, the impact of free trade agreements, and falling migration patterns with the eventual decline of remittance flows. On the social front they mentioned: domestic violence, the spread of AIDs, sexual education as a means of reducing population growth, nutrition among poor children, and the need for teaching moral values as priorities. On the political front, participants identified the need for an intensive education program for congressmen,

deeper participatory mechanisms in public service delivery, long-overdue electoral and territorial law reform, and corruption as important topics to address.

#### *The critical role of the legislature*

Congressmen were astonished by the results of the consultation pointing to their critical role in the development of the national agenda and the Bank's future assistance. In this case, Options Finder was extremely useful for providing evidence of a phenomenon virtually unknown before the survey.

### **Lessons Learned**

The use of Options Finder in El Salvador CAS consultations helped overcome previous difficulties in reaching out to civil society stakeholders and, due to its focused approach, facilitated the achievement of a minimum degree of consensus on essential CAS components. Options Finder proved to be an extremely efficient methodology for processing a significant number of responses (80 in all) from multiple groups in a very short period of time. As responses were anonymous and quantified in virtual time, initially skeptical stakeholders were confident in the transparency of the process. Mayors and NGOs in particular emphasized that they would have taken several days to work on the same set of issues using conventional methodology and that, ultimately, they may not have reached the same conclusions as clearly summarized as they emerged in these consultations. The most important lessons emerging from the use of this technology in Salvadoran CAS consultations can be summarized as follows:

#### **Technology is not a substitute for learning from past lessons in CAS consultations.**

The main reason for the success of the Salvadoran consultations is that they took advantage of previous lessons in many ways. They focused on the process, as well as the final product, were preceded by multiple Bank participatory efforts in different fronts, addressed multiple CSO stakeholders (that is, not just NGOs), enjoyed full commitment and support from authorities and key CSO sources, and, through publication of its summary report and broad media coverage, gained credibility in the eyes of skeptical CSOs, thus ensuring their full participation.

**Thorough prior preparation for the Options Finder session in the meetings is essential.** Critical preparatory activities for the success of the consultations include: (i) scrutinizing participant selection to establish the desired balance; (ii) sending information to participants in advance about the features of the consultation exercise; (iii) refining the questionnaire with the country team; (iv) preparing a short, focused CAS brainstorming presentation for the main stakeholders to acquaint them with the CAS pillars and the survey questions; (v) choosing proficient facilitators who have familiarized themselves with the survey and dialogue's questions ahead of time; and, (vi) last but not least, hiring a highly qualified supporting team for the swift handling and processing of Options Finder.

**Dealing with political or sector partisanship is always an issue.** No doubt there is always room for expanding the number and scope of invitees, since achieving an acceptable representation of CSO groups is a difficult task and limited scope in CAS

consultations is a frequent basis for criticism. Internal discussion took place among private sector representatives (in the banking and manufacturing sectors) about who should convene their meeting, as did debate between the official party and FMLN congressmen about the selection criteria for their deputies. These differences point to the need for providing full explanation of the purpose of the meeting to all participants in advance and for carefully weighing up potential in-group differences.

**Finding ways of addressing under-representation is important for maximizing the success of consultations.** Some key groups, such as those representing unions and poor peasants, were under-represented in the consultations. It is possible that, given their lack of formal education, they would have had difficulty adjusting quickly to a methodology based on information technology. Dealing with such groups might require a more traditional and complementary consultation process. Alternatively, efforts could be made to assist in capacity-building of these groups, in order to prepare them for participation in the main consultations on an equal footing with other participants.

**Options Finder helped to create a constructive dialogue between the Bank and stakeholders.** Apart from the FMLN's refusal to answer the survey, only a few direct complaints were heard from NGO representatives. No doubt the overall framework, full disclosure of results and the ensuing debate helped to prevent suspicion of a hidden agenda on the part of the Bank or the authorities.

**A survey technology-based session reduces the length of time available for profound discussion, and should be complemented by face-to-face discussion.** Some topics merited further discussion and the time devoted to participatory dialogues was barely enough to initiate them. For instance, issues about the potential for local development and Social Fund work or the FMLN's rejection of the privatization process merited further debate and would have benefited from additional questions and time. However, consultations' duration must be finite, and three hours seemed to be a reasonable length of time.

**CAS consultations should not replace existing dialogue mechanisms for more focused policy-level or project preparation discussions.** Consultations should be seen as a mechanism for complementing, strengthening and influencing pre-existing discussion processes. This combination of discussion and consultation processes will ultimately make the initiatives more relevant and effective on the ground.

**The limited local presence of the Bank remains an important handicap in El Salvador.** Whereas the Bank's in-country perceived role got a significant boost with such a participatory and transparent exercise, preserving it in the medium-term requires a continuous and enhanced field presence, as well as a systematic effort at disseminating information about the Bank's future operations. Mayors and NGOs expressed interest in approaching the Bank as a potential development partner than as a government ally— but such a relationship should be based on ongoing exchanges at the local level. Both organizations also recommended their participation in future project consultations, clearly

aiming to upgrade their role in Bank-financed projects from mere executors to social auditors.

**Follow-up analysis of the medium-term impact of CAS consultations in the country dialogue should be conducted.** A few participants pointed out that they had no reason to believe that the final CAS would ultimately reflect their input, or that the authorities would respect their agreement to full CAS disclosure. To counter such views, in the future the CAS process would benefit from follow-up benchmarks and mechanisms that would provide a platform for monitoring compliance with consensuses reached and minimize remaining distrust.

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