

## Capacity for Development

Municipal officials in LAC fight corruption and improve governance

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**February 13, 2003**—The world's largest distance learning initiative for municipal officials began four years ago as a modest collaboration between Mexico's Monterrey Institute of Technology and the WBI's Global Development Learning Network. Since then, 12,000 city officials throughout Latin America have boosted their skills in [municipal management](#), [finance](#), and [anticorruption](#).

To put learning into action while taking the course, local public officials design and implement real-world projects. These, in turn, are then analyzed by a team of practitioners with participants receiving written and streamed video feedback. In 2002, the course produced 300 anticorruption projects, the results of which are being compiled into a manual on anticorruption to be published later this year.

The best projects from Latin America, along with the best from Africa and Asia, will be showcased in May at the 11th International Anticorruption Conference in South Korea.

Many course participants are implementing their projects. According to Sergio Madero, administrative manager in Mexico's Ciudad de Juárez, the municipality is designing a new system for electronic purchasing that will address a weakness identified during the course. The new procurement process will be open to more bidders (legislation had restricted



Former mayor of La Paz, Bolivia, Ronald MacLean participates in the distance learning exercise.



Gerardo Garza, mayor of San Pedro, Mexico, addresses course participants through the internet.

participation), reduce arbitrary conditions, and increase accountability. A website is being developed to communicate with registered providers, publish requests for proposals, receive bids, and publish results.

The municipality of Nuestra Señora de La Paz, Bolivia, is pursuing a course project to keep the development of its central park free from corruption. Citizen participation will help ensure that the local development plan is faithfully implemented. Qualified personnel are to be appointed in accordance with detailed terms of reference developed jointly by civil society and government.

In San Pedro Garza García, Mexico, city officials are developing innovative internet-based instruments and mechanisms for citizen participation. The goal? To increase transparency and accountability in public decisions. An interactive webpage provides a direct link through which citizens can present complaints and follow up on actions taken by the local authorities. Via webcasts of local meetings, citizens get real-time information on decisions and discussions. Every Friday is "Citizens' Friday," and the mayor and his advisors receive citizens at the municipality.

Zacatecas, another municipality in Mexico, has developed a three-year action plan to create a more transparent and accountable government by involving civil society and grassroots organizations. Some 900 fractured committees of citizens have been consolidated and reformed; a web-based information system now facilitates their work. An electronic system based on new purchasing technology is being developed to control corruption in local procurement. Smart cards will be used to manage municipal inventories, and a new public procurement committee will include representatives of the private sector and civil society.

With demand running high, WBI is working with

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the Bank's operational units in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to build more communities of practice around this model.

*Useful Links:* To learn more about action-oriented distance learning at the municipal level, contact [Victor Vergara](#) or [Maria Gonzalez de Asis](#).

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