



Civil Society
Team

Empowerment in Action

A Newsletter of the Civil Society Team
Latin America & Caribbean Region, World Bank
www.worldbank.org/laccs

Spring 2003 Number 1

PROFILES Citizen Report Cards: Can Argentina's Social Services Make the Grade?

Amidst one of the worst crises in Argentine history, the Government is working to improve the delivery of vitally needed public services by enhancing transparency, civic engagement and accountability in the oversight of public services. The Bank's regional Civil Society Team, under a World Bank State Modernization loan, is helping to support these reforms with technical advice and capacity building on empowerment strategies.

These efforts include an innovative survey on the quality of public services, entitled Citizens Report Cards (Boletines de Calificación Ciudadanos), that will be used to monitor the social security agency (ANSES), which manages 50% of the national budget, and the health insurance regulatory agency (Superintendencia de Seguros de Salud), which oversees the provision of health services for 11 million people. The Civil Society Team is also working with the Government and civic groups to implement 23 Citizen Charters (Cartas Compromiso con el Ciudadano) that commit state agencies to improve the quality of their services.

For this special first edition of *Empowerment in Action*, Carmen Syzc, National Director, National Office for Innovation in Management, and the World Bank's official point of contact for the Citizen Report Card and Citizen Charters programs, agreed to be interviewed by the Civil Society Team's Roby Senderowitsch.

Roby Senderowitsch: Tell us about yourself and why you think citizen participation in shaping and managing public policies is important?

Carmen Syzc: I have been working in public administration for 28 years, and have been a National Director of the Office for Innovation in Management for the last 13 years.

We want to change the view "that the State is something rigid, immovable, obsolete and hostile to its citizens." -- Carmen Syzc, National Director, National Office for Innovation in Management, Government of Argentina



Planning meeting for the Citizen Charters Program

The inclusion of citizens in the management of public policies is important for various reasons. First, when public agencies facilitate citizen participation, they improve access to services and promote the exercise of rights, which strengthens the democratic process. At the same time, participation provides the basis for ensuring the full exercise of citizenship and increases the responsibility of civil society to engage in public affairs.

Second, when we create channels for the State to have permanent ties with citizens, it becomes possible to evaluate, jointly with them, the performance of public agencies and the level of satisfaction of the end users. Also, it becomes possible to understand the users' expectations and points of views, and with this, design services that are closer to their needs. The only means to obtain public services that are effective, equitable, of high quality, and responsive to citizens' needs and desires is by building mechanisms for participation.

When citizens are involved in the design, evaluation and control of public services, a more transparent public management is promoted.

RS: What benefits and risks are you encountering in implementing the Citizens Report Cards exercise? How can the risks be reduced?

CS: I believe that the creation of systems for citizen oversight, such as the Report Cards, is a key element in the process of modernizing public sector management. On the



one hand, any new experience such as this represents a challenge and carries with it certain risks. As such, we need to collaborate with all of the actors involved. The government needs to make a greater effort to create a new, more open institutional culture, which includes a concern for providing services in ways that take citizens' perspectives into account. The government also needs to see citizens as partners and not view mechanisms of citizen oversight as a threat but as an opportunity to improve.

On the other hand, this also requires a process of development among the diverse civil society groups engaged. They need to understand that the creation of lasting initiatives must take into consideration the pace of public administration, as processes of organizational change require gradual and sustainable advances.

It is certain that this is all about building bridges between the State and civil society, working to open space for dialogue and working together in ways that take into consideration the specific logics of each sector.



July 2002 – Iguazu, Argentina – Workshop on Participation of State Reform

RS: What are the next steps after undertaking the pilots in ANSES and the Health Insurance Regulatory Agency?

CS: The implementation of citizen watchdog mechanisms in these two public agencies with a large social impact will, without doubt, be a significant step. To the extent that we demonstrate results with these efforts, we will continue to further institutionalize this practice of citizen consultation. In addition, we will replicate this experience in other government agencies that are already working with us through the Citizen Charter Program.

This program, begun in 2000, has a final goal of improving relations between the Administration and citizens, especially through the services that the government provides. Its objectives are oriented to building greater awareness of citizens' demands in public agencies. More than 25 service delivery agencies have publicly committed to improving their level of services, to ensuring citizens their

right to information, to facilitating participation, and to guaranteeing citizens' rights to receive a response or a solution when things are not going well. This work already carried out in the agencies is an ideal input into carrying out the Citizen Report Cards.

The objective is to progressively advance the creation of citizen oversight mechanisms in Argentina. In short, during 2003 we want to give a qualitative push to the goal of changing the view – at times real and at other times stereotyped – that the State is something rigid, immovable, obsolete and hostile to its citizens. In other words, we want to support, within a framework of greater credibility and transparency, the creation of a State and a society in which we all want to live.

PANORAMA Regional Activities of the Civil Society Team

Empowerment in Programmatic Operations. An ambitious empowerment strategy is well advanced across the World Bank's work in the Latin America region. Programmatic and adjustment lending, in which the Bank helps to finance programs, after endorsing the objectives, but without defining in detail how the funds will be spent, are novel yet critical areas for advancing the strategy. Embedded within the programmatic loan to Peru, for instance, are several innovative activities to support more effective service delivery through measures that heighten transparency, participation and accountability; and similar actions are being developed for loans in preparation for Chiapas, Mexico, and Colombia. The Civil Society Team is also closely engaged in Bank lending to support the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) in Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Most recently, Civil Society Team Leader Kathy Bain journeyed to Tegucigalpa, **Honduras** in January 2003 as a member of the Bank's first mission to develop a programmatic loan in support of that country's PRS. During the mission Bain consulted with government officials, civil society leaders, mayors and donors on current actions to strengthen governance, democracy and transparency—key objectives of that country's PRS—and potential areas where World Bank technical and financial support might play a catalytic role.

Bain found extensive interest in Bank support for a program of reforms to open up policy processes, and to improve access to information and flows of accountability. Selected areas under consideration for action include initiatives to: improve public information systems; mainstream participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring systems; and strengthen the regulatory environment for governance and participation within the decentralization process. Bain plans to return to Honduras shortly to further develop this major component of the loan operation, which is scheduled to go to the World Bank Board for approval later in 2003.



Regional Workshop on Pro-Poor Governance. More than one hundred leaders from government, civil society and the private sector from 18 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean gathered with World Bank staff in Lima, Peru for a two and a half day workshop in late October 2002 on *Governance for the Empowerment of Poor People*. Organized by the Civil Society Team, the workshop provided an opportunity to analyze and share experiences across the region on how to promote good governance for the empowerment of the poor, and to better understand the roles that different actors can play in this process. Vice President David De Ferranti opened the workshop and former Bolivia President Jorge Quiroga served as a keynote speaker.

Case study presentations examined obstacles to and opportunities for supporting good governance and poor people's empowerment in six policy areas: public services, market regulations, judicial reform, conflict resolution and peace, anticorruption mechanisms, and political and administrative reform. A participant in the discussion on public services suggested that "the main challenge is to construct a relationship of trust between the State and civil society organizations so that each carries out its role and can complement one another to advance the public interest." Workshop presentations and case studies are available at: www.worldbank.org/laccs

New Initiative to Measure Empowerment. Both regional and Bank-wide initiatives are underway to develop a conceptual framework for evaluating the effect of empowerment on development outcomes, and to test the framework through case studies. Michael Walton, a World Bank Regional Advisor, has spearheaded these efforts in the region in collaboration with Argentine academic Catalina Smulovitz and Civil Society Team consultant Patti Petesch. Ruth Alsop is coordinating the Bank-wide evaluation program.

"Evaluating Empowerment" argues that the litmus test for empowerment is whether poor and subordinate groups have *effectively* advanced their interests through their own choice and action. (Smulovitz, Walton and Petesch, January 2003 draft) A two-part conceptual framework is developed in the paper, with the first part defining empowerment as a joint product of the interaction between i) the capacities of people and groups to make purposeful choices (that is to be agents), and ii) the social and institutional context (or opportunity structure) in which the actors live. The paper then identifies a small set of influences --such as the capacity of people to aspire to a better life, and the openness of institutions to influence from an array of interests in a society--that are particularly important to enlarging the empowerment of poorer or excluded actors. The second element of the framework explores how empowerment influences development. Here it is key to take account of the multiple forces at work, and to seek to identify the specific effects of empowerment among the many other influences on development outcomes. Over the months ahead, the analytic framework will be tested on various World Bank-financed operations around the world. It is hoped that the cases will provide greater

understanding of the role of empowerment, and help to refine the new analytic approach. For further information about empowerment and related Bank activities, visit: www.worldbank.org/poverty/empowerment

FIELD NOTES News from the Team's Country Officers

ARGENTINA More than a thousand representatives from grassroots groups, NGO's and government agencies participated in five **workshops on civil society monitoring** in October and November 2002. Held in Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Mendoza, Neuquén and Misiones, the workshops are the start of a capacity building program to strengthen civic engagement in public affairs, and especially oversight of public services. The World Bank initiative is being carried out with support of universities and NGO's in various regions of the country.

Over time, the capacity building program is intended to foster improved public services due to greater transparency and accountability, as well as more government openness to civil society monitoring. The initiative is building on previous experiences in the country with community engagement in planning and managing various social programs and participatory budgeting activities.



Graciela Altobelle, Asociación Nuñu de Ayuda Manterna, 2002
Small Grant Winner

A regional seminar involving participants from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay was held in December 2002 on "**Social Capital Seen from Below.**" The event was co-sponsored by the World Bank's Small Grants Program, the United Nations Development Program and the Social Capital Foundation of Argentina, and facilitated an exchange of experiences on participation and increasing the empowerment of poor, excluded and vulnerable groups. Representatives from civil society organizations participated in the seminar, including current and previous grantees of the Small Grants Program that are working on



social capital issues. An important conclusion of the seminar was the vital need for greater civic participation in the design and implementation of governmental social policies and programs, but civil society organizations would need greater capacity to play this role effectively.

--SANDRA CESILINI



Sandra Cesilini (World Bank), Jorge Repetto Aguirre (Social Capital Fund, FONCAP), Axel van Trotsenburg (Country Director, World Bank), and Susanna Gatto (UNDP)

BRAZIL On behalf of President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil's Minister of Labor Jacques Wagner has pledged public commitment to identify **solutions for youth unemployment**, and to work in full partnership with civil society in this effort. Considered to be the top priority on Lula's Social Agenda, a new policy on "First Jobs and Opportunities for Young People" was the principal topic discussed between Minister Wagner and Brazil's Country Director Vinod Thomas in early January.

Emphasizing partnership as a key instrument for empowerment, Minister Wagner requested during the meeting that Zezé Weiss, the Bank's local civil society specialist, join his Ministry's Youth Employment Task Team. The Task Team is charged with developing a Youth Policy Note for presidential review. Options for the policy note will be discussed at an upcoming Bank-sponsored workshop.

In partnership with the ministries of Social Protection and Education, the Brazil Small Grants Program will focus throughout 2003 on recognizing community best practices with a particular focus on **Afro-descendants' rights, contributions and opportunities** and poorer areas of the country's Northeast region. A closing ceremony to recognize the small grant recipients is scheduled for May 2003 in a Quilombo Community of the Northeastern state of Ceará, and will feature a Quilombo Training (Accelerating Results Together). Most of the estimated 3000 Quilombos live in isolated and impoverished localities which were formed as "free communities" during slavery. Brazil's 1988 Constitution granted Quilombo people full access the land

they inhabit, but land disputes, poor work opportunities and low self-esteem remain persistent barriers.

Zezé Weiss is coordinating a March 2003 capacity building seminar on fundraising for the Amazon Working Group (GTA, by its Portuguese acronym), a network of over 500 organizations committed to promoting sustainable livelihoods for rainforest peoples. GTA receives core budget support from the Bank's Rainforest Pilot Program, and is exploring alternative funding for the network and its affiliates.

--ZEZÉ WEISS

ECUADOR "New Voices: Youth for Community Development from an Intercultural Perspective" was a seminar which featured the six grantees of the Ecuador Small Grants Program. One of the grantees is a network group known as the Indigenous Foundation of the Foothills of El Chimborazo (*Fundación Indígena de las Faldas del Chimborazo*). The Foundation used the grant to explore solutions to local problems through consultations and an "Intercultural Meeting for the Preservation of El Chimborazo Snow-capped Mountain." This area is affected by low agricultural activity, and the seminar aimed to build capacity among indigenous leaders to support more diverse local economic activities, with a particular focus on ethno-tourism and protection of the fragile mountain ecosystem

--PILAR LARREAMENDY



Leopoldo Urrutia, President of FODADEL (Fondos Descentralizados para Apoyo del Desarrollo Local) in Nicaragua, participating in a plenary session, at the October 2002 Lima Workshop on Governance for the Empowerment of the Poor

MEXICO Dialogue between the World Bank and the Fox administration in Mexico is contributing to a major reshaping of the country's rural development policies. Senior officials in the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry (SAGARPA) particularly single out experiences from a Rural Development in Marginal Areas Project as having influenced the government's new approaches.



The new Sustainable Rural Development Law and the new SAGARPA programs build on the several features of the Bank-financed rural development program, including emphasis on poorer regions and vulnerable groups; integrated multi-sector approaches and promotion of diversification of employment and income; recognition of socioeconomic, environmental and cultural diversity; and strengthening the traditional rural economy, by promoting both self sufficiency and better terms of trade in the marketplace for local goods. An especially important activity in the program has been the creation of Sustainable Rural Development Committees at the municipal, regional and state levels, which include civil society representatives. The new local bodies, recognized by law, will facilitate the decentralization of decisions and coordination of public rural development expenditures, and are designed to empower poor rural people by enhancing inclusion, accountability and strategic partnerships.

The World Bank's Mexico Small Grants Program, in partnership with the National Institute for Social Development (INDESOL), promoted dialogues among poor indigenous women on the local operations of the OPORTUNIDADES (former PROGRESA) program (which is not Bank financed). OPORTUNIDADES, administered by the Ministry of Economy, is the principal program for alleviating extreme poverty in Mexico, and provides scholarship, health, nutrition and education programs to over two million families. In 2002 it had a budget of 1.8 billion dollars, and expanded coverage is planned.

The dialogues were organized by local civic groups in three different regions, and in some cases included local and regional program staff and senior officials. The voices of these women provide powerful messages on both positive and negative impacts of the program on community and family life. Positive impacts include improvements in mother and child nutrition, school attendance and family health. However, women also report some negative impacts on community life due to distortions introduced by local agents and lack of information on the program's normative framework. The results of the dialogues, which mainly included suggestions to improve local accountability and empowerment, were discussed among representatives of civil society organizations, OPORTUNIDADES and INDESOL authorities, and the World Bank country director and staff.

--JORGE FRANCO

EDITORIAL Democratic Security: The Road To Peace And Justice in Colombia?

Jairo Arboleda
Team Specialist in Colombia

Elected on a campaign to do what it takes to restore law and order in conflict-ridden Colombia, the Uribe administration's National Development Plan seeks to create a "Communitarian State" that is grounded in principles of

democratic security for all citizens. Many civic leaders have voiced concerns over the new policy on democratic security, however, fearing that it places too much emphasis on security measures at the expense of other vital development objectives that must be advanced for lasting peace.

The democratic security policy aims to provide security and protection to all Colombians without regard to political preference, ideological conviction, religious affiliation or socioeconomic level. It entails a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the police and military forces, dismantle illicit drug production, improve justice and focus support on deprived and conflict-affected zones, making sure that human rights are protected. To implement the strategy, the government will strengthen the police and military forces with funds from an individual or corporate asset tax, will issue special legislation to restrict civilian support to illegal forces, and will recruit civilians to collaborate with state authorities as informants to end the armed conflict.

In addition to democratic security, the administration has set forward an ambitious development agenda. Other components of the National Development Plan seek to promote economic growth and employment generation, build greater equality through better distribution of the fruits of growth, and renovate public administration by increasing transparency and efficiency.

An alternative view of democratic security--one that is shared by many Colombians and a large segment of civil society organizations--was presented by the *Millennium Workshops* taskforce assembled by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2002. According to the taskforce's conclusions, democratic security requires a far more comprehensive approach. A policy that gives priority to security measures is inadequate because it fails to address the broad structural problems that fuel the violence, such as conflict over land, generalized impunity, the capture of the State by interest groups and a clientelistic political system. A more strategic approach would emphasize social, economic and judicial reforms without excluding military, police and intelligence measures, and seek to foster a new order in which Colombian citizens are able to enjoy the minimum for a dignified life.*

The view articulated by the taskforce also builds on concerns that the administration's policies give undue priority to the use of force and the limitation of liberties, if necessary. A troubling feature of the security policy for many civic organizations, and particularly for human rights and citizen empowerment groups, is the proposed creation of a network of one million civilians as informants and collaborators of the state. It implies, they argue, a direct involvement of citizens in the armed conflict, an approach which has resulted in a deepening and extension of the armed conflicts in other places where this strategy has been applied. Human rights groups in particular have voiced concerns over proposed security measures such as searches and detentions without warrants, and other judicial powers for the military. The groups especially fear



that alliances among the military and citizens may deter open dialogue and dissent of public policies, a fundamental right that underpins healthy democratic governance.

The government's position is that the security measures will not affect ordinary citizens, but rather those individuals or groups that represent a risk to the communities by their violent actions. Contrary to what human rights organizations perceive, the democratic security policy will prevent the violation of human rights and protect international humanitarian law. President Uribe has presented this position publicly in national and international fora, assuring that his administration places a high value on human rights. In addition, many leading opinion shapers in and outside government argue that some legal restrictions on civil liberties can be justified if they are clearly time-bound and strengthen the government's capacity to restore its authority and legitimacy, and bring protection to citizens in the large areas of the country where there is currently little or no state presence.

The objective of a secure society with opportunities for all seems to be a shared purpose for all Colombians. The differences in views are over the strategic priorities that can best serve that purpose. Supported by the majority of ordinary citizens, a segment of civil society organizations and the private sector, the administration's view is that the government must guarantee the security of citizens first, which increases its legitimacy and capacity to represent the common interest. The fear of civil society organizations is that by giving priority to security over unresolved political and socio-economic problems, the government approach will lead to intensified conflict and a State still dominated by a small group of powerful interests.

The search for a balance between a State striving to protect its citizens and a State able to create effective conditions for economic and social prosperity for all is a pressing challenge. The increasing terrorist activity by armed groups in recent weeks makes the search for this balance a daunting task for the government in the short term. On one hand, people's frustration and rage over the indiscriminate terrorist attacks create an even greater demand for security. On the other hand, those most affected by the current economic crisis, the unemployed and those in absolute poverty, still expect the government to support them as they struggle to improve their economic and social well being.

Perhaps a practical means toward resolving the tensions between the government and its critics is by jointly monitoring the national security policy and its effects on broad state-society relations. The performance indicators would have to be jointly negotiated, but might include measures such as human rights violations, social and military spending, civic engagement and influence in key decisions affecting security policies, and changes in the numbers and types of civic groups participating in public affairs. Negative trends in any of these areas should provide useful impetus for course corrections to better advance democratic security in Colombia.

*See Garay, Luis Jorge, Coordinador. *Repensar a Colombia, Hacia un Nuevo Contrato Social*, Talleres del Milenio, PNUD-Agencia Colombiana de Cooperación Internacional, Bogotá, May 2002.

NEW RESOURCES

Thinking Out Loud IV. Don't miss this fourth edition of innovative case studies on participatory approaches to development from across the Bank's regional portfolio. The introduction and seven cases examine successes and gaps in supporting participatory measures, and add to growing evidence that such efforts contribute to more effective and lasting development. English and Spanish versions will soon be posted to: www.worldbank.org/lacccs

The findings, interpretations, judgments and conclusions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the World Bank, its affiliated organizations, or members of the Board of Executive Directors or the governments they represent. Patti Petesch developed and edited this first edition of *Empowerment in Action*.

