



BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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Presentation

The **Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments** (TRAALOG) regional initiative started in April 2010. The TRAALOG has been supported by the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF), the Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Spanish Trust Fund. The TRAALOG is an initiative of the UNDP Democratic Governance Practice Area of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), and is implemented from the UNDP Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama.

The TRAALOG targets small initiatives at the local level that can be scaled up through policy support and capacity development and partnerships. One of the key activities of TRAALOG is to promote the development and systematization of knowledge products and tools, focusing on specific initiatives aimed at increasing transparency and accountability, as well as to mainstream anti-corruption issues into other areas, such as access to information, ethics, climate change, health, Millennium Development Objectives and social audit. The idea is for these knowledge products to serve as means, to generate interest and discussion among UNDP Country Offices in and outside the region, regional service centers and other units of UNDP and the wider United Nations System, as well as development and democratic governance practitioners.

Similarly, it is hoped that these knowledge products could serve as reference in pursuing initiatives and in seeking opportunities for replication. These can also be used to develop and support projects and programs, as well as regional activities. These knowledge products are the result of partnerships with a number of UNDP Country Offices, donors, consultants and associate experts, academic institutions and civil society organizations. All helped to identify experiences that provide valuable practical information relative to improving democratic governance and increasing transparency and accountability.

These knowledge products are not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, their aim is to:

- Provide examples of transparency and accountability activities;
- Generate discussion and policy dialogue;
- Illustrate practices;
- Present tools, methodologies, approaches and frameworks;
- Highlight case studies;
- Direct readers to additional resources.

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Preface

Corruption, understood as the abuse of entrusted power for private benefit, threatens the stability and security of societies, undermining democratic institutions and values, ethics and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law, as noted in the preamble to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It also states that corruption is no longer a local matter but a transnational phenomenon that affects all societies and economies, making international cooperation essential to prevent and fight against it. The prevention and eradication of corruption is a responsibility of all States, which should not only cooperate with each other, but also have the support and involvement of individuals and groups beyond the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations, if their efforts in this area are to be effective.¹

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Colombia's score rose from 2.2/10 in 1998 to 3.510 in 2010, while showing no significant changes in terms of position. According to LAPOP-2007, the perception of corruption in the country was 74.2% compared to 73.9% in 2006, 68.2% in 2005 and 73.5% in 2004.²

Given this scenario, the prevention and punishment of corruption remains a challenge in Colombia. The diversity of the territory and the sophisticated forms of corruption developed, pushed the UNDP to strengthen the institutional framework and enhance the efforts of innovative Colombian municipalities and provinces that use the tools available to them to stay a step ahead in preventing the phenomenon of corruption.

This document reflects UNDP's wish and efforts to identify, organize, analyze and publicize successful experiences of local governance. UNDP is strongly committed to strengthening governance through the consolidation of democratic institutions. The best practices presented here prove that local autonomy can generate strategies that create opportunities for participation and improving the relationship between State and Citizen, directly impacting the legitimacy of governments and ensuring respect for Human Rights.

Similarly, the practices identified herein become tools for complying with the provisions suggested by the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which is the first legally binding international instrument in this area. These include: promoting and strengthening measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively, as well as integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property.

UNDP's support has sought to integrate the national and sub-national level. The purpose of addressing the sub-national level was to fulfill two main purposes: (i) to increase the direct participation of individuals and social organizations in public decisions and social oversight, thus contributing to full

¹ Preamble, United Nations Convention against Corruption

² *Corporación Transparencia por Colombia*, "La Corrupción en Colombia", available in <http://www.transparenciacolombia.org.co/LACORRUPCION/EnColombia/tabid/101/language/es-ES/Default.aspx>

social and political citizenship; and (ii) to promote public policies that develop models based on integrity, visibility and management accountability, as well as strategies that encourage social oversight of the implementation of public policies and their impacts on the territory.³

Responding to these postulates, the experiences and practices of Municipalities and Departments that are highlighted in this publication can be an example to follow for other territorial entities in Colombia. These practices make it possible to believe that there is not only a shared feeling about preventing corrupt practices, but that there are ongoing localized efforts that can offer valid options to the rest of Municipalities and Departments in Colombia. While the experiences respond to unique contexts, they can also be a reference to all Municipalities and Departments that are committed with preventing and combating corruption.

This publication would not have been possible without the support of the Regional Initiative for Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments (TRAALOG) Funded by the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) and the Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE), both from UNDP.

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³ UNDP (2010) Lineamientos generales Para la sistematización de Experiencias, Proyecto “*Transparencia en la Gestión Pública a Nivel Territorial en Colombia*” - Democratic Governance Area, Working document.

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Introduction

UNDP Colombia's Democratic Governance Practice Area intends, by the development of this document, to highlight the efforts made by Colombian Municipalities and Departments to improve the performance of their powers. The activities detailed in this book are efforts to reduce the risks of corruption and contribute directly to improving local governance, understood as the conditions of agreement between state and citizens on issues that are of public interest.

The aim of the formal distinction between each of the practices is intended to reveal independent decisions made by municipalities and departments that have translated into the improvement of sub-national governance and the interaction between state and citizen. Decentralization in Colombia requires evidence of local autonomy and entrepreneurship to instill the belief that possible avenues for political, administrative and economic empowerment in Colombian territories exist.

The issues developed from these practices correspond to the components of integrity, visibility and accountability, understood as the variables that combine to provide the conditions necessary for transparency and, consequently, reduce the risks of corruption. The lesser the risks of corruption, the greater is the legitimacy of governments. Stronger institutional frameworks reduce the risk of corruption.

While the practices are developed in response to situations of low local government credibility and legitimacy rather than to temporary situations, they establish the challenge involved in becoming long-term preventive measures. UNDP highlights these practices because they manage to articulate the components of integrity, visibility and accountability through the implementation of different projects in municipalities and departments of different sizes. They in turn demonstrate that it is possible to create effective alternatives to prevent acts of corruption, regardless of the contextual conditions.

It is necessary to continue to highlight regional initiatives. The strengthening of institutions ensures legitimate governments and citizen participation in decision-making. The tools that are described through the practices become elements of democratization in different areas as they seek to promote conditions of equality among the citizens of the territories; each one with equal care from government, access to information and training for participation.

Decentralization can only be maintained with solid municipal and departmental governments. This is achieved by institutions that are built as a result of a process of public consultation and open participation. Citizens must also be empowered in decision-making. Only processes that are appropriated by the citizens can be carried into the long term, while imposed processes will disappear prior to or with each change of government.

The democratic value of municipalities and departments that promote transparency is invaluable. Each of the practices described below has a deep impact on human development, as they increase the capacity of people to decide not only on the individual level but also in the sphere of public decision-making.

INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY

Institutional Training Model and Comprehensive Plan for Organizational Culture and Human Resource Management. Medellin - Antioquia



“The module allows for the effective integration of information and servers, allowing us to improve internally in order to improve externally. It helps us save paper and give fluidity to the correspondence. Definitely, the system managed to interconnect the headquarters of the Mayor’s Office with the other institutions”

John Jaiber Jaramillo –
Head of Administrative Services – Municipality of Medellin

OBJECTIVE: To define the guidelines that should direct the training and capacity building processes for public servants of the Municipality of Medellin, and manage its implementation. To improve the quality of service delivery, general welfare and the achievement of its own purposes, and to ensure effective and durable specific skills and capacities, in compliance with the principles governing the civil service.

Initial Situation

The Municipality of Medellín wanted a scientifically and pedagogically proved training system for a public sector entity that would allow the development of relevant and systemic development of qualifications processes, that sought efficient investment of resources and contributed to the achievement of corporate goals, facilitating the design of a specific implementation methodology for the entity.

The training and capacity building courses taught by the Municipality of Medellin were presented as atomized processes intended to respond to temporary situations, rather than to a strategic and prospective vision of training in the organization. Moreover, the lack of a monitoring and impact evaluation component to assess the training and capacity development processes, led to the application of widely used methodologies without performing an evaluation or assessing the relevance of learning. There was not a system of internal trainers, and the public servants who carry out these types of processes in the organization, did so relying on their own knowledge. In some cases they lacked the qualifications necessary to run training processes, design appropriate programs for adults and perform research for developing new training programs and lines.

Experience Process

In order to overcome the situation described above, the Municipality decided to design and implement two joint strategies:

- The Talent Management SAP⁴ – HR Platform
- The Institutional Training Model

The objective of the first strategy was to provide real and timely information for management decisions regarding the development and certification of the Municipality's public services. The strategy was based on the education and training of human capital, monitoring and assessment of each sector's achievements and performance evaluation. The second strategy sought to guide the training and capacity development of public servants throughout the implementation process, ensuring the improvement of the servants' skills.

The Municipality of Medellin implemented the SAP-HR Platform version 4.7's Human Resources Module, which allows for the use of a single mechanism to gather information about public servants in the processes of Individual Development, Event Management and Performance Evaluation. The initiative is grounded in the following equation: Model = processes + people + technology.

The implementation of the SAP platform's HR module acts as a manager for the organizational processes of Personal Development, whose functionality is the administration of comparisons between the qualifications of a public servant and requirements of each position; Event Management, designed to manage human resource training processes and the monitoring and evaluation of the servants' work performance; and the Performance Assessment process, to identify weaknesses and improvement strategies.

The system can quantify the information to assess and follow up the Municipality's performance indicators. For that purpose, the ICT area assigned a staff the main responsibilities of measuring, analyzing and constructing result management indicators.

Institutional Training Model: In order to strengthen its human resource component, the Municipality of Medellin created a comprehensive institutional training system consisting of the following components:

- Teaching model (definition, policies, structure, trainer and trainee profiles, components, principles, monitoring and evaluation system).

⁴ SAP is business management software that includes different modules. These modules integrate the different areas of the company on a global scale (accounting, sales, logistics, etc.) into one system. These modules replace the variety of independent systems which are frequent in many companies and organizations by creating a single standard and compatibility across different functions, gaining full control over the company.

- Educational projects.
- Training programs.
- Evaluation system.

The training model consists of training plans, projects and programs. Initially, the training was conducted by the University School of Marketing (Institución Universitaria Escuela Superior de Mercadotecnia) and the Pinal del Río University (Cuba), with which the Municipality had signed training agreements. However, despite conducting training for leaders and public servants with high performance or management evaluations, the possibility of replicating the knowledge to other public servants did not arise. As a result, a decision was made to design and implement a Training School. The main purpose of the School is to create a network of trainers who can replicate and multiply the knowledge to other public servants, particularly those who did not receive formal training on issues of interest to the Municipality. It also seeks to promote the creation of a methodology for training processes and procedures and the design of an incentive system for trainers and trainees, within the framework of institutional policies.

Similarly, the sub-Secretariat for Human Resources has also developed a virtual induction for the Municipality staff (e-learning). The primary purpose is to provide through educational and communicational strategies, tools that facilitate the incorporation and integration of public servants into the organizational culture, as well as the strengthening of their commitment, their sense of belonging and working skills.

Factors that Facilitated the Experience

- The intention to link the project with the organization's strategic planning.
- The allocation of financial, logistical and technical resources.
- The continuity of a trained team committed to the process.
- The broad socialization of the project, which facilitated the dissemination of its benefits and impacts.
- The commitment of the Senior Management and their knowledge of the time required for the implementation and maturity of the system, which allowed for the understanding that it was a cultural process that required a minimum of three years for its impact to be tangible.

Factors that Constrained the Experience

- The delays in obtaining the necessary permits, particularly in terms of the labor time required to ensure the participation of selected public servants in different phases of the project.
- The lack of institutional culture to understand the importance of the direct relationship between the initiative's success to the continuance of civil servants in the public service.
- The implementation of projects and training programs through the Institutional Training Plan (ITP), which initially involved a great deal of organizational coordination, as it began to generate a new organizational dynamic towards education and training Municipality's staff.

Current Situation

The SAP platform provided a valuable tool for reporting and for identifying capacity building needs. It also guided the Municipality in dealing with corporate goals by developing strategies for strengthening and modeling the Municipality's human talent. The development of the Institutional Training Model ensured the direct participation of the municipality's 16 Secretariats through the establishment of a project team consisting of 130 municipal civil servants. Since its origin, from the first half of 2008 to the second half of 2009, a total of 120 public servants from the different Secretaries in the Municipality of Medellin have directly benefited from the program, and 5,070 public servants who participated in training programs benefitted indirectly.

Similarly, this coverage will indirectly impact the members of the community as at some point they will have some contact with the public servants in each of the Secretaries, both in headquarters (CAM) and external sites, including the Family Service Agency, Police Inspectorates, the Houses of Government, the "Más Cerca" offices, fire stations, among others. However, it should be noted that some public servants that were being trained to be members of the training school, have already dropped out. This is a result of the lack of established training policies from the outset of the process, driven by the insufficient maturity required to plan for future needs.

Lessons Learned

The success of this best practice requires the commitment of the public servants to participate in the initiatives and to apply the knowledge in the work of the Municipality so it can contribute to achieve public goals. Similarly, its continuity depends on the allocation of financial, technical and logistical resources, and above all on the possibility to consolidate a stable and permanently qualified Human Resource Team.

The establishment of an efficient communication strategy both internal (within the entity) and external (towards the community) is crucial to support reporting on the project's everyday progress, achievements and challenges. Eventually, this constitutes a strategy of institutional knowledge management. The citizens should see that the model is able to qualify continually trained public servants, who have access to the best conditions when providing a public service efficiently and effectively.

The sustainability of the Institutional Training Model lies in the continuing need to qualify, develop and enhance the institution's human capital in order to strengthen the human capital base to be capable of meeting the institutional mission of public service. The Training Model allows to rationalize the use of the institution's economic resources, since the investments are determined by the prioritized training topics and needs. This strategy ensures that actions respond effectively to the institution's training needs in its functional and behavioral components.

INITIAL SITUATION

What was the problem and opportunity before the beginning of the experience?

Asystemic and atomized training of Municipal public servants.

What were the causes of the problem or opportunity?

The lack of a comprehensive training and capacity development strategy that would focus on capacity building of the public servants.

What factors were hindering the opportunities for local action in solving the problem or capitalizing on the opportunity?

The lack of a monitoring and evaluation component, to assess the impact of training and capacity development processes, made it impossible to determine the real impact of training.

EXPERIENCE PROCESS

What happened? (Milestones) When?

Real and timely information was made available for administrative decision-making; development and qualification of the public services in the Municipality of Medellin.

With what method?

Implementation of two joint strategies: The Talent Management SAP – HR Platform and The Institutional Training Model

By what means?

SAP System
Training School

Who was involved?

Municipality of Medellin,
University School ESUMER and
University of Pinar del Río – Cuba

What factors allowed the experience?

Linking the project to the organization's strategic planning.

What factors hindered the experience?

The lack of understanding, both at the institutional and managerial levels, that the initiative's success is directly related to the continuance of all the public servants initially trained throughout the project, as well as the allocation of the financial resources required for each stage of the process.

CURRENT SITUATION

What is the current situation?

The platform provided a tool to guide the capacity to address institutional goals through the development of empowerment strategies and human resources in the Municipality.

What tangible and intangible benefits can be attributed to the experience?

The direct participation of the Municipality's 16 Secretariats through the creation of a project team consisting of 130 public servants of the Municipality.

Who benefitted?

The experience benefited the community members that at some point have a degree of contact with the public servants of the different Secretariats.

What factors increased the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

Having updated information that may be consulted and utilized when required.

What factors limited the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

Lack of systematization of training policies from the outset of the process.

**CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS,
RECOMMENDATIONS**

What is the major conclusion from this experience?

The Training Model allows to rationalize the use of the institution's economic resources, since the investments are determined by prioritized training topics and needs.

What external factors influenced the process?

The involvement of the University School ESUMER and University Pinar del Río-Cuba.

How could the implementation of the experience be improved?

Formalizing the training policies and school after the first year of the beginning of the process.

LESSONS LEARNED

What was learned from the experience?

The public servants should be legally committed in advance, to prevent trainees from dropping out before completing the training.

What could be repeat it in a similar experience?

Linking the project to the organization's strategic planning.

What would be done differently?

Socializing the project to show the benefits and impacts for all citizens.

INNOVATION

The integration of a training strategy for public servants using technological tools that allow for measuring the impact of the training in terms of improvement of municipal public management.

VISIBILITY

VISIBILITY

Cooperation between the Local Government and the Municipal Comptroller's Office to monitor and oversight of public works online and in real time COBRA (from the Spanish CONTROL DE OBRAS, works control system). Manizales - Caldas



"The main feature of the COBRA system approach is that it makes the public sector transparent, and enables efficient, effective and appropriate citizens' participation to enhance the possibility of social oversight of public issues"

Gustavo Adolfo Castañeda
Comptroller of Manizales

OBJECTIVE: Make information on public works contracts implemented by the Municipality of Manizales visible online and in real time, through tools based on information and communication technologies (ICT), enabling effective social oversight and strengthening citizen participation mechanisms.

Initial Situation

In the city of Manizales, in spite of the fact that the main implementation shortcomings of public works tended to arise during the actual construction phase, these were only evaluated at the end of the process. They could not be monitored during the actual construction phase. Therefore, because there was not a preventive system in place, at the end the outcome was evaluated and not the process making it almost impossible to prevent inappropriate investment of resources.

The lack of control generated overcosts as a result of ineffectiveness, high rates of unmet deadlines, community disinterest in the progress of public works, and lack of participation mechanisms. Additionally, citizens did not have appropriate mechanisms or tools to exercise social oversight of public works and therefore could not monitor public resources and their proper use.

Oversight of public works is an obligation not only of the control agencies but also of local authorities. As such, it was necessary to have a cooperation mechanism between the Municipality of Manizales and the Comptroller General, which led to the creation of Works Control System or COBRA, a technology platform for real-time oversight.

The causes of the problem included:

- Inadequate auditing of public works due to the high volume of contracts awarded.
- Limited number of tools to control and monitor public works.
- Poor planning in the procurement and implementation of public works.
- The control exercise by relevant agencies on the resources invested in public works was perceived to be low.
- Lack of coordination among the actors involved in public civil works.
- Dispersion of the information on the implementation execution of public works in the municipality, which in turn makes it difficult to monitor progresscounty, making difficult to obtain.
- Insufficient early warning systems to allow timely intervention in case of anomalies in the implementation execution of public works.
- Uninformed and distrustful community.

Experience Process

Given that the intention of the two entities was to strengthen the mechanisms for transparency and social oversight, the Municipality of Manizales, acquired the Works Control System-COBRA software, which is operated by the Comptroller of Manizales and allows detailed real-time monitoring of each public works contract implemented by the municipality. The system tracks both the contractor and the financial controller, generating fully updated and transparent information for the community and reducing the risk of corruption and poor management practices. Furthermore, by making public investment visible to the public, the system allows the direct beneficiaries of works to express their opinion about the projects.

The development of control software allows for the generation of alerts, indicators and statistics for effective decision making in the Municipality, increasing the potential impact of civil public works on the citizens's quality of life.

The COBRA system allows the general population to track the progress of public works, as well as of the supervisor and the contractor thoroughly. The contractor enters the basic information about the contract, its cost and-or allocation and timeframe of implementation. As public works progress, the contractor and the auditor must continually feed the system with progress reports, photos, videos, invoices, etc. Citizens can easily see the work they want to monitor through a geo-referenced map.

The system cross references the information entered by the contractor and the contracted party to produce a series of reports using the color traffic light system: green when the time and progress are within the limits set by the contract; yellow when a report is missing or deadlines for delivery are close to expiring; and red, in cases where there are delays in the implementation or there is another obstacle.

By accessing the COBRA system, citizens can view a graph of the work's progress, according to the times set in the contract and oversight compliance goals. Also, the system allows the public to ask questions, file complaints or submit comments about a specific work project. Such queries must be answered by the auditor or by the contractor within a time frame established by norms under the right to petition. The Comptroller tracks the answer, and if there is no response, he/she has the power to investigate and demand a prompt resolution.

The successful development of the experience required:

Signing of agreement, between the Municipality of Manizales and Manizales Municipal Comptroller. It is a cooperation agreement in which each party agrees to implement the public works monitoring system through an ICT system, from their respective competencies.

Application design:⁵ The COBRA software system is a technological solution that allows for permanent and real control over public works projects and related contracts that are executed with public funds, through a graphical, simple and interactive interface accessible from anywhere in the world because it is a Web-based⁶ platform.

Implementation of the application, based on the advantages and features of the COBRA application, the Municipal Comptroller of Manizales issued an administrative act that requires municipal law enforcement agencies to file the information through the application. Such a strategy ensures frequent and timely feeding so that the public has first-hand knowledge of the state of public works in the city.

Extension of the initiative:⁷ after the great reception that COBRA received, the Comptroller established a new system called SIVICOS,⁸ which is a new stage of evolution in the system of social oversight. SIVICOS allows for the control of not only public works processes, but also any type of contract across the municipality. In addition, this initiative complements the process of community empowerment in order to create a citizen network of social oversight driven by community leaders.

⁵ The German Technical Cooperation –GTZ- provided conceptual support to the implementation of the system and the promotion of citizen participation mechanisms for social oversight.

⁶ Interkont Soluciones de Control was the company in charge of the software design, conceptualization and development.

⁷ Universidad del Rosario and Universidad Nacional de Colombia promoted academic and operational support in the process of installing, evaluating, assessing, and pre-assessing the system.

⁸ Integrated System for Social Control and Oversight.

Factors that Facilitated the Experience

- The creation of a policy of transparency and access to information embodied in instruments such as the Pact for Transparency.
- The strengthening of quality management in the municipality, which is clearly evidenced by the awarding of the ISO 9001 and NTCGP 1000 Certificates.
- The interest in developing an initiative based on the new e-oversight generation as a mechanism for dialogue between institutions and citizens that allowed a partnership between the Municipality and the Comptroller General of Manizales.

Factors that Constrained the Experience

- The time scheduled was insufficient for training the people responsible for operating the software, as it was necessary to provide training not only for use of the tool, but also on the effective use and application of ICT.
- The lack of initial assessment of the security and capacity requirements of “hosting” and virtual participation, which led to delays in the installation of the trial software.
- The lack of a timely validation of the application with the entities, which delayed project due to the different implementation models for public works operating in the city.

Current Situation

These types of tools are contributing to the creation of a collective culture of knowledge applied to social, economic, cultural and technological development. Manizales is seen as a modern and progressive city that has regained confidence and is redefining its productive sector, with the competitive advantage of its excellent human and technological capital.

The system acts as a mechanism to make information of all ongoing works publicly available, responding to a need for clear and harmonized participation in the climate of trust that any implementation requires to be successful. The implementation of the system has resulted in increased transparency and visibility.

The traceability of the products and services provided by any public or private entity has become an indispensable management tool, not only to account for the state of the product or service with the customers but also to increase their satisfaction.

The main advantages of COBRA are:

Reduction of Implementation Cost overruns in public works: According to comparative studies, the implementation of the tool has required the contracting of entities and contractors to refine the planning and implementation stages of works in order to avoid higher costs.

Perceived Legitimacy of the entities involved: The use of the tool and the enhancement of the publicity and transparency of the implementation of public resources have generated an immediate increase in the perceived legitimacy of public institutions that invest in civil works.

Social Profitability: Increased efficiency in the allocation and spending of public resources has created conditions for improving the quality of life of citizens, because the best use of resources resulted in greater capitalization to meet other social needs.

The potential population that may be directly impacted by public works includes all inhabitants in the municipality of Manizales (386,931 inhabitants). Thanks to ongoing monitoring of public works exercised through the application and its panoptical effect on contractors and contracting entities of public works, the municipal government can effectively invest in planning and implementation that promote transparency in procurement and empowers citizens to perform the social oversight to which they are constitutionally entitled.

Lessons Learned

The COBRA experience has brought important lessons to the Manizales City Comptroller and the Municipality. Interagency coordination is undoubtedly the main contribution of this practice. Similarly, the leadership, will and commitment of senior management, both at the Municipality and in the oversight agency, as well as in other entities that record public works information, demonstrates that the ideal of durable accountability is possible.

The usability of the application and immediate Web access with minimum navigation requirements, has also favored the public's ownership. However, its success is due largely to the development of a comprehensive strategy to promote transparency. This goes beyond the purpose of making oversight visible through ICT and involves other methods of citizen participation, which are in turn harmonized with the policies and plans of the Municipality Administration and the Comptroller of Manizales.

INITIAL SITUATION

What was the problem and opportunity before the beginning of the experience?

Control of the result rather than the progress of public works.

What were the causes of the problem or opportunity?

Insufficient early warning systems, dispersed information on the implementation of public works, inadequate audit.

What factors were hindering the opportunities for local action in solving the problem or capitalizing on the opportunity?

The lack of the Municipality's will to establish a partnership with the Comptroller's Office of Manizales for public works control in the city.

EXPERIENCE PROCESS

**What happened? (Milestones)
When?**

In 2008, the Municipality of Manizales purchased the COBRA software for public works control, which is operated by the Comptrollers' Office of Manizales.

With what method?

Agreement development, Software design and Software implementation.

By what means?

Software design for oversight that generates warnings, indicators and statistics.

Who was involved?

Municipality of Manizales, Comptroller General of Manizales, German Technical Cooperation – GTZ-, Universidad del Rosario, National University of Colombia and Interkont Control Solutions.

What factors facilitated the experience?

The creation of a policy for transparency and information delivery.

What factors hindered the intervention?

The lack of timely validation of the software with participant entities.

CURRENT SITUATION

What is the current situation?

The implementation of the system increased transparency and visibility.

What are the tangible and intangible benefits attributable to the experience?

Reduction of implementation cost overruns in public works. Perceived legitimacy of the entities involved. Social profitability

Who benefitted?

All inhabitants of the municipality of Manizales

What factors increased the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

Making the contracts visible to the public.

What factors limited the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

Inappropriate planning: there was no baseline for municipal works in the process. Updating works' information in COBRA was initially conceived as completed procedure

CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS

What is the major conclusion from this experience?

E-tools must not be considered as an end in themselves. They are tools that contribute to the achievement of project goals.

What external factor influenced the process?

The development of the SIVICOS system.

How could the implementation of the experience be improved?

Strengthening the SIVICOS system for an integrated control of all types of contracts.

LESSONS LEARNED

What was learned from the experience?

All actors participating in the system should be coordinated. The application must be user-friendly. Citizens should be trained in the use of the tool.

What could be repeat it in a similar experience?

Promoting oversight strategies through the use of ICTs, with full visibility for the community.

What could be done differently?

To Include the requirement of accounting for the works through the system before developing the capacity necessary to use the system.

Changing the lack of flexibility/ inflexibility of the system during the trial period.

INNOVATION

Creation of the Immediate Response Audit Group (GARI), in charge of visiting the work sites as soon as the system reports atypical situations.

Citizen oversight is done during the process which prevents the waste of resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

Collective and everyday decision-making is based primarily on the information that is available. If that information is limited or of poor quality, decisions will have the same fate. In contrast, an informed citizen can make a better decision regarding the many activities that are related to his/her public or personal life. Therefore, the importance of the right to information is not just a matter of a few citizens, but an asset for the greatest number of citizens possible.⁹

Accountability is the communication bridge that promotes participation for social oversight. As it responds to a procedural dynamic, it should be planned and designed for each stage. Although the most common means is public hearings, mechanisms that ensure an ongoing process should be ensured. Accountability should cover at least two stages: the delivery of information and the creation of mechanisms to discuss and analyzed the information provided. The information should be: timely, reliable, understandable, simple, and sufficient.¹⁰

2009 Accountability Management. Departmental Government of Tolima



“What is public is sacred”

Oscar Barreto Quiroga, Governor of Tolima.

OBJECTIVE: The objective of the program was to promote a permanent process of oversight, monitoring and evaluation at the Departmental Administration to enable timely accountability for the community, enforcement agencies and politicians, as to allow these actors to conduct the respective social, fiscal, internal and political control in a way that it restores trust in the Departmental Administration.¹¹

⁹ VILLANUEVA, Ernesto. Derecho de Acceso a la Información Pública en Latinoamérica. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM, México 2003. Available online: <http://www.bibliojuridica.org/libros/libro.htm?l=1156> p. XV.

¹⁰ DNP, DAFP, Contraloría General de la República, OCASA, Transparencia por Colombia, Programa presidencia de Lucha contra la Corrupción, German Technical Cooperation –GTZ – “Cartilla para tejer una rendición de cuentas que cuente con la gente” p. 25.

¹¹ Plan de Desarrollo 2008 – 2011 – Capítulo III Soporte Institucional – Subprograma Fortalecimiento de la planeación del Desarrollo p. 176.

Initial Situation

The Department of Tolima used to exhibit low levels of communication and dialogue between the community, social organizations and the Departmental Administration, resulting in weak local governance. The main challenge to overcome was designing tools that allowed sufficient, timely, accurate and permanent information to make the exercise of social, political and fiscal control over departmental management possible. These challenges required the Departmental Administration to show the community a commitment to accountability and to the design departmental management evaluation systems.

In this context, it was agreed that the goal would be to establish a Departmental System of Public Management Performance Evaluation, to improve the availability and frequency of information, as well as to establish appropriate quality controls. In turn, better information would allow the community to remain up-to-date on the progress of the Development Plan goals through appropriate channels, and promote transparent resource implementation processes with community participation.

To meet this demand, the Departmental Government of Tolima decided to implement the methodology provided by the "Handbook No. 4: Public Hearings towards Accountability to the Citizens of the National Public Administration" published by the Administrative Department of Civil Service (DAFP), School of Public Administration (ESAP), and the Comptroller General of the Republic; as well as the methodological guidelines developed by the National Planning Department.

Experience Process

The Accountability process consisted of three stages:

Preparatory stage: a series of steps and procedures were undertaken prior to the public accountability hearing.

The implementation of the Departmental Development Plan 2008 - 2011 "*Solutions for the People*" was the main input for the Accountability management and exercise. Based on the Plan's evaluation, the Administrative Department of Planning used two tools to gather information from each departmental secretary: the Indicative Plan and the Action Plan. Once the information was obtained, a management report was developed and submitted to the departmental assembly on the first day of the Assembly's regular sessions⁸. This management report was published on the department website as information for Tolima citizens a month prior to the public hearing.

As soon as the report became public knowledge, a special newsletter on accountability was prepared, which included figures, progress, challenges and investment of the programs and the goals of the Development Plan for the year and the overall progress of the four-year term.

From a logistical standpoint, the Administrative Department of Planning began an arduous and in-depth process of community outreach, targeting the different social organizations and formal mechanisms of citizen participation. Planning officials distributed personal printed invitations in the department's 47

municipalities. Leaflets and posters were also printed to promote the event. Finally, an invitation was made through telemarketing channels, radio, television and newspapers.

Public hearing: As was mentioned, for the exercise of the Public Hearing on Accountability, the Government of Tolima drew on the Handbook on Accountability developed by the Administrative Department of Public Service (DAFP). Based on that model, the departmental government created innovative elements and generated new opportunities for accountability and transparency.

The National Learning Service (SENA its Spanish acronym) Regional Tolima Office supported the public hearing, by lending its students to welcome and usher citizens to their seats. Additionally, registration tables were set up at the lobby entrance where attendance forms were filled out and citizens were provided with an accountability kit containing a notebook, a questionnaire, an evaluation form to assess the hearing, a copy of the annual report, a pen and a special Accountability Bulletin.

The public hearing exceeded the participation expectations: more than 1,700 people attended the hearing. For this reason, big screens and sound system were set outside the venue to transmit the event live. The transmission was led by a moderator who was responsible for managing the time and agenda. The interventions of the departmental representatives were followed by a presentation of the annual activities and achievements by each of the management units. Then there was a 10 minute intervention for each guild (associations of producers, youths, single mothers, women's associations, etc.). Community doubts and concerns were then expressed in a question and answer session, followed by a reading of the hearing's minutes. Upon leaving, the Government gathered the event evaluation forms and tabulated them to develop an analysis of the results. This assessment served as input to review areas for improvement in future accountability exercises.

Post-Public Hearing - New Mechanisms for Accountability: After the public hearing, the Government of Tolima created some new means for providing information to the community and feedback to sectors, guilds, vulnerable populations and even local elected leaders. Six new mechanisms for special accountability were thus consolidated:

Discussion Groups

The Governor of Tolima, in the interest of restoring trust and legitimacy in the public administration, created discussion groups, to take place in a different municipality of the department each week. The Governor attends the discussions with his Secretaries, to deliver specific information to each municipality. During these events, printed communication materials are distributed with data related to community projects and investment programs. In the discussion groups, people and their organizations share their needs with the government, and the Administration promotes agreements and commitments.

Sectoral Accountability

Once the Administrative Department of Planning has gathered information from each secretariat, it begins to prepare sectoral accountability exercises, conceived as a process in which sectors, leaders,

entrepreneurs and organizations are convened to a dialogue with each Departmental Government unit. The information presented in this type of sectoral accountability exercise is more technical, detailed and comprehensive.

Accountability Exercises Dedicated to Municipal Mayors

In addition to sectoral accountability exercises, the Departmental Government has also prioritized Accountability exercises targeting municipal mayors in order to provide complete information on the resources allocated to each municipality. A key issue is chosen for each meeting to focus the strategies and actions.

Accountability to the Departmental Assembly

In compliance with the law, the Government of Tolima must account for the previous year's management at the start of the Assembly's yearly regular sessions. To this end, the Administrative Department of Planning collects and refines each secretariat's information, in order to cross reference variables, give coherence to the management report and, foremost, make a comprehensive assessment of the annual progress of the Development Plan.

Specific Hearings (with youth, disabled people and vulnerable groups)

In order to disseminate the Administration's information among different sectors, the departmental government created Specific Hearings for youth, women, displaced and disabled people, in which they are provided with relevant information on programs implemented for the benefit of these vulnerable groups. At the conclusion of the hearings, the Government also obtains information from the community about the challenges and deficiencies of ongoing programs.

Weekly Press Conference

To deliver more accurate and frequent information, the Government of Tolima organizes weekly press conferences in which a specific topic related to the implementation of spending, funding or project implementation are discussed.

Factors that Facilitated the Experience

- The development of the planning tools that allow an objective assessment of the Development Plan, as well as the ongoing review of the availability of information for each local authority to dispose of sufficient and timely information for the evaluation.
- The availability of financial resources referred to in the budget and Departmental Development Plan.

Factors that Constrained the Experience

- In some cases, lack of timely and consistent information to evaluate the Plan.

- The non-existence of communication with community leaders as a consequence of the remoteness of some municipalities which leads to a lack of efficient means of communication.
- The limited participation of citizens in the exercise. In spite of the great attendance at the accountability event, the community was minimally engaged.
- The lack of understanding of some citizen groups about the nature of this process, resulting in the transformation of the hearings mainly into spaces for requesting works or projects.

Current Situation

There has been improvement in the civil society's perception of Departmental Government action in the various activities carried out with responsibility, honesty and impartiality. This has allowed Tolima citizens to recover some credibility and trust in their public institutions.

That increased trust has strengthened departmental governance by improving citizen participation in the implementation of public policies that guarantee the economic, social and political rights of all Tolima citizens. Today, Tolima citizens are more informed and responsible about public issues.

Lessons Learned

The Accountability exercise and the mechanisms for meeting with Tolima Department citizens have served to increase community participation in various events organized by the administration.

INITIAL SITUATION

What was the problem and opportunity before the beginning of the experience?

Lack of sufficient, timely, accurate and permanent information to make the exercise of social, political and fiscal control over departmental management possible.

What were the causes of the problem or opportunity?

Insufficient communication and policy dialogue with the community.

What factors were hindering the opportunities for local action in solving the problem or capitalizing on the opportunity?

As Departmental Governments are not specifically obliged to accountability exercises, these processes depend more on the political will of the Departmental Administration.

EXPERIENCE PROCESS

What happened? (Milestones) When?

Establishment of a Departmental System of Public Management Performance Evaluation.

With what method?

Implementation of the "Handbook No. 4 Public Hearings towards Accountability to the Citizens".

By what means?

Departmental Development Plan, Action Plan, Indicative Plan and Budgeting.

Who was involved?

The Government of Tolima has developed an Accountability exercise with its own resources.

What factors provided the experience?

The development of the planning tools, which allowed to carry out an objective evaluation of the Development Plan.

What factors hindered the experience?

The lack of an information system online to capture the information and have real time information available to the community by electronic means.

CURRENT SITUATION

What is the current situation?

The civil society's perception of Departmental Government action in the various activities has improved.

What are the tangible and intangible benefits attributable to the experience?

Strengthened departmental governance by improving citizen participation in the implementation of public policies.

Who benefitted?

More than 1,700 people participated.

What factors increased the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

The customization and targeting of communication strategies among the departmental administration, the community and social organizations.

What factors limited the scope of the effects or the number of beneficiaries?

Accountability hearings end up being spaces for requesting works or projects to the Departmental Government.

**CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS,
RECOMMENDATIONS**

What is the major conclusion from this experience?

Accountability should be supported by the measuring tools stated in the Development Plan and Budget.

What external factor influenced the process?

The organization of information for Accountability resulted in the standardization of the information submitted by the different areas of the Department.

How could the implementation of the experience be improved?

It should be complemented with the development of citizens' capacities so accountability can become a two-way exercise.

LESSONS LEARNED

What was learned from the experience?

It is necessary to extend the participation of the community in the different accountability or dialogue events.

What could be repeat it in a similar experience?

Promoting sectorial accountability.

What could be done differently?

Having an integrated information updating system that articulates all the departments of the Departmental Government.

INNOVATION

Sectorial accountability.
Permanent dialogue spaces with the community through discussion forums with the Government.
Tools for post-evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

UNDP wants to continue to address the fight against corruption in a proactive way, highlighting the good practices developed by municipalities and departments in Colombia. The experiences of these municipalities and departments are innovative in the way that they manage the territory, as they add variables that make their institutions an example of how territorial autonomy can be the incentive for finding strategies that strengthen democratic governance. Generally, it can be concluded that the practices described here seek to promote the prevention of the risks that derive from corruption. This responds to UNDP's premise of transcending coercion and judgment to establish prevention and improvement strategies that have a direct impact on the institutional strengthening of local authorities.

The conclusions listed below are the result of direct reflection by the stakeholders who have developed these practices and analyzed the experiences. The findings are divided into general conclusions and some derived from each of the components.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

All practices, both at the municipal and departmental level, determined the need for establishing capacity in the population to exercise sound and well-founded social control. It is necessary to ensure that citizens have the tools to interact in public management issues. Citizens have the right to know the meaning of Public Budget and/or Development Plans, and how they can influence decision-making. However, the majority of the population is not empowered to face the participation processes. Efforts to build participation mechanisms and disseminate information will not be legitimated until recipients can understand clearly the information that they are given.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The institutionalization of the initiative through regulatory elements was common to several practices. Institutionalizing the practices through agreements and/or decrees ensures sustainability despite changes in government. Furthermore, it guarantees the integration of local administrations into action guidelines. Turning action against corruption into public policy is a means of guaranteeing the power to reach benchmarks.

INTEGRATION

The most successful practices were those that accounted for comprehensive strategies that included activities addressing government groups as well as citizens. It is obvious that a strategy that seeks to fight corruption should be designed in a cooperative manner between government and citizens, as both parties are related and part of the system in the State-Citizen relationship.

COMMUNICATION

The experiences proved that strengthening interaction mechanisms between local administrations and citizens is essential in achieving good levels of democratic governance and it is dependant on the effective communication between the two parties. Creating mechanisms for policy dialogue among social organizations and local administrations provides practices with legitimacy and citizens' ownership.

Periodical dissemination exercises with the community create opportunities to work within an environment of trust and legitimacy. It is worth noting that many practices involved decentralization strategies within territories in order to reach as many citizens and sectors as possible, as not everyone can attend the main activities developed by municipal and departmental governments, since they take place in urban centers.

OWNERSHIP

The sustainability of the practices depends on one primary factor: that their impact is large enough so that the community can take ownership and make demands for additional reforms and oversight. Nonetheless, it is necessary to show results to obtain commitments.

CONCLUSIONS BY COMPONENT

INTEGRITY

Medellin through its experience showed the importance of training civil servants. The cornerstone of the training was to conceptualize the citizen as a customer. The crosscutting element was the provision of information, complemented by the innovative component of restructuring the processes and procedures so that the information was informative and educational. The challenge was to articulate the various factors and actors surrounding local public services, as well as to promote changes in public management through training and business tools to improve integrated citizen services.

Also strategic alignment of all stakeholders and institutions involved in territorial governance is necessary to ensure the integrity of administrative processes. This integration can be possible through the establishment of commitments led by senior managers of the respective institutions. Without will of technical and political leaders reform initiatives will not be possible and-or sustainable.

The practices that address the integrity component will only be sustainable if local teams respond to long-term plans. In Colombia, the change of government every four years affects the continuity of the management and administrative processes. Therefore, long-term strategies that are appropriated by the communities are an opportunity to consolidate roadmaps with local development strategic vision.

However, the practices featured here also present a paradox: while the results show that the implementation of the experiences has motivated a change in the attitude of public servants towards transforming administrative processes, they all serve to demonstrate that the primary challenge facing the implementation of these type of practices is changing the mindset of decision-makers.

VISIBILITY

The use of Information and Communication Technologies was positioned as means to facilitate the delivery of consistent and timely information to the community. The use of ICTs is crucial in promoting visibility, as they can be tools that allow for real time communication and interaction, turning the delivery of information into a democratic governance mechanism to promote participation in the decision making process. ICTs, if enhanced, can democratize public decision as they promote constant interaction between State and citizens. However, coherent strategies must be designed to overcome the digital gap and make this possible.

Practices developed under the visibility component reveal that initiatives that seek to promote transparency in governance and efficiency in managing public resources depend in great part on the inclusiveness of different actors to generate incidence and change in democratic governance practices. According to the promoters of one of the experiences featured here, a large percentage of the community distrusts government, and in turn the first attempts to involve citizens do not generally

attract many participants. Consistency and efficiency in service delivery, as well as ratification of the implementation of a new democratic governance model could be means to increase awareness and trust, as well as citizen interest and participation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Tolima Department, innovated the process of accountability by using different means and scenarios to reach all of the potential population involved. This model of decentralized accountability can become an example and-or reference-. Essential elements to making Accountability an opportunity for strengthening democratic governance and promoting social oversight include: empowering citizens to understand the type of information they receive, provide the information in advance and through different means, and convene and consider the views of the different sectors and social organizations.

It also became clear that the provision of information on issues involving territorial development should be promoted regularly. Reporting on procurement processes, selection of civil servants, budget implementation, compliance with the goals of municipal and departmental development plans, investment of extra resources, the allocation of social housing, subsidies, scholarships, quotas, etc., allows for the tracking of stated goals in the development plan and garnering community interest in administration activities.

“The promotion of transparency and accountability at all levels is a democratic governance achievement. Accountability and disclosure of administrative and government actions, as well as easy access to information by citizens, allow for public scrutiny and political and citizen control. This certainly increases the transparency of government and reduces the possibilities of corruption.

As long as there are sound mechanisms for reporting on management and providing feedback, trust and citizen respect for democratic institutions will expand and the work of governments could become more effective and efficient.”¹²

¹² Corporación Transparencia Por Colombia, “Es hora de informar a la ciudadanía”, Índice de Transparencia Municipal 2005 – 2006, Bogotá Mayo de 2008, pág.16

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