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CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

USAID conducted a cross-sectional assessment on citizen engagement strategies promoted by five activities. The assessment analyzed citizen participation and oversight mechanisms that, together with other strategies, sought to reduce corruption, contribute to greater state transparency, promote issues of national interest, and increase citizen engagement.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND MONITORING MECHANISMS SHOW THREE FORMS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT.



Citizen advocacy/ awareness

Citizen participation seeks to:

- Promote citizen engagement in elections.
- Become aware of civic-democratic issues.
- Mobilize individuals or groups to influence the State on citizen rights and services offered to citizens by the State.



Oversight/surveillance

Organization of committees or groups to:

- Observe the performance and functions of the State.
- Oversee the budget for reconstruction with changes.
- Surveil the quality of public expenditure from extractive industries.



Citizen advocacy/ awareness and oversight

Combines the two previous models to:

- Raise awareness of human trafficking.
- Oversee cases or risks of human trafficking and the State's performance in prevention and protection of victims.

2. THE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IS A CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGY IN CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS.

The three citizen engagement forms yielded positive results in the inclusion of vulnerable groups, both in the design and implementation of the mechanisms. The largest participation involved women, LGTBIQ people, and young people. Indigenous and Afro-descendant people and people with disabilities were less included as participants or as a beneficiary population.

3. EFFECTIVENESS

One of the most important achievements of the three citizen engagement forms was that people understood or became aware of their rights to demand transparency and access to information from the State and to account for the performance of its functions, services, and public expenditure. Other achievements include:



The value of a citizen engagement mechanism is that it is a proxy of channels of representation or person-State relationships and an affirmation of identity and personal citizen capacity and sense of belonging.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE OPERATION OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS



4. SUSTAINABILITY

Citizen engagement mechanisms show little evidence of sustainability. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the connection between implementing partners and participants in the mechanisms, as well as volunteer participation.

The State learned lessons and gathered information from the work of the mechanisms sponsored by USAID, such as the advocacy and synergy achieved with OSCE, the Comptroller General's Office of the Republic, and the Presidency of the Cabinet. Other civil society organizations learned from the mechanisms, such as Observatorio de Integridad, artists, art associations, and the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen volunteer management and sustainability** through: (1) the application of diversified strategies according to the profile of members and the citizen engagement mechanism; (2) feedback; (3) symbolic reaffirmation of the volunteer's work; (4) creation of socializing spaces, and (5) transfer of skills. In the context of COVID-19, strategies are recommended to maintain the link with volunteers and training in technological tools.
- **Strengthen the incorporation of vulnerable people and groups** either to integrate them into the citizen engagement mechanism or as a target audience, applying strategies or interventions ad hoc.
- **Promote the dissemination of the work of citizen engagement mechanisms** with the media to promote proactive responses by the State and more lasting effects.
- **Drive interventions in democratic citizen training** to ensure the sustainability of practices for communicational-training purposes or alternative forms of citizen engagement, some close to the daily work of the citizen with the State (complaint channels, suggestion boxes).
- Explore with partners and other cooperators the creation of a volunteer and member **skills accreditation scheme** of sponsored mechanisms, with curricula, standards, and strategies differentiated by type of volunteer, and supporting the accreditation of graduates for their performance before external stakeholders as members of the mechanism.
- **Foster shared learning of implementing partners and exchange channels**, including dissemination of strategies and instruments, achievements, good practices, solutions, and challenges faced.
- **Promote collaboration** between the mechanisms promoted by the State and civil society and opening of public entities to citizen participation and oversight.

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See the full report "[Civil Society Engagement Assessment](#)."