



Citizen participation and public procurement in Latin America: Case Studies

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Photo cover (photographer: Verónica Leyton) This photo was taken at the Hivos / IIED Food Lab in Bolivia in October 2018, as part of the Sustainable Diets for All program. At the lab, 27 women got together to share their concerns, ideas and solutions to realize a shared dream: to give everyone in Bolivia access to healthy, sustainable and nutritious food.

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Content

Content	3
List of figures	5
List of tables	5
List of boxes	5
Case studies	6
Case study: Testigo Social	7
Country, period, and sponsoring organization	7
Description, origins and development	7
Results and success factors	10
Some proposals for improvement	11
Case study: Comisiones de Compra – Programa Alimentación Escolar Qali Warma	14
Country (period) and organization responsible	14
Description, origins and development	14
Results and success factors	18
Case study: Gasto Público Bahiense	20
Country (period) and organization responsible	20
Description, origins and development	20
Results and success factors	22
Case study: Cuidando do Meu Bairro	24
Country (period) and organization responsible	24
Description, origins and development	24
Results and success factors	27
Case study: BA Obras	29
Country (period) and organization responsible	29
Description, origins and development	29
Results and success factors	32
Case study: Tianguis Digital - Ecobici	36
Country (period) and organization responsible	36
Description, origins and development	36
Results and success factors	39
Case study: Audiencias Públicas	42
Country (period) and organization responsible	42
Description, origins and development	42
Results and success factors	44
Case study: Comisiones de Veeduría Ciudadana	47
Country (period) and organization responsible	47
Description, origins and development	47
Results and success factors	52
Case study: Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas	55
Country (period) and organization responsible	55

Description, origins and development	55
Results and success factors	56
<i>References</i>	60

List of figures

Figure 1 Social Witness (Mexico) as a tool for public procurement	9
Figure 2 Qali Warma National School Food Program model.	16
Figure 3 EAP's Procurement Committee Qali Warma (Peru) as a public procurement tool.	17
Figure 4 Gasto Público Bahiense (Argentina) as a public procurement tool.	21
Figure 5 Cuidando do Meu Bairro (Brazil) as a public purchasing tool.	26
Figure 6 BA Obras (Argentina) as a public purchasing tool.	31
Figure 7 Tianguis Digital – Ecobici Experience as a public purchasing tool.	39
Figure 8 Public hearings (Paraguay) as a tool for public procurement.	44
Figure 9 Citizen oversight committees (Dominican Republic) as a public procurement tool.	50

List of tables

Table 1 Social Witness: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	13
Table 2 Qali Warma (Purchasing Committees): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	19
Table 3 Gasto Público Bahiense: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	23
Table 4 Cuidando do Meu Bairro – Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success	28
Table 5 BA Obras: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	35
Table 6 Tianguis Digital (Ecobici experience): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	41
Table 7 DNCP Public Hearings (Paraguay): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	46
Table 8 Citizen oversight committees: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.	54

List of boxes

Box 1 On Integrity Pacts in Latin America	11
Box 2 Connecting citizen participation tools for public procurement in the open government ecosystem BA Elige and BA Obras.	31

Case studies

According to our review of cases in the region carried out in the last quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020, only a small number of initiatives linked to public participation in government procurement have emerged over the years.

This figure is low when compared to the large number of democratic innovations that have been implemented over recent decades with varying degrees of success and continuity in the countries of Latin America (Pogrebinski, 2017).

This research has identified ten initiatives or strategies (cases) from seven Latin American countries that incorporate citizen participation in the public procurement process. Some of these initiatives have been replicated in other countries. Nine of them are analyzed here, and the tenth (BA Elige) is included within the discussion of the strategy of BA Obras.

Eight of the nine cases analyzed are ongoing, while one—Gasto Público Bahiense—is inactive. The following section describes each of the cases selected for this research.

1. Testigo Social (Mexico)
2. Comisiones de Compra — Programa Alimentación Escolar Qali Warma (Peru)
3. Gasto Público Bahiense (Bahia Blanca, Argentina)*
4. Cuidando do Meu Bairro (São Paulo, Brasil)
5. BA Obras (City of Buenos Aires, Argentina)
6. Tianguis Digital — Experiencia Ecobici (Mexico City, Mexico)
7. Audiencias Públicas (Paraguay)
8. Comisiones de Veeduría Ciudadana (Dominican Republic)
9. Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas (Quito, Ecuador)

Case study: Testigo Social

Country, period, and sponsoring organization

Mexico (2004 –) *Transparencia Mexicana* - Ministry of Public Administration

Description, origins and development

The *social witness* (SW) is a variation of the institutional design known as the Integrity Pact (IP), a tool developed during the 1990s by Transparency International (TI) to advance transparency and combat corruption in the field of public procurement.

While the IP entails both a contractual agreement (between a government or a government entity and those who participate in the bidding process for a public contract) to promote transparency and integrity and an independent monitoring system developed by a CSO, the form of IP that developed in Mexico focuses less on the contractual aspect of the pact and more on the role of external and independent monitoring, carried out by a third party (which can be an individual or organization) free of conflicts of interest. This independent monitor is termed the *social witness*.

As is the case in many countries in the region, the decision-making processes associated with public procurement and contracting in Mexico traditionally lacked transparency and there was no opportunity for external bodies or individuals to be present at key events in the public procurement process. Historically, the lack of transparency, the restricted access to decision-making, and the high level of technical expertise associated with these processes have made them practically inaccessible to public scrutiny and citizen control. These features of the process made it a fertile breeding ground for corrupt practices, cost overruns or unjustified decisions.

In Mexico, social witnesses have been in use since 2001, but it was not until 2004 that the federal government required the participation of social witnesses in the public tendering of goods and services above a certain economic threshold value, and their use was formally initiated that year. Currently, both non-governmental organizations and individuals, technically qualified and previously registered in a census, can be selected as social witnesses by the Ministry of Public Administration (SFP) to observe public procurement processes.

The role of the social witness is to observe the process and propose strategies to improve transparency, impartiality and compliance with the legal framework. Where appropriate, social witnesses can issue a warning if they detect any irregularities in the contracting process.

In 2001, *Transparencia Mexicana* (TM) promoted integrity pacts in Mexico, but in doing so, determined that it was necessary to make changes to the law itself, since it did not even allow the presence of third parties (independent observers or actors) in public tendering processes, so the law had to be modified to legally enable this participation (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020). It should be noted that in this initial stage, participation in this area of public administration was very limited in Mexico. The *Secretaría de la Contraloría*, which preceded the current SFP, was a monitoring and control body and the issue of transparency was just beginning to emerge on the institutional horizon and as a topic of CSO advocacy.

At the beginning of this process, TM also considered that it was fundamental to rethink and adapt the original design of the integrity pact to the context and reality of Mexico at that time, fundamentally in relation to the contractual system. The objective of this rethinking was to enhance the relevance of the IP, and therefore, greater emphasis was placed on the activity of independent monitoring of public bidding. The idea of the integrity pact was therefore reconceptualized to focus on the external monitor rather than on the contract: with this, the

concept of social witness was developed. The SW could be a single person or a group of people without conflict of interest, having technical expertise in the subject of the bid and without partisan affiliation (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020).

As implementation progressed, the TM team identified the stages of the tender in which the SW had participated—behind the scenes—more actively with the bidding party (e.g. the stages prior to the contracting procedure), and those stages in which they participated more passively (e.g. simply observing) in the events associated with the tender (clarification meetings, submission of bids, ruling). With this in mind, they realized that it was important not only to open the process and to provide access to the basic information about the bidding process, such as the specifications, the bases for decision, and the requirements, but also to open the process and have access to the information on the planning of the bids, from their origin. (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020)

In 2004, the Ministry of Public Administration (SFP) regulated the participation of SWs for the first time. At the end of 2004, the institutionalization of this collaboration began with a registry of social witnesses, a census that includes both individuals and organizations.

According to Ramírez & Crespo, "...with this process underway, associated with the progress of ICT platforms for public procurement with Compranet,¹ and with the figure of the SW, mechanisms were developed to promote greater formal and institutionalized control against corruption in public procurement and contracting in Mexico" (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020).

In 2009, the SW was formalized and incorporated into the Federal Law of Public Sector Purchases, Leases and Services (LAASSP)² and into the Law of Public Works and Services related to them.³ In doing so, the government appropriated the *social witness* concept and name as a tool for citizen participation, differentiable from other mechanisms or processes of monitoring or social control. It was therefore a great step forward in legally defining, based on certain characteristics, which public procurement processes required the incorporation of a social witness by legal force. From that moment on, a process of institutionalization began and the social witness model was established and began to operate independently from the work of TM and in an environment institutionalized by law.

SWs are not auditors or controllers; they do not validate or certify as positive or negative the work done by a contracting company. Their job, rather, is to verify in real time and through independent monitoring that the applicable standards are being met during the tendering process.⁴

Social witnesses are citizens, independent monitors and social organizations that oversee public tendering procedures that are larger than a predetermined threshold (*approximately* \$22.7 million dollars in 2014). Social witnesses are third parties who are deemed to have no conflict of interest in the contracting procedures and whose task is to observe the bidding process in order to improve the accountability, legality and transparency of the process. Social

¹ <https://compranet.hacienda.gob.mx/web/login.html>

² http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/14_101114.pdf

³ http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/56_130116.pdf

⁴ According to TM, a tender is a public contest in which the government requests proposals to buy a good, carry out a project, contract or grant a service. Once a public call for tenders is made, the bidders present technical and economic proposals. The government analyzes the proposals, qualifies them and determines who offers the best conditions for the State. Once the winner has been determined and after the deadline for appeals a contract is signed. The social witness verifies that each of the stages of the tender process complies with the legislation in place at the time of the tender. A public procurement procedure includes, in addition to the tender process, a previous stage of planning and a subsequent stage of execution of the contracts awarded. By law, none of these stages is monitored by the Social Witness, see (Transparencia Mexicana, 2019).

witnesses are certified by the Ministry of Public Administration (SFP) and receive compensation for their services. (OECD, 2015)

According to TM, the SWs carry out independent monitoring that focuses on the tendering stage of the procurement process and they are appointed by authorities in accordance with the terms of Article 26 of the LAASSP. The process for the appointment of SWs operates without their participation, which may be either by direct appointment or by decision of the committees formed for that purpose. TM describes the internal functioning of the SW:

During the monitoring of the public tender, which sometimes lasts for months or even years, the Social Witness makes observations, recommendations and suggestions that the government agency can address or dismiss. Accepted observations are attended to immediately. The recommendations that the agency rejects are recorded in the Social Witness's final report for the record. (Transparencia Mexicana, 2019)

In any case, when TM acts in its capacity as a Social Witness, and identifies or knows of possible irregularities or crimes, it informs the relevant authorities, giving an account of the possible irregularities, as well as of the way in which they informed the relevant authorities. Another aspect of its operation is that the SW acts as an independent monitor; they do not determine or suggest what goods should be purchased, they do not influence or define purchasing needs, nor do they decide who wins the bid. They merely provide first-hand evidence that the procedure is subject to the applicable rules and regulations, and report on it in writing. In any case, the function of the Social Witness is not to judge the appropriateness of contracting for a given good or service, nor to verify compliance with the terms of contracts (Transparencia Mexicana, 2019).

Although some public agencies have their own procedures and assign the social witness directly by invitation, the agency authorized at the federal level to appoint social witnesses is the Social Witnesses Committee, which comprises five representatives of the Ministry of Public Administration (SFP) and five representatives of different business chambers and professional associations. The Social Witnesses Committee is governed by its own regulations and the social witnesses do not interfere in its actions (Transparencia Mexicana, 2019).



Figure 1 Social Witness (Mexico) as a tool for public procurement

Results and success factors

As indicated, the social witness tool has been incorporated into the legal framework governing major public procurement processes. According to Ramírez and Crespo, at the time of this research, 44 Mexican laws already include the figure of the social witness. (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020). The effectiveness of this model has already been recognized in various international organizations' publications and in academic studies (Transparencia Mexicana, 2012; Pacheco Monroy, 2020; OECD, 2015; OECD, 2015)

The total number of instances of the use of social witnesses are not known for certain. Although by law the social witness is mandatory in major public procurement processes, our knowledge of the full impact of the use of the social witness in Mexico is limited by the fact that there is no public repository that unifies and presents this information in its entirety. TM has its own repository, as well as systematic evaluations linked to its effectiveness and impact, but this organization is one of more than 50 individuals and/or organizations in the Social Witness Registry.⁵ *Transparencia Mexicana* has identified at least 250 monitoring processes between 2001 and 2017 in which it served as a social witness.⁶

A key issue is that the proposed institutional design allows citizen monitoring processes to be carried out with the support of specialists and technicians who can see the process in its entirety, since there are legal, organizational, financial and technical variables (directly linked to the type of service and product to be contracted or purchased) that require considerable knowledge in order to assess decision making, and allows the SW to have the overall vision necessary to carry out adequate monitoring.

Although attempts have been made to avoid being associated with the quantification of savings, some initial estimates have shown that the social witness makes it possible to achieve better public procurement processes, which translate into direct and indirect savings, some of which go beyond the cost of purchasing the products or services, but in the procurement process itself. Savings have more to do with the dynamics of the public procurement process, which relies on the participation of social witnesses.

Undoubtedly, this initiative is one of the pioneering institutional designs in the region to incorporate citizen participation in public procurement, as well as one of the most well-known. It is an effective institutional design as a means to make complex public procurement processes more transparent and open, which has succeeded in attracting interest. Although the design of the SW is actually an adaptation of a previous institutional design (the integrity pact), there is no information regarding the replication of the SW initiative in other places, although the Mexican experience has undoubtedly been a catalyst for improving or adapting the institutional design that gave rise to it. In any case, more information and analysis is needed to identify whether the SW model has been a source for similar initiatives in other countries and in other contexts.

This is an initiative where the success factors linked to the initial development team are clear, as TM managed not only to incorporate the design into the regulations, but also to adapt and condition it to the Mexican reality at that time, demonstrating that they had a team with sufficient skill and dexterity, a team that also demonstrated adequate change management throughout its implementation. With respect to the external dimension associated with the success factors, it should be recalled that the Ministry of Public Administration gave the necessary impetus to make it possible to institutionalize SW in more than 40 Mexican laws, which is undoubtedly a key factor in its success. There is no evidence that the work team has advanced, maintained or involved itself in networks, platforms or systems of public innovation,

⁵ <https://funcionpublica.gob.mx/uncp/tsocial/tsocial.htm>

⁶ <https://www.tm.org.mx/programa-de-integridad-en-contrataciones/>

although *Transparencia Mexicana* (TM) is one of the most active chapters of the Transparency International organization in the region.

In addition to the Mexican case (social witness), Latin America also has several instances of progress with integrity pacts/social witnesses, such as in El Salvador, where since 2009, the Integrity Pacts in Public Works has operated with the support of the National Foundation for Development (FUNDE) and the CSO Social Initiative for Democracy (ISD). Similarly, in Peru in 2005, Proética implemented the pact in some of its essential monitoring elements to detect corruption risks in public contracting, (Transparency International, 2009). In Honduras in 2013, the CSO ASJ—Transparency International's chapter in Honduras—exposed widespread corruption in the purchasing, selling and distribution of medication to state hospitals that was endangering the lives of countless Hondurans. As a result, a Framework Agreement for the implementation of Integrity and Transparency Pacts in the health sector was signed in 2014 with the main pharmaceutical companies to oversee the purchasing and supplying of medicines in the country (see IAIP Honduras, 2020). There are also other relevant experiences in Argentina (implementation of integrity pacts within the Transparent Public Contracting Program of the CSO Poder Ciudadano) Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, and Panama.

It is important to clarify that, for the Mexican case, the figure of the social witness (SW) demanded a reconceptualization of the idea of the Integrity Pact (IP), to focus on the independent and expert actor who observes a public procurement or contracting process, rather than on the voluntary contractual relationship in which the actors involved commit themselves to implement or oversee key transparency and integrity issues, a characteristic of the IP. That is, although they have a common origin, and the SW is understood as an institutional variant of the IP, they are differentiable institutional designs.

Box 1 On Integrity Pacts in Latin America

Some proposals for improvement

This initiative has reached the stage of maturity where it has been possible to identify in the literature some proposals for institutional changes and modifications in order to improve its operation, performance and transparency.

While progress has been made in terms of the institutionalization of this initiative, Crespo (2020) argues that certain elements were not correctly defined at the outset. One is the need to collect and systematize information on the use of social witnesses. The SFP has the duty to keep such a record, but, as noted above, it is not known how many processes employing social witnesses have been carried out, since there is no unified repository of this issue (or if there is one, it is not available to the public). TM has begun to systematize this information, but it does not have all the relevant data and only provides information about those procurement processes in which TM itself has been the social witness (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020).

A related issue is the need to improve transparency in key aspects of the model. For example, a 2018 USAID study of the SW approach was carried out and yielded the recommendation that, among other issues, it is necessary to make the decisions of the bidding committees transparent (USAID, 2018).

We recommend:







- Clarifying the nature of the *social witness* figure in order to overcoming tensions and foster a shared vision;
- Improving transparency and accountability, making the work of the Social Witnesses Committee more transparent, modifying the voting mechanism for the appointment of social witnesses, and making its sessions, minutes and operating manual public;
- Strengthening the Social Witness Registry, whose members should be regularly trained, comprehensively evaluated and, if necessary, purged;
- Broadening the scope of the social witness's activity to enable the SW to intervene from the planning of the procedure to the execution of the contract. We further recommend providing the SW with technical support, the creation of a random appointment mechanism for other processes, the construction of an information and reporting system that allows social witnesses to integrate their report online and enables the SFP to know in real time what is happening in the contracting procedures they observe, and the creation of databases and a system of preventive alerts.
- Finally, we recommend that the Ministry of Public Administration (SFP) be institutionally strengthened, especially the Public Regulations and Hiring Unit and its Social Witnesses Registry, so that it has sufficient human and material resources to carry out its tasks (USAID, 2018).

According to Crespo, another element that could improve the SW's work is for a SW to withdraw from a process in the face of evidence that the conditions for them to carry out their work as monitors are not met. That is, SWs should have the option to either "exit " or "voice" (Hirschman, 1970) when they find themselves involved in procurement processes whose conditions (e.g. legal, technical, procedural) do not allow them to advance the participation of the SW or to guarantee that the SW can do its proper work. (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020).

Crespo also recommends that the figure of the SW be maintained and strengthened by including a key process in the institutional framework of the National Anti-Corruption System and its Citizen Participation Committee. One way of strengthening the figure of the SW is to take the SW appointment process away from the social witness committee, which is an instance where the government participates. By taking advantage of the fact that such a committee is in place, it can be given this appointment function, which could guarantee greater decisional independence, as well as provide greater traceability. Another proposal to strengthen the SW is to advance to the post-contractual phase, associated with the delivery of goods and services. It may be feasible to take this step if the SW is changed from playing a face-to-face role to playing a virtual one.

In the future, Ramírez & Crespo considered that, with the progress of open contracts, the issue of citizen participation could be dealt with in other terms, where participation could have a different character or dimension (a kind of social witness 2.0) that could be used in a more automated way to carry out social control of the contracting system. (Ramírez & Crespo, 2020).

Table 1 Social Witness: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
					

Source: Author’s elaboration

Symbology:  Accomplished  Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis  To be determined

Case study: Comisiones de Compra — Programa Alimentación Escolar *Qali Warma*

Country (period) and organization responsible

Peru (2012 —) Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion

Description, origins and development

The National School Food Program "Qali Warma" (a phrase that in Quechua language means "vigorous child") is a social program whose mixed management model is organized through purchasing committees, school food committees and classroom committees with representation by citizens (parents) whose children attend public educational institutions. QW is a program with a level of public participation, because the community members and civil society representatives collaborate in all stages of the program: they co-decide, co-administer and co-evaluate the planning and implementation of the program in schools and localities in conjunction with the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS).

As an institutional design, it has elements of community-led procurement and citizen oversight committees.

It is worth mentioning that experiences with co-management models such as the one used by Qali Warma are not unprecedented in Peru, as there have been similar experiences with collaborative management and coordinated participation by the State and civil society, such as local health administration committees⁷ or the management committees of the Cuna Más National Program (formerly Wawa Wasi),⁸ among others, which manage the public budget.

MIDIS was created in 2011. A few months after its founding, it began a process of evaluating and reorganizing the five social programs assigned to it, in order to examine the social benefits they provide and to adapt their design, organization and objectives to the guidelines of this sector. One of these was the National Food Assistance Program (PRONAA), which was responsible for, among other benefits, providing school meals to children in public schools at the kindergarten and primary levels nationwide. According to Romero et al. (2016), this program had several problems, including:

- Fragmentation due to the large number of activities that were incorporated;
- Lack of clear goals for activities, components and results. Shortcomings were identified in the logistics framework, which conflated management and results indicators, making it impossible to estimate progress in quantitative terms;
- Insufficient and non-inclusive coverage;
- Inconsistency with other programs in the use of targeting criteria;
- Not ensuring that the meals were actually consumed by the children who were the intended beneficiaries, which was compounded by low acceptance of the meals, poor variety, and poor digestion;
- Complex program operation and poor logistical performance; the procurement process was very complex and there were problems with the timely distribution of food.

⁷ <https://latinno.net/es/case/17073/>

⁸ <https://latinno.net/es/case/17032/> see also <https://www.cunamas.gob.pe/>

Although Qali Warma was established by supreme decree on the very day PRONAA was extinguished, it was created to address a different issue, and would work with only a part of PRONAA's target population. Qali Warma was a pilot program designed to last for three years, after which an impact assessment would determine whether to continue it on a broader scale as national policy. In other words, it was conceived as a universal program, to be implemented progressively. It was created in 2012, and it began to operate in 2013. In 2016, it was expected to serve the entire school population at the kindergarten and primary levels of the country's public schools.

QW sought to solve the problem of "inadequate food consumption (in terms of quality and quantity) of children attending public schools" (*Qali Warma* National School Food Program 2013). At the time of the program's creation, it was estimated that about a third of children and adolescents in Peruvian households had an insufficient intake of calories to carry out the daily activities of a person of their age; a situation that is even more critical in rural areas of the country (Romero Lora, Riva Castañeda, & Benites Orjeda, 2016). It should be noted that, in Peru, the right to education at the kindergarten and primary level includes the right to participate in government-sponsored nutritional programs. School-age feeding is therefore a right regulated by the Law of Education.

The Qali Warma program was created with the purpose of providing a quality, sustainable and healthy food service, appropriate to local consumption habits — and co-managed with the community, for public school children from kindergarten through primary education. (Goldmark & Lodesani, 2013)

In 2014, Supreme Decree No. 006-2014-MIDIS established that QW would progressively serve schoolchildren at the secondary level in public schools located in the indigenous communities of the Peruvian Amazon.

As already indicated, QW proposes a model of shared management and co-responsibility. The program had to consider in its different processes the participation of the educational community, civil society, NGOs and local governments, among other social actors. Its design combined various characteristics found in different school feeding programs in the Latin American region, such as social participation, the national government as a single source of financing, and centralized management, which was chosen because of the heterogeneous management and institutional capacities of provincial governments, although the program did opt for a decentralized procurement model.

The public procurement process in this program is one of the most important. This process is managed by the Purchasing Committee, whose functions are detailed and regulated in Qali Warma's purchasing manual, the main management tool of this committee (MIDIS, 2014). As such, QW's work in the area of public procurement is not regulated by the State Procurement Law.

These committees are formed to purchase baskets of products and meals served to the beneficiaries of the program. They are made up of representatives from local governments (social development departments), representatives from health networks (mainly nutritionists), governors (due to their fundamental role in monitoring social programs) and parents from public schools in QW's area of intervention. The selection of these members within the procurement committee is based on the need to involve those governmental and civil society actors that are most relevant or concerned about the proper functioning of the program and the procurement process in general.

The operation of the Program is based on a co-management model that involves the participation of the organized community in the Procurement Committee and School Food

Committee. The Procurement Committees are responsible for the processes of selecting food service providers and paying them, while the School Food Committees are responsible for monitoring food quality and for receiving, storing, preparing, serving, distributing and monitoring consumption (in the case of the products category) and receiving, distributing and monitoring food consumption (in the rations category). (MIDIS, 2014)

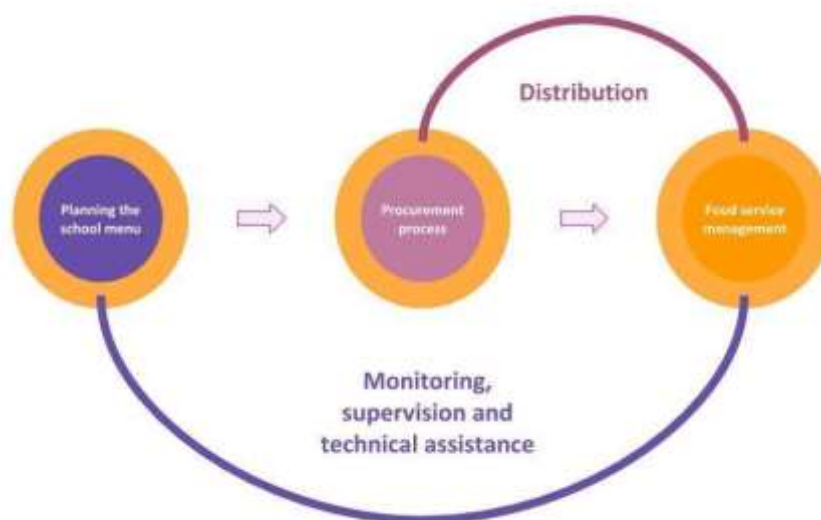


Figure 2 Qali Warma National School Food Program model.

Source: <https://www.qaliwarma.gob.pe/> (Using Wayback Machine - Capture 2018-09-01)

Procurement committees benefit from a legal identity, which allows them to contract for services and to purchase materials and supplies. The members of the procurement committee must change every year, as a means of ensuring the integrity of the committee's decisions and preventing them from interacting with suppliers and from engaging in practices that conflict with the general interest.

The Procurement Manual identifies five phases of the procurement process, which are managed by the procurement committees and which should not take more than 25 working days in total: (i) Notice and distribution of the bases for selection; (ii) Proposal formulation and release; (iii) Proposal submission; (iv) Proposal evaluation and selection; and (v) Contract signing (MIDIS, 2014).

As part of the program design process, a community oversight protocol was established that set out the mechanism and tools to ensure a transparent procurement process. The Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty, the Committee for Transparency and Citizen Monitoring of MIDIS' Social Programs and the Local Education Management Unit were given the task of monitoring the procurement process. This strategy was operational for the first few years, but later changed to one based on citizen observers who would be trained to raise concerns.



Figure 3 EAP's Procurement Committee Qali Warma (Peru) as a public procurement tool.

Over the years, the program began to reveal weaknesses linked to the design and the weak participation of some citizen members of the procurement committees, while it continued to make progress by taking corrective measures. One FAO expert put it this way. "*Qali Warma* is a good program, it is a benchmark because it is a work in progress that requires profound reforms to make it work. Also, by recognizing that it has not evolved in a linear fashion, it has been able to make corrections to the difficulties it faces."⁹

With respect to the institutional design of the project, it should be noted that the element of social control and oversight, a crucial element in the design of QW, was reinforced with a commitment to significant progress and results within the framework of Peru's participation in the Open Government Alliance. This was in response to the diagnosis of the first years of the program's life, as there was little citizen participation by parents in the purchasing process due to the absence of incentives (MIDIS, 2016), as well as little participation by parents and other actors in monitoring the National School Food Program *Qali Warma*, and multiple reports of irregularities in its distribution, both in the press and elsewhere (IRM-OGP, 2017).

For this reason, Commitment 9 was included in the second Peruvian Action Plan for Open Government 2015-2017, consisting of a series of measures to strengthen and institutionalize citizen participation in the monitoring of the *Qali Warma* program, including the creation of a Directory of Social Actors interested in oversight, the design and implementation of a training program for them, and oversight actions through a protocol for issuing alerts.¹⁰ In 2016, the stakeholder directory was validated for *Qali Warma*, accrediting 300 watchdogs to participate in the 116 purchasing committees that had been set up. The effective participation of 254 of these 300 people was verified.

⁹<https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-fao-qaliwarmas-es-un-milagro-de-politica-social-y-referente-la-region-507094.aspx>

¹⁰<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Peru%CC%81-End-Term-Report-2015-2017-SP-for-public-comment-0.pdf>

According to this report, and as a result of the programmed actions, there was a significant increase in the activity of citizen observers, who in 2015 issued alerts about 414 cases with 2,039 critical issues, while in 2017 there were 730 cases with 4,746 critical issues (IRM-OGP, 2017). This meant a renewal of social control linked to the program, organizational and procedural gaps and weaknesses were detected, and new strategies were devised to counteract these weaknesses.

Results and success factors

Although this project has not been free of controversy, due to scandals associated with defective or expired supplies and other instances of corruption or mismanagement, the project has demonstrated its effectiveness and endurance over the years and can be associated with a significant decrease in indicators directly linked to it, such as chronic child malnutrition (UNICEF, 2019).¹¹

The government intends that, as of 2020, all procurement of supplies for the MIDIS Qali Warma National School Food Program will occur through an electronic system. By the end of 2019, therefore, the members of the procurement committees were trained in the use of an electronic procurement platform (Vilca, 2019). Electronic purchasing will not only facilitate better management and use of information, but will also allow for the automation of some processes, the centralization of information and improved control of key processes linked to the procurement cycle.

In the future, it is understood that Qali Warma will evolve and improve its activity at the community level, thanks to the use of ICT and through centralized databases.










In many ways, the Qali Warma School Food Program is one of the most important social programs in Peru. Over the years, the teams from MIDIS responsible for its design have been working methodically to strengthen, improve and consolidate it, thus demonstrating the core team's high level of maturity, with clear objectives and realistic planning processes. This program has enjoyed great political support at the highest level, and has sought to leverage the knowledge gained from experience with co-management models previously developed in Peru to promote this type of institutional design.

There is no evidence that this program has had support from or continued interaction with other CSOs or international organizations, although the community participation associated with it has been crucial and has been there since its inception. The strength of the law that established the program conferred strong institutional support from the beginning at all levels. It is important to remember that the design of QW is mixed; different levels of government are involved under a common regulatory and management framework with clear rules of operation and clear objectives.

Scandals related to bad decisions, poor procurement processes, or supply management or storage problems reveal a learning curve that in many cases had to be surmounted, requiring, among other things, the strengthening of the institutional framework associated with social oversight processes, which acts as an important component in this strategy and demonstrates its resilience in order to adapt to the needs of inclusion and participation.

¹¹ The UNICEF press release states "Peru's success in the fight against (child) malnutrition reflects the national political effort, coordination between sectors, budget allocation and an effective results-based monitoring system".

Table 2 Qali Warma (Purchasing Committees): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
✓	✓	✓	✓ With controversies associated to media cases		       

Source: Author's elaboration.

Symbology: ✓ Accomplished ✗ Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis ⌚ To be determined

Case study: Gasto Público Bahiense

Country (period) and organization responsible

Bahía Blanca, Argentina (2010 — 2016) Manuel Aristarán - Intendencia.

Description, origins and development

Gasto Público Bahiense (Bahian Public Spending) was a civic initiative with the objective of improving transparency in the municipality of Bahía Blanca, Argentina. This initiative made it possible to offer, through a simple web platform, structured information on State procurement and suppliers and on the budgetary execution of these expenditures.

This initiative is included in this research not because it offers a participatory institutional design per se, but because, in addition to being one of the pioneering cases of the use of public procurement data in the region, it was an initiative based on the use of civic technology, which emerged and was promoted from outside the government with the support of other civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors. Its impact was such that it was adopted as a key initiative of the Bahía Blanca government's "open government" strategy for several years until it was shut down. This platform was developed by an individual citizen, Manuel Aristarán.

As a key precedent, it should be noted that the government of Bahía Blanca was one of the first local governments in Latin America to commit to an agenda of transparency and openness based on open data, and focused on public procurement, publishing information about the purchases made by the municipality. This proactive transparency process developed rapidly (from 2000-2001), under the leadership of Jaime Linares. According to Mirofsky & Bevilacqua (2017), this transparency exercise was crucial and commendable, although "...the initiative today is not strange in view of the massive use of data technology in favour of transparency, it was not common at that time and was even more exceptional in the field of local governments" (Mirofsky & Bevilacqua, 2017).

Although the progress in transparency was important, and this information was valuable because of its content and scope, it was published on a web page where it was difficult to access and understand the data. This was unstructured information that users could neither analyze or reuse. According to Artopoulos (2016), at that time Aristarán knew that journalists were consulting the Municipality's website regularly and could not decipher its content, so he decided to "organize it in a better and navigable way" (Artopoulos, 2016).

The development of the GPB project consisted of two parts. The first, data extraction—based on a technique called *screen-scraping*,¹² allowed users to access the information and to reconstruct the original database from the municipality's website by reverse engineering. The second part, using data visualization tools, enabled the platform to display in a clear manner (with selection and filtering options) the information that until then had been hidden in disaggregated and isolated data.

Aristarán launched "Gasto Público Bahiense" (GPB) in July 2010,¹³ and it remained operational for more than six years, until October 2016. After its creation, this platform received support and collaboration from members of the GarageLab collective,¹⁴ a platform and space for

¹² *Web scraping* is a software technique for extracting information from websites.

¹³ The page was hosted at the URL <http://gastopublicobahiense.org>. The last screen archived in the Wayback Machine, from 2019, reads as an obituary, defining GPB as an "experiment in civic technology that led to scandals, received awards and motivated the creation of the first municipal agencies dedicated to the systematization of public information in Argentina."

¹⁴ <https://garagelab.tumblr.com/quienesSomos>

collaboration, innovation and scientific, artistic and technological production and innovation of which Aristarán was also a member.

Originally, GPB defined itself as "...a tool for exploring procurement data from suppliers."¹⁵ Consistent with the strategies of civic technology and openness, it was created in open source software and was offered for free, so that anyone could replicate it. In addition, a CSV export tool was offered to share the "scraped" data.

Launched in July 2010, the impact of the GPB "experiment" was surprising. In just two weeks it had between 200 and 300 visits per day. It suffered harassment from suppliers that were evidenced at the website. However, political leaders, journalists, and disinterested citizens also showed their support. GPB's activity quickly became nationally and regionally renowned. (Artopoulos, 2016)



Figure 4 Gasto Público Bahiense (Argentina) as a public procurement tool.

Although the GPB platform project does not offer a specific institutional design for citizen participation, nor does it explicitly include participatory processes, there is evidence that within it, processes of openness and collaboration were articulated with the involvement of civil society organizations and other groups, whose dynamics, in turn, led to changes in government procedure. This happened once GPB participated and co-organized with GarageLab the first "Public Data and Open Government Hackathon" in Argentina on the campus of the University of San Andrés in Victoria. This was an unprecedented event in the country (Artopoulos, 2016) at which several similar open government projects were addressed.

The creation, development and subsequent shutdown of this project was not without controversy. The most well-known controversy is the so-called "CaptchaGate," which took place a year after GPB started operations, in July 2011. In the process of modernizing the municipal website, the Bahia Blanca government decided to require users to complete Captchas to access the databases of the municipality's website. A Captcha—an acronym for "Completely Automated Public Turing Test To Tell Computers and Humans Apart"—is a web security system to prevent data extraction by robots, which caused operational difficulties for

¹⁵ <http://gastopublicobahiense.org/acerca-de-gpb/>, (accessed using Wayback Machine. 30 July 2010 capture)

data extraction in Aristarán's development. It should be noted that Captchas are not used in portals where public transparency information is hosted. This fact was brought to the attention of the local media, and caused a media stir, which, contrary to stopping the project or hindering it, gave it great visibility at the national and regional level¹⁶ in addition to promoting under its wing the development of other open government projects based on the development of civic technologies.¹⁷ (Aristarán, 2020)

Results and success factors

This initiative was awarded and recognized by several entities and organizations. At the beginning, it was recognized by the Honorable Deliberative Council of Bahía Blanca, which declared it of Municipal Interest. GPB was recognized by the Undersecretary for State Modernization of the Government of the Province of Buenos Aires with the Provincial Award for Innovation 2013. Aristarán was recognized in a personal capacity, by the Municipal Government of Bahía Blanca, in January 2015 (Artopoulos, 2016).

The visibility of the project was perhaps one of the greatest contributors to its success. As indicated above, much of this visibility was initially provided by its advocacy work, but largely by the "CaptchaGate."

In 2012, with a change of government, the Ministry of Innovation and Open Government was created in the Bahía Blanca government, and under this new directive the collaborative approach changed completely. The Bahian government collaborated decisively with the GPB project and supported innovation processes involving the development of civic technologies based on open data.



As this was an individual initiative, it is difficult to speak of successful processes associated with the level of maturity of the teams behind the initiative. However, thanks to such individual initiative, effective collaborative spaces were articulated in the search for open government solutions based on the use of open data, thus indicating that there were groups of collaborators with appropriate talent and skills for the development of new initiatives and projects, which the government of Bahía Blanca welcomed. There was strong support at the highest level which, from 2012 to 2016, allowed this initiative to be maintained and integrated into the open government ecosystem that was being promoted.

Regarding level of institutionalization and external interaction, we can say that GPB was welcomed by the NGOs that promote open data, transparency and citizen innovation in the country, and generated positive synergies to contribute to the emerging regional ecosystem of open data and technology advocates. There is no evidence that this innovation had deeper institutionalization processes linked to changes in the regulations that gave it legal force or a greater centrality to the city council, beyond the orientation towards transparency and open government. The initiative offered opportunities for its developer to engage with a regional innovation ecosystem.

¹⁶<http://www.redusers.com/noticias/captcha-gate-%C2%BFque-paso-en-bahia-blanca-con-los-datos-de-la-municipalidad/>

¹⁷ <https://garagelab.tumblr.com/post/7359366416/captchagate>

Table 3 Gasto Público Bahiense: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
✓	✓ Given the origin of the initiative	✓	✓		

Source: Own elaboration.

Symbology: ✓ Accomplished ✗ Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis  To be determined

Case study: Cuidando do Meu Bairro

Country (period) and organization responsible

São Paulo, Brazil (2012 —). Development and Participation Laboratory. University of São Paulo, with the support of the Brazilian Social Observatory (São Paulo)

Description, origins and development

Cuidando do Meu Bairro (CMB) is an online open platform developed to provide a web-based citizen tool to control public spending (budgetary information) in São Paulo, Brazil. Based on geolocalized information, it empowers people to exercise their right to access information guaranteed by law¹⁸ and to carry out citizen control of city spending.

As such, CMB is a platform that brings the population of the City of São Paulo closer to the process of monitoring the city's budget allocation, through various integrated web tools, as well as through the development of other training and awareness activities, such as budget workshops and "data rallies" and "data expeditions" carried out in collaboration (since 2016) with the Brazilian Social Observatory headquarters in São Paulo.¹⁹ This organization has supported CMB's development and endorses on its behalf requests for access to information on the platform, disseminates and promotes the use of the project in public schools at a community level, and promotes its use and findings in social movements and through local media. In short, the participatory and outreach actions linked to this initiative are carried out by this CSO.

This project is the result of an academic project associated with the use of open data and its link to geolocalization interfaces. It gradually gained strength and coherence as an information system for citizen empowerment. Since 2010, researchers at the University of São Paulo, led by Gisele Craveiro within the Public Policy Research Group for Access to Information and the Collaborative Lab in Development and Participation²⁰ of the same university, began to address the issue of open government data as a research topic, studying public budget data and its uses. Since 2009, the Transparency Law requires the proactive disclosure of public expenditures, and with this an opportunity was identified to investigate the use of this data.

The initial objective of this research project was to understand how access to fiscal information affects the relationship between citizens and public administrators at the district/municipal level. While it was clear from the start that people need more than *access* to information; they also need to *understand* the information to use it to its full potential. The research group's interest, therefore, was to improve understanding of fiscal information by translating it into a more manageable, accessible and understandable form for wider audiences.

The CMB tool was launched in 2012 as a web application that uses bots to recover public budget data from official sources, automatically and in real time. It places examples of individual expenditures on a map of the city and color-codes dots to indicate the status of the expenditure in real time (Craveiro, Machado, Matado, & Souza, 2015).

Initially, the aim was to provide cognitive tools to understand and process these data, based on public accounting principles. As a first step, simple visualizations were made by extracting the

¹⁸ <https://cuidando.vc/>

¹⁹ The Social Observatory of Brazil - São Paulo (OSB) is a non-partisan organization created by civil society, which promotes fiscal citizenship and works for transparency in resource management in the capital of São Paulo as a way to prevent corruption and promote the wise allocation of resources, and which is supported by more than 50 institutions. The São Paulo capital unit is part of the OSB Network, present in more than 120 Brazilian municipalities. OSB is a national organization that has many delegations or chapters in Brazilian cities. More information is available at <http://www.osb-saopaulo.org.br/>

²⁰ <http://colab.each.usp.br/>

data from the Municipality of São Paulo, and geo-locating expenditures on a map because the general public found geo-localized data to be more relevant and useful.

An initial study corroborated this finding and concluded that the providing the geographic location of budget items is a good strategy for making difficult and/or abstract fiscal concepts, data, and information more accessible to a wider audience. (Craveiro, Machado, Matado, & Souza, 2015). This research also showed that, in the case analyzed, the civil society ecosystem and the quality of its components and connections can counteract the poor quality of the data, which makes it essential to understand the role of intermediaries and final consumers of information.

Based on user-experience analysis, it was determined that the budget information that was published by the government was not published in a way that people found comprehensible, but was published, rather, in order to comply with legal requirements. Therefore, it was necessary to change processes to improve the quality of the information provided, as well as to improve the data, such as by making them more relevant to the public, in order to promote better public oversight.

Subsequent developments in the project led to improvements in CMB, including other functions that are now key parts of the platform.

Currently, this digital participatory space features geolocated information on public spending on a map of São Paulo. It is possible to visualize in real time the projects that have been carried out, are in progress or are in a planning stage. In addition, this platform shows the public entity in charge of the project, the budget, the actual expenditure, the cleared transactions, as well as the associated tenders and awards.

If the information is not online, citizens can request it by exercising their right to access the information, via this same platform. This occurs through the interface for channeling requests for access to information, and it occurs with the support of the CSO Brazilian Social Observatory (São Paulo) that presents itself as a petitioner within the framework of the Law on Access to Information. Responses are published on the platform.

CMB combines information from the City's budgets with information about other relevant processes, such as public bidding, so that people can access and cross-reference relevant information to enable them to exercise public oversight of the government.

In the words of Gisele Craveiro, the interviewee for this initiative, the perspective guiding development of the platform has always been to have the user in mind—who are the users of CMB? What information do they need? The most active users of the platform are people who have little knowledge of public accounting or use of computing tools, but who are somehow involved in political processes, and need information on budget execution (Craviero, 2020). Additionally, Craveiro states that with CMB it is possible to monitor budget execution in general, and not only control the spending associated with public purchases. Thus, it is possible to offer citizen's support and follow-up also on other relevant issues of public policies and public services of the city.

The partnership in 2016 with the CSO Brazilian Social Observatory (São Paulo) made it possible to measure the actions in a community context and to strengthen the participatory nature of this initiative. They have the infrastructure and capacity to hold neighborhood workshops for budget oversight, and they encourage the use of the CMB tool with their volunteers and other CSO groups with whom they collaborate in citizen oversight efforts. CMB is used by neighborhood organizations, within the framework of the Observatorio Social, with use of the

platform supported by academia and neighborhood movements. The Observatory plays the role of raising awareness of the platform. There are projects that use the platform in schools.

In short, although the platform is clearly designed to provide a good user experience, the appropriation of the tool occurred within the framework of the actions implemented by the Brazilian Social Observatory in Sao Paulo, who welcomed it as a primary tool for neighborhood empowerment, public oversight, and training and awareness-raising activities.



Cuidando do Meu Bairro (São Paulo)

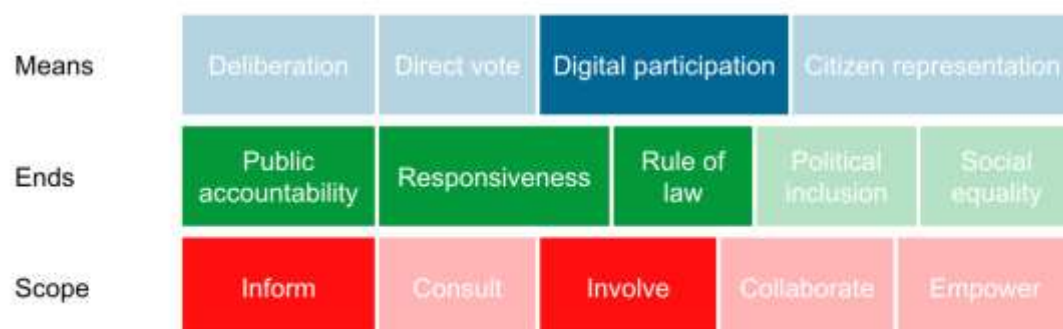


Figure 5 Cuidando do Meu Bairro (Brazil) as a public purchasing tool.

Although the platform allows for some virtual interaction between users, these are not often used because, in the opinion of the interviewee, personal interactions among the participants in the neighborhood projects based on relationships built in the movements and in community organizations have greater weight and relevance. This project sought to promote face-to-face interaction and to build trust and communication based on proximity. It was understood that CMB's role could not be a top-down one. To create the relationship of trust on which this project is based and promote its integration into the social fabric, it was necessary for participants to view each other as equals (Cravero, 2020).

When the CMB project started, it was presented to the General Comptroller's Office of Sao Paulo, the agency in charge of policy and management of open data and transparency. The General Comptroller's Office thought it was a great project, which meant CMB enjoyed important institutional support. Because of this support, it was proposed that CMB should become an official platform of the government of the city of Sao Paulo. The General Comptroller's Office wanted CMB, or to create something similar, which was a challenge for the government because the data the government publishes is not disaggregated and has no links to fine tune the information. In many ways, CMB helped to ensure that public expenditure data was generated in ever greater detail. In other words, CMB put something concrete on the

table and the platform helped improve internal government processes in order to supply CMB correctly.

Results and success factors

Several CSOs have long expressed interest in replicating CMB in other large Brazilian cities. CMB offers an open source solution²¹ with a blog where experiences of using this platform at the neighborhood level are shared, illustrating the participatory work carried out within the framework of this strategy.²²

Regarding the indicators linked to the level of maturity of the team behind the project, it can be said that this team has collaborated intensely and continuously to develop the platform. Once it was shared and recognized, the team was able to interact with one of the most important civil society organizations in Sao Paulo, in order to promote CMB's use at the neighborhood level as a tool for social control.

The members of this team have been working intensively with other international networks. The project has been promoted and developed in collaboration with major donors and regional organizations.²³ In recent years, the CBM initiative has been nominated for and received several awards in public innovation.²⁴ In Craveiro's (2020) opinion, the main problem with its replication potential is that, because it was originally an academic initiative, there is no commercial entity that systematically seeks to grow the initiative in other local governments in the manner of a start-up. Many of the CSOs do not have sufficient experience or training to initiate this project in other cities, or do not have a clear idea of how to operationalize it.

It currently only operates in Sao Paulo. Another problem is that, because cities in Brazil do not all have the same systems and structure for processing data and information, each city would have to start from scratch. For this reason, the Research Group has advocated the standardization of information on budgets and expenditures. This would make it possible to provide CMB in the more than 5,000 Brazilian municipalities.

²¹ <https://gitlab.com/cuidandodoimeubairro>

²² <http://blog.cuidando.vc/>

²³ <https://cuidando.vc/?texto/sobre>


²⁴ National Fiscal Education Award (Brazil) 2016 <http://www5.each.usp.br/noticias/projeto-cuidando-do-meu-bairro-desenvolvido-na-each-foi-o-vencedor-do-premio-nacional-de-educacao-fiscal-2016/>
Afresp Award in 2019 <http://www5.each.usp.br/noticias/projeto-cuidando-do-meu-bairro-recebe-nova-premiacao/>.

Included in 2018 as a good practice in the ENCCLA Bank of Initiatives (National Strategy to Fight Corruption and Money Laundering): <http://todosjuntoscontracorrupcao.mppb.mp.br/index.php/2018/11/06/cuidando-do-meu-bairro-uma-plataforma-para-acompanhamento-dos-gastos-na-cidade/>.

Finalist Google Social Impact Challenge (2014):

<https://linkestadao.com.br/blogs/codigo-aberto/aplicativos-sobre-os-gastos-publicos-em-projeto-finalista-do-desafio-google>

Table 4 Cuidando do Meu Bairro – Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	

Source: Own elaboration.

Symbology: ✓ Accomplished ✗ Not accomplished 🔍 Missing information or analysis ⌚ To be determined

Case study: BA Obras

Country (period) and organization responsible

Buenos Aires, Argentina (2017 –) Open Government Ecosystem. Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

Description, origins and development

BA Obras is an open government initiative by the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (GCBA) within the area known as the Open Government Ecosystem,²⁵ which essentially comprises two strategies: a web platform²⁶ and a participatory process of proximity.

This initiative focused on advancing a policy of openness and fighting against the opacity of public works, the existence of which allows for irregularities and eventually corruption. With the government of Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, the city of Buenos Aires embarked on a very ambitious public works agenda during the 2015-2019 period. In order to increase transparency in the management of urban public works projects and to promote compliance with international standards, the government proposed launching a web platform and developing participatory processes.

The Government of the City considers that BA Obras represents a new way of rendering accounts and promoting channels of dialogue with the citizens through public works. At the time this report was prepared, the BA Obras website showed user-friendly information on more than 1,100 public works and openly involved residents and citizens in the process of monitoring the projects.

Through a user-friendly interactive design in its web platform, BA Obras seeks to provide information and tools for the public to learn how public resources are invested and, in particular, to provide them the necessary information to engage in citizen participation and government monitoring, where these issues are discussed.

BA Obras originated in 2016, when a process of standardizing data about construction works was initiated. The process integrated information about the tenders, their location, and their stage of progress and classified them by type and stage within a structured database and with periodic updates. The objective at that time was to provide standardized information on all the works undertaken by the different government agencies.

The aim was to provide information in a simple and agile way in order to inform, at first, any resident of the city about what was being done in terms of public works and how long it would take to complete each project. Later, this information was improved, adding information about the contractor, the context of the construction project and its contribution to the City of BA. The idea was that this information would be clear and understandable to wider audiences and would *include* photos. (Vila, 2020)

According to the IRM-OGP 2017-2019 implementation report, the work associated with this data standardization was carried out as planned and included ten other government agencies in addition to the public works agency.

BA Obras takes shape within the framework of a commitment of the Alliance for Open Government OGP, within the Third Action Plan Argentina 2017-2019 (see commitment 35 in

²⁵ <https://gobiernoabierto.buenosaires.gob.ar/>

²⁶ <https://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/baobras>

sub-national area), and from this second phase, it was also conceived as the product of a co-creation process between government and the citizens.

The idea was to set up an "open observatory of urban works" for accountability²⁷ and citizen participation which, as described in the aforementioned Action Plan, "...allows for a clear and user-friendly visualization of the georeferenced database on a map of the City of Buenos Aires and which can be classified by region or by stage, depending on the user's preference" (IRM Open Government Partnership, 2019).

As noted, BA Obras is more than an information platform based on standardized data. It is also a participatory process. The Action Plan states that:

Based on a double-participatory and co-creative process with civil society, institutions and citizens, data of interest will be collected for the subsequent development of urban indicators that will be reflected in this platform. The participatory processes will be periodic, with the aim of keeping these indicators updated. (Vila, 2020)

In other words, as an open observatory, BA Obras progressed through three complementary participatory strategies, which are associated with obtaining information, citizen monitoring processes and relevant feedback associated with the use of the platform by interested citizens for continuous improvement:

1. *Neighborhood Meetings (local actions)*: Every week, the head and deputy head of government hold "neighborhood meetings" with neighbors from different parts of the city. These meetings are attended by staff of the department in charge of the BA Obras website, with a touch-screen display and tablet computers, to show the neighbors who attend the meetings how to use the platform and to collect their opinions and preferences concerning the website. This practice has allowed them not only to promote the BA Obras web tool but also to improve it continuously based on citizen feedback. Neighborhood meetings have been held in all of the city's municipalities to promote the diversity of participants. In these meetings, complaints are also presented and responses are offered to citizen concerns about particular public works. This exchange of information is crucial to achieving more responsive governments.
2. *Focus groups*: In accordance with the Action Plan, six focus groups were held from November 26 to 28, 2018, with men and women over 25 years of age, all residents of the City of Buenos Aires (CABA). In each focus group, the facilitator(s) first determined participants' level of knowledge about BA Obras and then showed them a video about how to use the platform, as well as a demonstration of the website's content. Finally, the facilitator(s) collected information on participants' perception of the platform. To promote a diverse set of participants, a focus group membership representative of the CABA population was pursued.
3. *Citizen feedback via website*: Based on the focus groups as well as on the citizen feedback received on the platform, a form was added to the website to enable users to express their opinion of the website. In addition, the platform included a link to the GCBA complaints and questions channel (line 147).

²⁷ According to Pogrebinshi, accountability is defined here as "all non-electoral ways in which representative governments, institutions, elected officials and representatives are held accountable for their actions, that is, responsible for their actions and omissions, and subject to challenge. Democratic innovations aimed at improving accountability can promote activities as diverse as monitoring institutional performance, disseminating public information, sanctioning public agents and supervising the provision of public services." Other approaches involve participatory spaces included in this strategy that allow for citizen oversight and government responsibility, without reaching systems of public accountability that require the duty to inform, justify actions and submit to a regime of sanctions in case of non-compliance.

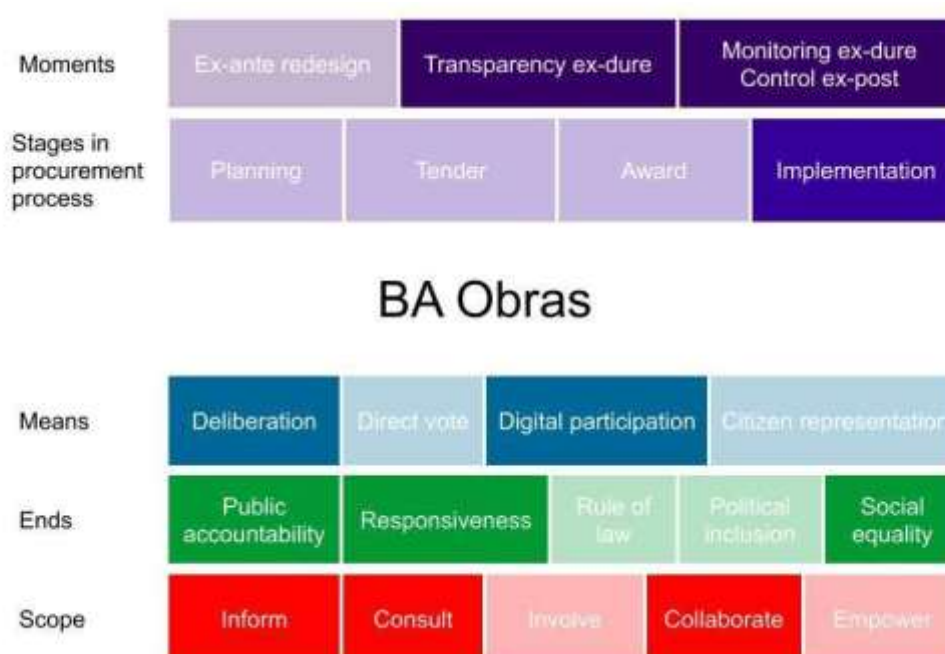


Figure 6 BA Obras (Argentina) as a public purchasing tool.

After the launch of BA Obras at the end of 2017, GCBA focused during 2018 and 2019 on publicizing the platform, teaching neighborhood residents how to use it, and listening to their comments with an eye toward making changes to the site to improve the information available and the user experience.

After this initial process, the specifications of construction projects were published on BA Obras. According to current estimates, 80% of the specifications have been published, while the remaining 20% have not yet been published for a variety of reasons (Vila, 2020).

Box 2 Connecting citizen participation tools for public procurement in the open government ecosystem BA Elige and BA Obras.

Similar to BA Obras, BA Elige is an initiative of the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, included in the Open Government Ecosystem, which is based on a web platform (Consul) and a participatory process of proximity.

BA Elige is a result of the implementation of the CONSUL platform, an international collaborative web development project for citizen participation and participatory budgeting, with an open source code that is currently used by 28 governments (mainly sub-national) from 13 Latin American countries (see information at <https://consulproject.org/es/>).

In 2016, the Sub-secretary of Communication of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires (GCBA) launched a Citizen Participation program through which more than 56 projects and 52 implementations were made available to the residents, where they could participate and vote through social media and in their neighborhoods. A total of 1,402,514 votes were recorded and 8,065 people attended the various neighborhood meetings. This pilot program was the basis for the Undersecretary of Communication to launch a program called BA Elige in 2017, which resulted from the collaboration between the Citizen Participation area of the GCBA and the City

of Madrid.

BA Elige is an initiative that proposes an evolution of citizen participation, so that all the residents of the city, through different stages, can propose and choose ideas to help improve the neighborhoods, the communities and the City of Buenos Aires in general. All people in the city have the opportunity to create proposals, co-create them in a collaborative way, and support those suggested by others.

The participation process was carried out through BA Elige's website, a Consul software application where citizens had to register and then submit their proposals. Prior to the launch of the initiative, information meetings were held in which locals were invited to learn about the projects and how to participate. In addition, to achieve broad participation, the proposals could also be submitted through the web platform, social media (Facebook/Twitter), citizen service line 147, administrators at neighborhood meetings and at high-traffic points in the city.

BA Elige designed an inclusive strategy through the distribution of the budget allocated to each community. The budget was proportional to the population and inversely proportional to the per capita income, using as a source the Annual Household Survey of the General Direction of Statistics and Census of the GCBA for the year 2014 and the last Census of the National Institute of Statistics and Census. Both in its first edition in 2017 and in 2018, more than 26,000 proposals were received, far exceeding expectations, as well as participation in other cities around the world.

More than 200 projects were implemented in 2018 and 443 more in 2019 in all the communities. By 2020, up to \$600 million, part of the City's total investment budget, was allocated to enable the projects chosen by citizens to be carried out. This budget is distributed by communities in proportion to the size of the population and inversely proportional to per capita income. This program generates a new form of relationship between the citizen and the government, where now it is the citizen who defines where public resources should be invested.

Results and success factors

The project has resulted in a total of 500,000 visits to BA Obras since its launch, and has been monitored by the OGP's international platform.

Between 2018 and 2019, the platform was used in over 170 local actions including meetings of the Head and Deputy Head of Government with the residents of all the city's districts and communities; in two inaugurations of major public works (*Viaducto FFCC Mitre* and *Paseo del Bajo*); and in different national and international events and congresses (Smart City Expo,²⁸ ConsulCon,²⁹ International Congress on Urbanism, Urban 20, etc.).

The head of BA Obras said during the interview that at some point there had been "misinterpretations" due to the publicity surrounding BA Obras, and that some things were criticized, such as the small number of contractors for the projects.

A crucial point is that, gradually, as a result of all this work, each responsible area of the GCBA has been delivering information associated with public projects in a systematic way. Therefore, this database began to be used and consulted systematically (even by public officials themselves) as the only centralized and reliable source. The incentive for departments to post

²⁸ <http://www.smartcityexpo.com/en/the-event/past-editions-2018>

²⁹ <https://www.medialab-prado.es/videos/consulcon>

is that doing so avoids duplication, and that, thanks to BA Obras, there is a unique way to deliver, systematize and open this information, which generated a virtuous circle within the city government associated with the collection and management of information in this crucial area. With BA Obras, information was clarified for all officials in all areas. Policy makers also had information to report on progress and developments in public projects. There was therefore a very significant change in the management of information and its channeling, not only for internal control (mainly associated with implementation times), but also for institutional communication work.

During the interview with the head of BA Obras, it was possible to identify a high level of maturity with respect to the team behind the project. It is a small work team that has extensive technical skills and is very aware of the open government project, which has clear guidelines for work, responsibility and action, and where actions are coordinated within the greater environment—the "Open Government Ecosystem." The BA Obras development process has been planned based on the identification, analysis and release of data in structured formats, which allowed the initial development of the web platform, as well as the promotion of the tool and the formation of initiatives for participatory feedback, allowing citizen oversight and promoting continuous improvement.

Additionally, the head of BA Obras recognized a constant and determined political support at the highest level as a characteristic element of the Open Government Ecosystem in general, and of the design and implementation of BA Obras in particular, which was of special relevance given the ambitious plan to promote transparency of public projects.

With respect to the level of institutionalization and external interaction, a key success factor identified is that, thanks to the initiative's web development and standardization, progress has been made in replicating the initiative elsewhere in the region, a strategy that has been promoted and supported by entities such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).³⁰ The BA Obras Platform is an open-source web platform, which is offered free of charge on its website. Any government can use this code. Additionally, as part of the work to support the replication of this initiative, the team designed a booklet on the application of the code and maintains constant contact with the various platforms (regional and international) that exist to promote these initiatives.

As of the date of this report, and according to information on the BA Obras website, in addition to the city of Buenos Aires (which has information on 1,117 published projects) there are seven governments in Latin America that have implemented the BA Obras code, with published information on almost 4,800 public works from 3 countries.

- Bahía Blanca³¹ (Argentina), with information on 893 projects;
- Teresihna³² (Brazil), with information on 848 projects;
- Olavarria³³ (Argentina), with information on 707 projects;
- Vicente López³⁴ (Argentina), with information on 468 projects.
- Pergamino³⁵ (Argentina), with information on 419 projects;

³⁰ <https://code.iadb.org/es/herramientas/ba-obras>

³¹ <https://obras.bahia.gob.ar/#/home>

³² <http://obras.pmt.pi.gov.br/>

³³ <https://gobiernoabierto.olavarria.gov.ar/transparencia/olavarria-obras/>

³⁴ <https://obras.vicentelopez.gov.ar/home.html>

³⁵ <http://obras.pergamino.gob.ar/dist/demo-home.html>

- Veracruz, Veracruz³⁶ (Mexico), with information on 191 projects;
- San Pedro Garza García,³⁷ Nuevo León (Mexico), with information on 155 projects.

Furthermore, according to information provided by the interviewee, the government of São Paulo, Brazil explored the possibility of applying this code, but dropped it.³⁸ The government of the City of Quito, Ecuador also made some progress in the implementation of the code, but no further developments were made. The City of Bogotá, Colombia has also implemented the platform, but it is currently only used internally.

The Bogotá case illustrates that the replication of this platform in other local governments may not necessarily be accompanied by openness based on transparency or citizen participation (since in the aforementioned case, it is used for management and control at the internal level); it may remain fundamentally a platform used as a technological government solution. The participatory model of BA Obras should therefore be considered limited to the original context of this experience, which, in view of its replication, is possibly a weakness of its design in the participatory dimension.

In fact, this issue is made evident in key documents, since the Guide which offered to implement BA Obras³⁹—although it is understood that it is a reference to openness and can allow processes of accountability with collaboration — does not link the technological platform and its implementation with the experiential participatory dimension of it, that is, it does not indicate how and when a combined use of citizen participation strategies can be made with the support of this platform. Nor does it indicate or offer any cases (either its own or those of third parties) in this regard. It could be assumed that this gap is due to the fact that different participatory models can be designed in each local government or city, linked to the use of the technological platform.

Finally, the BA Obras team has a good relationship with national and regional CSOs for transparency, access to information and open data. Within the framework of future actions, and given the need to improve knowledge about the impact of the projects on people's lives, the team is currently working with some CSOs to generate relevant knowledge linked to the end of a project, such as the impacts of public works (and of BA Obras as a platform of openness) on the improvement of the living conditions of the people of Buenos Aires.


³⁶ <http://gobiernoabierto.veracruzmunicipio.gob.mx/ver-obras/>

³⁷ <https://obras.sanpedro.gob.mx/>

³⁸ Currently, the city is operating "Cuidando do meu Bairro" (see case in this report).

³⁹ http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/sites/qcaba/files/guia_para_replicar_ba_obras_en_tu_ciudad_1.pdf

Table 5 BA Obras: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Author's elaboration.

Symbology: ✓ Accomplished ✗ Not accomplished 🔍 Missing information or analysis ⌚ To be determined

Case study: Tianguis Digital - Ecobici

Country (period) and organization responsible

Mexico City, Mexico (2018 —) Digital Agency for Public Innovation

Description, origins and development

Tianguis Digital (TD) is a strategy and digital platform that seeks to transform the way the government and the municipalities of Mexico City make purchases. This strategy is part of the actions carried out by the Digital Agency for Public Innovation (ADIP), whose responsibility is to lead, design and monitor the implementation of policies for data management, open government, digital government, technological governance and governance of technological infrastructure in Mexico City.

In Mexico City, public procurement and contracting have historically been characterized by a large degree of bureaucracy and slow proceedings, and where the City Government and Mayor's offices work under a logic of silence, with no communication or coordination. Through the use and development of the platform, the aim is to manage information properly and promote transparency, expediting or eliminating many internal procedures that slow down processes and encourage corruption. The objective is for Tianguis Digital to also reach the municipal governments of Mexico City, and not only the capital's government, opening key processes to citizen participation.

The word "tianguis" comes from the Aztec language (*Náhuatl*) and it means "market." Central to this strategy is the digital platform of the same name, which seeks to provide the Mexico City Public Administration with a new set of tools to plan, conduct and monitor public procurement procedures, in an open and efficient manner, to ensure that the resources allocated are properly invested, in order to expedite the process of public procurement. Among these are tools to open up participation in public procurement processes. As a transformation strategy, *Tianguis Digital* includes the following characteristics:

- Modular strategy;
- Coverage of the entire procurement cycle;
- Transactional; the platform will promote interaction between officials, suppliers and citizens and encourage completion of all procedures via the platform;
- Interoperable between modules and other procurement platforms, such as *Compranet*;
- Open and transparent, with access to all the information and databases regarding the process and receptive to citizen participation and social control processes.

This platform comprises several different modules:

- Business opportunities;
- Registry of Suppliers;
- Framework Contracts;
- Open contracting.

These modules will be put into operation incrementally during the first three years of the 2018-2024 Administration. These modules will offer various better ways for Mexico City to purchase goods and services and for more people, companies and organizations to participate in the different stages of public procurement.

As noted, Tianguis Digital is more than a modular technological solution or the use of ICT for a more efficient and transparent digital government. According to an interview with Rafael García Aceves, the purpose of the initiative as a whole is to reform the public procurement system in Mexico City, where the platform is the most visible technological component, but not the only one. The initiative goes further, to include institutional redesign and changing incentives, rules, weights and counterweights within the public procurement system, which requires openness to participation.

For this purpose, work has been carried out on redesigning (institutional reengineering), reviewing processes, identifying responsible parties and needs for regulatory reform, and identifying relevant projects where participatory and open processes can be incorporated. Regarding regulation, García Aceves highlights the necessary legal accompaniment of the innovation processes:

"...if we introduce a technology or a good practice, we think at the same time of having sufficient legal support or coverage for its application. Many times, a platform is created, where politicians are willing to release information on contracts, but without legal or institutional support. And once the pressure is over, or the government changes, the politicians simply stop publishing contracts." (García Aceves, 2020)

The work began strongly with the formation of a new government team in 2018. TD was formally presented on February 11, 2019, by the Head of Government, Claudia Sheinbaum, with the opening of the first two modules: Business Opportunities and the Registry of Suppliers.

The Registry of Suppliers module was the first component developed by TD. The driving team identified an affordable opportunity to involve participants in public procurement processes in a faster and more agile way. With this, the Registry of Suppliers was renewed, and at the time of this study, there were almost 6,500 active companies in it.⁴⁰ This was a non-innovative advance which aimed to integrate information into a single system from several sources, and therefore to provide a system in which to record all public procurement processes.

The Business Opportunities module provides notices of public contracts and the terms and conditions of tenders, providing the basis for minimum public information in terms of transparency and under international OCDS standards.

Nonetheless, it is the dimension of openness and participation within Tianguis Digital that this research aims to incorporate. To this end, we discuss below the work of ADIP's Strategic Project Support Area as well as the renovation and expansion of Mexico City's public bicycle rental system (Ecobici), which began in 2019. This process sought, through the use of the Multi-Stakeholder dialogue (MSD) tool, to bring together relevant stakeholders in order to improve levels of trust between different actors, share information and institutional knowledge, and generate relevant solutions and good practices. These are mechanisms for early involvement of suppliers that were complemented by a market survey.

According to García-Aceves, there is an area of Tianguis Digital to support strategic contracting projects, where important procurement or public contracting projects for the city are identified and supported. These projects receive a higher level of public and media attention and they

⁴⁰ <https://datos.cdmx.gob.mx/explore/dataset/tabla-padron-de-proveedores-vigente-sheet1/table/?sort=rfc>

provide an opportunity to propose public procurement processes that differ from "business as usual" (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

Ecobici was a pioneering bicycle sharing system and it is currently the largest by size in Latin America. In 2009, in the context of an emerging initial market, with only two bidding companies, the contract was awarded to the company Clean Channel. After 10 years of operation, key advances have been made with Ecobici, in terms of mobility, emission reduction and improved user health. However, after ten years, the bicycle's are nearing the end of their life cycle and it is necessary to renew the system and enlarge it, in a different market, where there are already more companies offering different solutions, technological and technical characteristics and business models. In other words, after ten years of successful implementation, an opportunity arose to review and redesign the current Ecobici System contracting model, so as to ensure the future operation and growth of this public service, with a projected minimum expansion to 750 stations and 10,000 bicycles under optimal conditions by 2024, compared to the current system's 6,500 bicycles and 480 service stations.

Within this context and priorities, the support area decided to open this process in the initial planning stage, a phase that is usually hermetic and closed to any external influence. This part of the process was opened by holding a public event. It should be noted that this exercise was designed in accordance with the best practices in the field. Its development was framed within the activities carried out by the Ministry of Mobility (SEMOVI) and the ADIP Agency within Lift, a technical support program for the design of Open Contracting projects and reforms, led by the international organization Open Contracting Partnership (OCP).

The objectives of this launch were to present the idea of a renovation and expansion project for the Ecobici System in an open event, inviting potential interested companies to attend and to propose their products with their specific features. In an open process, the market participants were asked what they had, what each company offered, the durability of their product, and what business model they wanted to propose. All of this was done through an open survey.

In October 2019, the government presented the project to the public. They provided information about the status and current market value of Ecobici and extended an invitation to prospective vendors to participate. The call was issued in December and was open for over 30 days. In order to increase the transparency of this initial process, a public report was prepared on the findings of the study, which provided an assessment of the information that could be considered proprietary, so as not to violate the conditions of competition.⁴¹

⁴¹ Press release here: <https://www.tianquisdigital.cdmx.gob.mx/ecobici/> Special project microsite.



Tianguis Digital/Ecobici Experience



Figure 7 Tianguis Digital – Ecobici Experience as a public purchasing tool.

There was a very good public response to this transparency exercise, as it showed the objectivity and openness of the process. Seven complete proposals were obtained from a total of nine interested companies, all with management experience and the capacity to bid. All the companies shared valuable information regarding their experience in the operation of this type of service, in terms of infrastructure, equipment (technical characteristics of the bicycles, anchoring points, recharging points) and services offered by each company. They also provided information regarding the operating model and the implementation of the system, indicating in each case their ability to coordinate with the previous service⁴² (SEMOVI, 2020).

Results and success factors

Positive results have been obtained by the work of the Tianguis Digital team, which has had repercussions within the Mexico City government. For example, the Ministry of Mobility of Mexico City asked ADIP for support in two more procurement processes: the acquisition of radar⁴³ and the vehicle towing service (Garcia Aceves, 2020). This shows that for some key areas of government, it is becoming increasingly important to rethink and open up public procurement processes.

Positive results have been identified in terms of public attitudes. Tianguis Digital has been associated with the beginning of a cultural change in public procurement. According to García Aceves, the public perception of the effort thus far is positive. The media coverage of the changes has been very positive, as in the case of Ecobici, where the government was seen to be involved in innovation. However, it is also necessary to point out that sometimes good actions do not generate good news: "When the good news is that there is no news—no news is good news" (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

⁴² https://tianguisdigital.cdmx.gob.mx/ecobici/docs/ecobici_reporte.pdf

⁴³ <https://www.tianguisdigital.cdmx.gob.mx/proveedores/micalle>

For example, in the case of opening up the planning process with Ecobici, the company Clean Channel, which had previously been awarded the concession, initially understood that its involvement was being threatened by allowing this process to be opened up, and mobilized its public relations capabilities. However, they “quickly understood that it was not a matter of excluding them from the process, but of opening it up and making it more transparent and competitive.” (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

One issue that demonstrated effective change management by the leadership team is the work developed with other agencies on regulatory improvement initiatives. In Garcia Aceves' opinion, it has been necessary to make great efforts at the internal level, in search of unnecessarily complex or redundant procedures, where the search for consensus and the negotiation between city government agencies has been perhaps the most difficult of all the steps. This is because many stakeholders within the government continue to work under the prevailing traditional historical logics, where they do not wish to share power, information or control over procurement processes, partly because it is their responsibility, and partly because of administrative inflexibility and internal power logics. Administrative units act as airtight entities (silos), only interacting in the internal purchasing process. They do not see the bigger picture and are not willing to contribute to a whole, to be audited in the face of a new, more open, transparent and efficient system. Fortunately, there are also important progressive changes in such issues (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

In Garcia Aceves' opinion, one of the triggers for the progress and success of Tianguis Digital and its opening strategy has been a noisy and ongoing citizen demand for better, more efficient and transparent public procurement, an issue that was often touched upon in electoral campaigns, during which all large contracts were under scrutiny. This prompted the current head of government to adopt in the campaign certain political commitments directly associated with this work (Garcia Aceves, 2020). The public pressure was a great incentive to maintain the political will to assume these commitments. The political commitment, therefore, does not exist by itself, but, rather, is due — and continues to be subject to — this citizen pressure.

For example, Garcia Aceves indicates that recently CSOs have raised their voices about the need to access contract information associated with COVID-19, and the issue (of contracting and procurement) has returned to the press agenda. In his opinion, the CSOs must articulate a clear voice to obtain a political reaction that has the support of a capable technical team, with leadership that will ensure action and avoid “political locks.” (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

Also highlighted as a success factor is the multidisciplinary team, as well as its level of skill and conviction regarding the agenda in question, with high technical capabilities and motivation to promote change. Leadership has been crucial at times when there have been tensions with other areas within the government. Tianguis Digital's modular design has enabled clear strategy planning. A noteworthy issue is related to the political leadership and the quality of the technical teams. In Garcia Aceves' opinion, when you have good political leadership you have technical teams that perform optimally, because politicians know how to listen, stick to a technical agenda and, if necessary, take risks, be receptive to civil society and to the needs of the work teams and their proposals (Garcia Aceves, 2020), while other more authoritarian or hierarchical types of leadership limit these capacities. In the past, unresponsive political leaders prevented collaboration and monopolized the media and the headlines.


Another crucial success factor is the recognition of the very important support from and collaboration with the vibrant international community, which has operated at different, mainly technical, levels. The pro-transparency and open data CSO community has supported these processes and has assumed the role of data journalists, offering their support and feedback.

Garcia Aceves considers it an advantage that he has previously been collaborating with Mexican CSOs in this area.

According to Garcia Aceves, part of the strategy for the future will be to incorporate a specialized open purchasing unit, to ask the relevant questions about which markets we are operating in and to reduce information imbalances. By reducing these asymmetries and with open and transparent processes, procurement processes can be better designed (Garcia Aceves, 2020).

This project is still in its early stages, and hopefully it will attract the attention of other officials in Mexico City, as it did the Secretary of Security for the acquisition of the radars.

Table 6 Tianguis Digital (Ecobici experience): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚	

Source: Own elaboration.

Symbology: ✓ Accomplished ✗ Not accomplished 🔍 Missing information or analysis ⌚ To be determined

Case study: Audiencias Públicas

Country (period) and organization responsible

Paraguay (2015 –) General Public Procurement Office

Description, origins and development

This initiative consists of the incorporation of a participative space for consultation in the Paraguayan procurement process. Specifically, the *Audiencias Públicas* (public hearings) provide the opportunity to request more information on the tender to be conducted, and even to submit suggestions.

The objective is to inform and explain the results of the process in terms of works carried out, investments, funds received, expenses, tenders, and other types of information that will allow citizens to evaluate the procurement and public contracting process. Everyone involved in the system, and citizens in general, can find out in detail everything that a given State entity buys, in a simple, clear and user-friendly way. The underlying assumption is that, by having the information available in a clear and straightforward manner, they can participate and generate the necessary social control to give greater credibility to the public contracting system and fight corruption.

The hearings are convened by the National Department of Public Procurement (DNCP)⁴⁴ and their progress is subsequently recorded in an official report. These reports include all consultations made during the hearings and the responses of the authorities, which in principle is a great step forward for transparency in the discussion and debate on issues included in the public procurement process.

Under this participatory model, citizens are also able to submit complaints through the DNCP website,⁴⁵ specifying the corresponding entity and person involved, and follow up on their complaint as it is dealt with by the authorities.

Resolution No. 813/2011 of the DNCP dated 27 April 2011 established the new procedure for holding public hearings,⁴⁶ according to which the terms and conditions of the public procurement law would be submitted "in order to guarantee a public, transparent and consultative procedure to discuss the technical and formal aspects of the terms and conditions, in order to allow and promote effective participation by citizens and interested groups."⁴⁷ The purpose of Resolution No. 813 is to regulate the mechanism for holding public hearings, including the principles that govern and guide it, highlighting the consultative value of the "opinions, suggestions and/or proposals of the participants" which are not binding for possible decisions or modifications that may or may not be taken into account by the supplier for the final drafting of the specifications.

The call for a public hearing prior to a public procurement process is optional for the applicant or institution interested in initiating a bidding process. However, according to the regulations established for this participation mechanism, the DNCP may recommend that the bidders submit to public hearings "...certain contracting processes, considering their high complexity, size, importance or social character". The DNCP supports the invitation to participate in public

⁴⁴ <https://www.contrataciones.gov.py/buscador/audiencias.html>

⁴⁵ https://www.contrataciones.gov.py/stje-cliente/public/investigaciones/escrito_de_denuncia_edit.htm

⁴⁶ Public Hearings in Public Contracting. Interview with Iván Lezcano from the DNCP, held on August 31, 2018. Reference in Cruz-Rubio & García-Ascolani (2019)

⁴⁷ According to the wording of the explanatory statement of the legal framework mentioned.

hearings, but each institution is responsible for the procurement process, through its procurement operating unit.

According to the Latinno Project, this democratic innovation is based on mechanisms of deliberation and electronic participation for public accountability.⁴⁸ Public hearings are designed as spaces for information and deliberation in public procurement, as a means to prevent waste and corruption in this sector. Public hearings are regulated by law and also exist at the municipal level.

The National Department of Public Contracting (DNCP) has the mission of regulating, ensuring transparency of and optimizing the Public Procurement System and supporting all the stakeholders in the country. In this context, the model of citizen participation that it implements includes the informative, consultative and active types of participation, but only in the aspects of the contracting process that occur within the hearings. The mechanisms or tools that the DNCP implements to generate participation include the following (Aguero-Monello, 2020):

- Public hearings, in which a given party that intends to carry out a purchase or contract provides the draft of the Terms and Conditions or Terms of Reference for consideration by potential bidders and citizens in general, in order to discuss it and hear recommendations or suggestions for improvement before the call for tenders. These hearings are held on the DNCP premises, and DNCP acts as the moderator of the session. Documents relating to the hearings are also uploaded and published on the DNCP website.
- Market Information Request hearings conducted by the DNCP to consult the market and analyze the feasibility of a possible tender for a specific good or service.
- Interinstitutional or Union work-tables are generated from the signing of Agreements for a specific objective, in areas related to or affecting the public procurement process.

The DNCP indicates that, in addition to these actions, training is periodically provided to stakeholders and the general public in all areas related to the public procurement process. Information on the public procurement process is also made available through web pages, with the SIE (Statistical Information System); the quecompramos.gov.py portal; the Open Data Portal; and the Contract Monitoring System (Aguero-Monello, 2020).

Therefore, it is a set of mechanisms through which key processes related to public procurement are opened, and where public hearings are part of the participatory strategy that does not exhaust all the initiatives and advances.

It should be noted that, in the area of public procurement, Paraguay has advanced towards a model of transparency based on open procurement standards and the use of open data. This has allowed for significant savings in the public budget (OGP Open Government Partnership, 2018), and, at the same time, has given tools to journalists and CSOs to detect contracts with unjustified excess costs (OCP Open Contracting Partnership, 2017), many of which were featured in the press.

⁴⁸ Source: Pogrebinski, Thamy. (2017). <https://www.latinno.net/es/case/16031>



Public Hearings (Paraguay)



Figure 8 Public hearings (Paraguay) as a tool for public procurement.

Results and success factors

No management reports have been found for this participatory and social control mechanism; however, the Public Hearings portal provides information on ongoing and completed hearings. As of June 2020, this portal contains 46 records of public hearings held since October 2015 by around 15 government entities. Each of these records contains a compressed file that includes documentation of the public hearing and the report of the process in question with the questions, consultations and their answers by the authorities.

The promotion of these participation spaces by the DNCP and the opening of the participating public companies has a technical and regulatory motivation, namely, to achieve successful contracting practices with the market. However, there have been cases of its use by other sectors of society, especially those with an academic or social purpose, to interact in the negotiation with representatives of the State and to determine the community impact of possible agreements. A case worth mentioning, for example was the public hearing for the execution of construction to widen and deepen the intake channel of the Pilcomayo River in 2017⁴⁹, which was also attended by the inhabitants of the affected areas.⁵⁰

According to an inquiry made to DNCP officials in a previous study (Cruz-Rubio & García-Ascolani, 2019), no evaluation is made of how this innovation improves the management of contracting through the use of metrics. However, the mechanism is considered effective at improving the proper management of contracting processes, as this is something that is assessed by each public institution that invites tenders.

What could be indicated from the DNCP is that the convening institutions have generally stressed that these participation processes are positive, in the case they are necessary for a technical reason, that is, there is a prior explanation to the market, and they prevent inadequate specifications, a common cause of unsuccessful contracting processes. The public hearings

⁴⁹https://www.contrataciones.gov.py/buscador/audiencias.html?nombre_licitacion=pilcomayo&estado=&order=&page=1

⁵⁰ This is a procurement process that has operated in several previous phases.







also help prevent bidding processes in which the bidder's technical experts lack the necessary knowledge of the market and so no bids are tendered. It is advisable to consult specific cases with certain companies or to seek to define a set of criteria to determine when to call a hearing and when to work openly with the market.

In conclusion, improving the procurement specifications and requirements through public hearings, or through previous work with the market, is a responsibility of the entities calling for tenders. The criteria for their implementation (or not) are optional for the entities calling for tenders, with the exception -usually depending on the experience in the country- of the standard specifications for goods' insurance, air transport services or cleaning services. When there is going to be an update of the standard specifications, public hearings are usually called, although they are not legally required. There are no official criteria as to when public hearings should be held. Rather, this power is left to the discretion of the entities that call for bids, which is one of the greatest weaknesses of public hearings as a participatory institutional design.

Public hearings have demonstrated their effectiveness as a means to increase citizen participation in public procurement and contracting processes in a simple and basic way. This is a consolidated, but not generalized, institutional design that has been operating in Paraguay for several years now. These designs allow for openness at the consultative and propositional level, of a non-binding nature, and they are complemented by the use of other systems and platforms for access to information and transparency. There is no research available as to whether and how these mechanisms have slowed down corruption processes, saved public money or increased public integrity. Nor is it known whether these mechanisms have been socially accepted and fully embraced. Other countries in the region use this participative approach, although it is not necessarily for public procurement and contracting processes. Nevertheless, the existence of hearings has allowed (in a limited way, rather than organically) for citizen involvement in these processes.

Regarding the success factors, the level of institutionalization dimension was the most important. The legal force linked to the promotion of the hearings by the DNCP is what has allowed progress in this participatory approach. This speaks to the leadership demonstrated by the DNCP team that has sought to implement an agenda of openness not only based on greater transparency, even though the participatory mechanisms are considered to be of lesser importance. It is always up to the entities involved to convene a hearing or not, which means that it is still possible to operate public procurement or contracting processes in the absence of such mechanisms, with their respective lack of transparency.

Table 7 DNCP Public Hearings (Paraguay): Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
					

Source: Author's elaboration.

Symbology:  Accomplished  Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis  To be determined

Case study: Comisiones de Veeduría Ciudadana

Country (period) and organization responsible

Dominican Republic (2013 —) General Department of Public Procurement.

Description, origins and development

For more than a decade, the Dominican Republic has been implementing different institutional designs to incorporate effective participatory processes for citizen oversight of public procurement and contracting. Although civil society organizations in the country have given due importance to systematic citizen oversight of public procurement, the government has sought to promote it in various ways and through the use of different mechanisms, such as specific training on public procurement or unrestricted access for CSOs to the Portal with information on the procedures, from planning to awarding contracts.

Procurement systems can fall prey to client-based processes or corruption. For this reason, since the origin of Comisiones de Veeduría Ciudadana, the objective has been to provide a different approach to the public procurement process and to find more effective ways to consistently and robustly involve citizens and civil society in these processes. The initial goal was to help people understand what the public procurement system is and how it works. The vision or rationale associated with the promotion of these initiatives has been to understand citizen participation not only as a means for citizen control or monitoring of what the state buys or contracts, but also as a privileged instrument to enhance the role of public procurement as an agent of development, in its largest sense.

The Dominican experience with citizen participation in public procurement began in 2009 with the Public Contracting Observatory, whose objective was basically to form an alliance of institutions to monitor public contracting and prepare a report or assessment of the state of the country's public contracting system at that time. This initial effort was stopped during the preparation of the report (Grupo Gestión Moderna, 2009), as there is no evidence of further activity after this first effort.

In 2010, the Participatory Anticorruption Initiative (IPAC) was launched with the aim of creating an open government strategy focused on strengthening efforts to fight corruption and promote transparency. As part of the IPAC, a Citizen Observatory was created to follow up on the recommendations and commitments created by each of the roundtables from that initiative. One of those roundtables was focused on public procurement and contracting. That year, the Dominican Republic was in the middle of an electoral process and the unfinished recommendations remained unaddressed.

Subsequently, between 2012 and 2014, the General Department of Public Contracting (DGCP) launched another participatory institutional design for the medium and long term. This effort was much more ambitious and produced the Social Observatory for Public Procurement (OSCP), an initiative that emerged from the government and was included in the anti-corruption agenda of the then presidential candidate Danilo Medina, who signed the "Protocol for Transparency and Institutionality in the Dominican Republic" with members of civil society.

The objective of the OSCP was to strengthen strategic cooperation between the General Directorate of Public Procurement and the signatory CSOs, in an effort to increase the levels of transparency and efficiency of the national public procurement and contracting system, promoting citizen participation so that the government offers quality public services, in a timely manner and at the lowest price. This observatory originally proposed the development of several activities, among which were the creation of a national civil society organization to regulate the OSCP and form collaboration networks, the elaboration of a map of risks related

to public contracting, the production of periodic reports, the establishment of integrity pacts, the creation of two State-civil society dialogue tables and a technical table of experts, as well as coordination of the OSCP with the emerging Citizen Oversight Committees (DGCP, General Department of Public Procurement, 2013). The aim was to provide mechanisms and conditions for obtaining and sharing information and knowledge in order to move towards a more open and responsive procurement system.

As leader of the initiative, the DGCP team invested a lot of effort in designing, developing, meeting and networking with stakeholders and establishing activities to promote OSCP. However, there was distrust not only at the institutional level, but also from the social organizations that were being recruited to lead these processes. The government made an effort to recruit even at the territorial level where many meetings were held, where they noticed a lot of interest in participating. However, it was not clear how to articulate these local ambitions. The DGCP decided to give space to the CSO that led the observatory at that time, but this organization started to be fully focused on monitoring the electoral process and could not continue leading the OSCP. Additionally, lack of resources, and the impossibility of organizing other the provision of resources from other sources, ended up making the Observatory inactive.

The DGCP tried to find concrete solutions and proposed the creation of a trust fund for this purpose, but the CSO and the other organizations involved were also involved in the electoral process and eventually lost interest in the OSCP. As a result, the competing priorities of the CSOs in the country, with limited capacity for involvement given their funding models and strategies, and the change of government, led to a loss of interest in the development and leadership of the OSCP (Guzmán, 2020).

Almost simultaneously with the initial work to set up OSCP, the *Comisiones de Veeduría Ciudadana* (Citizen Oversight Committees, CVC) began their work in the Dominican Republic in June 2013 as a new proposal for the institutional design of citizen control of public procurement. The CVCs are a tool or mechanism for supervising public spending. Originally, the initiative was a government effort to open up procurement to limited citizen participation (available only to those who received a presidential invitation), where public institutions had the power to set up such CVCs.

The CVCs were sponsored by the Presidential Ministry, and, as a result enjoyed (and continue to enjoy at the time of writing) political support at the highest level. In addition, they have the technical support of the DGCP. The CVC sought to call the public's attention to the issue of public procurement, as the procurement system was not observed or monitored by anyone, nor did any outside party follow up on its processes.

Decree 188 was published in June 2014, defining the principles and general rules that would serve as guidelines for the Citizen Oversight Committees to observe, oversee and monitor the purchasing and contracting processes carried out by the institutions where they were integrated. This decree defines the CVCs as:

"...a mechanism of direct participation and social control, through which representatives of organized civil society follow up on the fulfillment of the obligations, commitments, competencies and functions of the public entities to which they are assigned, with the sole purpose of watching over and supervising the processes of procurement and contracting of works, goods, services and concessions executed" (Dominican Republic, 2014).

The CVCs comprise between five and seven people, ethically trustworthy citizens representing civil society, recognized as role models in their respective professional fields, who are invited

to participate by the President of the Republic (hence the limited nature of the participatory process).

The aim is for Citizen Oversight Committees and CVC participants to be independent and autonomous; therefore, their members should not have a dependent relationship with any public institution. The committees are civic, voluntary, proactive and *ad honorem* in nature and are guided by the principles of autonomy, responsibility, morality, good faith, objectivity, transparency, integrity, reserve and by other principles that may be established in their respective internal regulations. Their members are bound by a regime of incompatibilities.

The functions of the CVCs are:

- To supervise, follow up and monitor all purchasing and contracting processes of the institution to which it was assigned, guaranteeing unrestricted compliance with the Law;
- Receive reports, observations, complaints and suggestions from suppliers, citizens and organizations, collect indications of non-compliance with the law and/or acts of corruption related to the public procurement and contracting processes;
- Submit follow-up reports with observations, assessments and findings on the performance and management of the public procurement and contracting processes observed in the institution where they were assigned. These reports will be published on the institution's website, on the Dominican Procurement website, and by any other means considered by the oversight committee;
- Recognize and diffuse good practices carried out by State institutions, so that they may be replicated.

According to the director of the DGCP, the 24 CVCs constituted in 2014 supervised approximately 70% of the country's procurement budget, equivalent to \$67 billion RD (Guzmán, 2014). Despite these initial achievements, the work of the CVCs was questioned by Dominican CSOs who argued that the CVCs were not effective as citizen oversight agencies.⁵¹

Currently, the Presidential Ministry's web site provides information on the existence of a CVC in 23 Dominican ministries and institutions⁵² and offers a directory of the commissioners in each of these institutions, including their date of admission to the CVC, their contact address, telephone number and affiliated institution. However, it is worth noting that several of these institutions do not have recent updates, either on this website or on the respective websites of each institution, which suggests that some CVCs are currently inactive.

⁵¹ In this regard, the director of the Transparency and Government area, of the civic organization Participación Ciudadana, an expert in transparency in public administration, Carlos Pimentel Florenzán, indicated that just over two years after the establishment of the citizen oversight commissions they were still no reports of the results of the audited processes. For this reason, he understood that the CVCs were not very effective tools to monitor compliance with Law 340, on Purchases and Contracts. See <http://www.copymecon.com/creen-veedurias-no-han-contribuido-con-transparencia-estatal/>

⁵² The complete list is at <https://minpre.gob.do/sobre-nosotros/comisiones-de-veeduria/ministerio-de-la-presidencia/> (see right column)



Citizen Oversight Committees (CVC)



Figure 9 Citizen oversight committees (Dominican Republic) as a public procurement tool.

A recent case of the implementation of the CVCs that is worth mentioning is that, in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, the government decided to establish a special Citizen Oversight Committee, to coordinate its supervision processes and to carry out a focused transparency strategy⁵³ associated with electronic procurement of emergency purchases. In April 2020, President Medina signed Decree 145, which created the COVID-19 CVC, responsible for supervising, tracking and monitoring the procurement and contracting processes carried out under the emergency purchasing mechanism. The CVC includes a representative from the National Council of Private Enterprises (CONEP), one from the Dominican Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises (CODOPYME), one from the Catholic Church, another from the Evangelical Churches and a representative from the Dominican Newspaper Society.

Although this CVC is regulated by the same specific presidential decree as are others, in reality it is the same institutional design referred to above. According to Guzman, the members of this special CVC COVID-19 have a fairly high level of knowledge in procurement matters. With financial support from the EU, the CVC is able to hire qualified technicians selected by the commissioners to collaborate with the CVC in facilitating these processes (Guzman, 2020).

Emergency purchases are usually awarded through direct mechanisms, and have a structure that makes them more susceptible to corruption allegations (they are usually awarded without advertising or competition, in the rush to meet needs directly and quickly). In these contexts, purchases are made in the absence of supplier options, not based on price but on their speed of supply, and usually from entities closely linked to the government or known to it, which is a cause for concern. For this reason, it was necessary to ensure that emergency purchases did not hinder accessibility to the process. Even though it was an open format, there was only one interested entity and the awarding took place without delay due to the emergency conditions.

⁵³ This model provides concrete information and seeks to resolve specific doubts or respond to the needs of certain audiences. The information is released by the government or requested by the government and/or citizens. "This model is based on the idea that the government can suppress risks, solve specific problems of public interest, or promote structural reforms. Sometimes the problem could be the poor quality of the goods or services, and in others it could be the absence of reliable information that the citizens require to make decisions on a daily basis" (Cruz-Rubio C. N., 2014)

The criteria for emergency awarding by delivery time has proved to be very problematic, as many companies committed themselves to deadlines that they could not subsequently meet. In the end, the purchase was very expensive, with exorbitant upfront costs, and supplies were not obtained. (Guzmán, 2020).

With the use of the transactional portal it was possible for the COVID-19 CVC to follow up and after a five-day delay, the emergency orders were cancelled. In view of the crisis in the international markets for medical supplies regarding COVID-19 (of medicines, equipment and other health-related supplies) the DGCP articulated a strategy to promote a focused transparency process that has generated noteworthy results. It collaborated closely with the COVID-19 CVC and prepared a guide to establish the minimum requirements that each institution must take into account when calling for an emergency procedure.

A few days after being established by decree, the COVID-19 Citizen Oversight Committee issued a report indicating key aspects to be changed urgently⁵⁴ and also required that all documents be available (in sync with each phase of the process), and made a series of observations regarding the processes that have been used for the acquisition of supplies and medicines by government agencies. The committee's report included both positive and negative observations.

All this was managed from the transactional public procurement portal. Therefore, in Guzmán's opinion, without this portal this information exchange would have been impossible.

"Now we have been able to verify the power that information affords at the right time, especially in these cases of emergency, as well as the possibilities offered by electronic contracting for transparency, inclusion and multiple concurrence, even in such a critical situation. Although it was not designed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, the transactional portal was essential as a tool to facilitate the participation of multiple providers" (Guzmán, 2020).

At the close of 120 days of the declaration of emergency purchases, the nine institutions authorized to make emergency purchases posted their reports on the Transactional Portal for Public Purchases, where the full report of the Oversight Commission of the institutions and an analysis developed by the General Directorate of Public Procurement on the procedures and their results. The main achievements were the following:

- All emergency procedures were publicly called.
- Between 3 and 41 bidders participated per procedure, depending on whether it was from the health or food sector (for social assistance purposes).
- More than RD \$ 11 billion were awarded.
- Regarding gender and inclusion in public procurement, companies led by women presented 28% of offers and were awarded for an amount of RD \$ 2,628 million (US \$ 45 million), 22% of the total awarded;

⁵⁴ According to the statement, among the points to be corrected that are highlighted in this report are the following: There is still no uniform criteria for the shortened deadlines in the publications for submission of tenders; the information is not being uploaded in accordance with the schedule for each process. It was observed that in most of the 22 processes carried out from April 6 to date, the publication of the documents had not been completed on the established dates; in the final reports, most of the criteria for the selection of the awarded companies are not detailed. Among the important aspects are that the CVC recommended that the Government issue a statement to the procurement departments of these entities as soon as possible, strictly instructing them to use the procedure of posting the documentation supporting each step of the process on the procurement portal within the established time frame.

- The MIPYMES presented 48% of the bids and were awarded RD \$ 4.812 million, (US \$ 82 million), 41% of the total awarded.⁵⁵

Results and success factors

As an institutional design, the Citizen Oversight Committees are already part of the Dominican governmental and public fabric. Despite the fact that there is evidence that this is an effective initiative and that it has enjoyed continued support from institutions such as the Presidential Ministry and the DGCP, according to Guzmán, over the years some CVCs have worked quite well, while others have not. It is worth remembering that these are restricted participatory mechanisms and whose members are invited by the president and whose credibility is restricted, and which is based not so much on their knowledge or technical capacity, but on the reputation of its members.

Therefore, more detailed studies are needed of its operations and effects. This research has not found any reports that provide historical or comparative information regarding the performance of these oversight mechanisms as a whole, and although the web pages of the ministries and Dominican institutions have information on the proceedings and work of the CVCs, in many cases the information is outdated or vague or is not available.⁵⁶

At the time of the creation and initial push for the CVCs, there was no electronic public procurement platform (the transactional portal) and the inspection offices had to review a large number of physical documents. The oversight committees have clearly benefited from being to access the information contained in the transactional public procurement portal,⁵⁷ which was launched in 2017.

There is no evidence that this type of institutional design, restricted to reputational participation, is being used in other countries in the region. In many ways, CVCs share some elements with the Integrity Pact - Social Witness tool, as public oversight mechanisms, linked to experts or people with proven integrity.

On the other hand, although it was originally intended that CVCs operate in the Dominican Republic at the sub-national level, they have not done so. There were serious attempts to advance the CVC agenda at the sub-national level with the support of the Dominican Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU), but the tragic death of its director in December 2015 abruptly ended the project, and it was not taken up again by the following leadership.

With regard to the success factors, the lack of detailed information is a problem, which needs to be resolved in order to give an evidence-based account of the matters referred to here. Nevertheless, it can be said that the leadership team exhibits many of the characteristics indicating a high level of maturity, such as motivated work teams with a talent for advancing innovations, development of tasks based on realistic planning processes, and attention and support from the highest level of the government. The leadership teams of the DGCP and the Presidency also have demonstrated a capacity for resilience and a proactive attitude towards change, in order to maintain and persevere, through continuous work, the ongoing initiatives. However, some weaknesses are also evident regarding the distribution of burdens and benefits among government and non-government actors, and specifically the issue of financing and management of expectations among the participants.

⁵⁵ The complete analysis developed by the General Directorate of Public Procurement is available at: <https://www.dgcp.gob.do/covid-19/>







⁵⁶ See case <http://www.mopc.gob.do/nosotros/dependencias/comisi%C3%B3n-de-veedur%C3%ADa/>

⁵⁷ <https://comunidad.comprasdominicana.gob.do/STS/DGCP/Login.aspx>

In the case of the CVC of COVID-19, due to its results, and the integration of the members of the Commission and the leading role that the collapse of international markets had before, it could be spoken of a successful experience of participation in purchases public emergency, which deserves to be analyzed in its results and impacts in more depth.

Due to the level of institutionalization and external interaction, the initiatives promoted by the country, and specifically the CVCs, show a high level of responsiveness from the members of the institutions invited to participate as observers, even though this process is restricted, and it is currently up to the presidential administration to decide who will serve on these committees. It is understood that this is a delicate matter, as a means of ensuring the integrity of their work and their independence. There have also been effective strategies of focused transparency, associated with electronic procurement systems, that combined with the work of the CVCs, have generated noteworthy results in the face of emergency health situations. For example, in the case of the COVID-19 CVC, it is clear that participatory and open mechanisms are, in general, viable, relevant and effective in these contexts of uncertainty, urgency and global market saturation. Finally, it is evident that the DGCP's leadership team works closely with other international organizations, networks and platforms specialized in public procurement.

Table 8 Citizen oversight committees: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizen interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
 <p>The effectiveness and continuation of the CVCs has varied in each department.</p>	 <p>Access to the process is restricted to prominent members of society.</p>	 <p>The process has not been able to consolidate the involvement of CSOs</p>	 <p>Although subject to initial criticism from some CSOs</p>		

Source: Author's elaboration.

Symbology:  Accomplished  Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis  To be determined

Case study: Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas

Country (period) and organization responsible

Quito, Ecuador (2011 –) CONQUITO

Description, origins and development

The goal of the *Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas* (Inclusive Metropolitan Fairs) is to encourage the participation of artisanal, micro and small producers of goods and services in the hiring process carried out by the Metropolitan District Municipality of Quito (DMQ), Ecuador. These fairs are the main mechanism designed in the National Public Procurement System to carry out economic inclusion processes. These fairs are a mechanism for awarding public contracts to companies in this sector. The award criteria, therefore, are associated not with the logic of competition in the market, but with the logic of inclusion and participation.

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador establishes the characteristics of the development process in the country, stating that the economic system is social and based on solidarity, recognizing the human being as the subject and end. It also states that this economic system is based on solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity. Article 132 of the Organization Act on the People's Economy and Solidarity defines inclusive trade fairs as one of the measures for promoting this kind of economy at the national level through public procurement.

As of 2017, there were an estimated 7,300 legally recognized Popular Solidarity Economy (EPS) associations in Ecuador (CMQ Concejo Metropolitano de Quito, 2018). These inclusive fairs have been organized and promoted since 2011 by CONQUITO, the Metropolitan Economic Promotion Agency, from the government of the Quito Metropolitan District (DMQ). In the Municipality of the DMQ, the inclusive fairs are developed based on the INCOP Resolution N° 047-2011 that determines the need to promote the participation of artisans, micro and small producers in the municipal procurement. However, Metropolitan Ordinance No. 0539, issued in April 2014, in compliance with Article 133 of the Organic Law of Popular and Solidarity Economy, sought to promote this economy, clearly differentiating it from micro and medium businesses.

The CONQUITO website defines inclusive metropolitan fairs as

"a public procurement tool that facilitates the inclusion of community groups, individuals and actors of the Popular Solidarity Economy in the municipal public market as suppliers of goods and services, through a public award procedure, prioritizing the participation and qualification of people with special abilities, ethnic diversity and gender equity" (CONQUITO, 2020).

In the political arena, there was a debate on this issue among the responsible elected officials, as there was tension over how to move from one model of EPS promotion to another. Some wished to transition gradually, rather than immediately. There were technical challenges that made it difficult to increase EPS contracting from 1% to 10% of the budget in the Annual Procurement Plans, as planned, because, among other issues, there was no EPS supplier registry. A consensus was sought between CMQ councilors and CONQUITO officials about how to do this. In the end, it was decided to reach the 10% figure incrementally, rather than immediately without clear technical guidelines.

The economic sectors and areas of contracting that are promoted by these inclusive fairs are varied, and include services such as gardening, maintenance and cleaning, fumigation, food and catering, minor construction work, events (cultural, artistic, theatrical), waste collection, transport, reforestation, as well as the sale and supply of diverse materials (cleaning supplies

and materials, printing and advertising, office supplies, automotive parts, textiles and work clothes, uniforms, etc.)

According to CONQUITO, the activities carried out to implement the Inclusive Metropolitan Fairs are focused on the analysis of the Annual Contracting Plans (PACS) of the municipal institutions, in order to determine the goods and services subject to inclusive contracting processes. Activities also include carrying out preliminary training for the participants in the fairs, especially in their methodology, the workshops with officials from municipal departments, with artisans, micro-enterprises, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders in the Popular Solidarity Economy, in order to provide information on the requirements for participation and to train the invited suppliers in how to access the public procurement market through the process of inclusive fairs and, finally, to resolve any doubts through consultations and tutorials.



Ferias Inclusivas (Quito)



Figure 8- Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas Quito (Ecuador) as a tool for public procurement.

Results and success factors

During the Inclusive Public Procurement Fairs, offers are delivered by the small business owners to the municipal entities in accordance with the corresponding productive sector. An evaluation of offers and the awarding of contracts for each and every one of the processes is monitored and a report on the results of the fairs is prepared.

Over the years, the Inclusive Metropolitan Fairs have yielded results, generating collaborative synergies between CONQUITO and the different EPS associations. It is estimated that between 8-10 inclusive fairs were held every year, but mainly as a means of giving visibility to a sector in need of encouragement and support. This participatory mechanism has been the subject of case studies and research in other parts of the country and has achieved considerable levels of social acceptance and effectiveness (Calderón Espíñales, 2018; Tapias Arias, 2014).

The progress of this tool suffered a major setback. One of the turning points in its development was, paradoxically, the launch of a public information system at the national level, which offered

advantages in terms of transparency and which, at the same time, served as a direct allocation system (Albuja, 2020), as opposed to serving the awarding function of the fairs: namely, the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog under the responsibility of the SERCOP. Resolution No. RE-SERCOP-2015-000025, adopted on February 6, 2015, issued the Regulations for Inclusive Fairs and the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog, which "is a direct procurement system that guarantees the inclusion and exclusive participation of actors in the Popular Solidarity Economy, including micro and small suppliers; suppliers belonging to vulnerable groups; or groups meriting priority attention, which allows contracting parties to expedite, simplify and make transparent their exclusively regulated procurement of goods and services." This new tool changed policy to the disadvantage of participatory models based on proximity.

A new system thus came into effect at the beginning of 2015. The system of awarding contracts encouraged by the inclusive metropolitan fairs was succeeded by that of direct awards, which proposed and facilitated this system. The aim was not to provide complementary tools, but, rather, to commit to a new model. This new public procurement system based on the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog was aimed at progressively replacing the regulated sectors of the procurement process.

According to Javier Albuja, CONQUITO's project coordinator, the incorporation of the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog had its positive aspects, but also its negatives. The positive factor is that any institution can now access this information quickly, in order to analyze the offer and choose EPS suppliers. With this tool, procurements are distributed among EPS suppliers using the direct contracting system. This explains the increase in the percentage of the budget allocated for this purpose, which is ultimately positive for the model. But the negative aspect is that with the implementation of this system the new EPS initiatives declined in importance, including the inclusive fairs, which had been considered a powerful model to promote EPS (Albuja, 2020).

The Inclusive Fairs as an instrument to promote public procurement to members of the Popular Solidarity Economy (EPS, has lost effectiveness due to the emergence of the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog (CDI). For this reason, contracting under this regime suffered a slower growth in 2015 than in 2014; due to the creation of new sectors cataloged in the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog tool in 2016 and 2017, there has been a significant decrease in its use as an inclusive purchasing system; however, this phenomenon has also helped municipal entities target their procurements to EPS actors, supported by the CDI tool.

Fairs began to decrease despite being considered a strategic tool to advance effective participation. In many ways, the launch of this Catalog generated competition between tools, causing users to prioritize among them such that the metropolitan inclusive fairs were overshadowed by the Catalog's direct awarding system.

In the city of Quito in 2015, 1.2% of the government's total annual procurement plan was allocated to the EPS; this number increased to 6.9% by 2017. This increase was largely due to the work of CONQUITO in this area, much of which was focused on implementing the Inclusive Metropolitan Fairs, but was also due to the use of the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog.

The work performed by CONQUITO with the support of the President of the Economic Development Commission has led to a significant growth in municipal public procurement through inclusive processes. The reduction in the number and use of inclusive fairs as a means of contracting is detailed in the 2017 CONQUITO accountability report (CONQUITO, 2018), and is described as follows:

"It should be noted that the participation of inclusive fairs has been reduced by the implementation of the Inclusive Dynamic Catalog. In 2017, contracting by Inclusive Dynamic

Catalog represented 95% and only 5% was done by inclusive fairs". (CMQ Quito Metropolitan Council, 2018).

CONQUITO's current concern and agenda seeks to identify innovations to help promote EPS, through the use of *hackathons*, the Innovation Lab, as well as various initiatives already underway.







It is important to note that in the face of the COVID-19 health crisis, for example, the issue of emergency procurement of products from the textile sector (masks, gown materials, etc.) was handled by CONQUITO. In states of emergency, procurement processes tend to leave aside planning and economic solidarity, given the urgency, the necessary volume and the types of certifications required, and where, for example, it would not be possible to ask EPS associations for the product without first obtaining the necessary qualifications, even though they met the formal specifications of the procurement process. As CONQUITO saw that these EPS companies could not participate in the process, it opted to consult the health standardization and certification institution, and with its permission facilitated the process to enable EPS to participate in the market in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, without requiring, but, rather, suggesting to the applicants that they open these processes to EPS. The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that it is necessary to develop individuals' skills and improve processes and the chain of suppliers and contacts, so that EPS providers can compete under better conditions, even in health emergency situations. (Albuja, 2020).

In terms of the initiative's effectiveness, we can conclude that the Inclusive Metropolitan Fairs were able to demonstrate their usefulness as a means of promoting the EPS model, and they managed to create relatively stable spaces for citizen participation in the awarding phase, which at the same time generated changes in behavior and greater citizen awareness. Although there is no evidence regarding the level of citizen interest and social acceptance, it can be assumed that these models have been positively received during their implementation. There are no known replication examples of this initiative or tool as it has been defined in the case of Quito. However, this is a national model which different local governments have been able to implement and adapt based on the particularities of their specific regulations.


Regarding the success factors, the role of institutions is emphasized, as well as their responsiveness. Albuja indicates that CONQUITO has committed itself to improving the public procurement process, to make it a means to increase people's well-being, to save money and to promote EPS. Opportunities are generated and many people take advantage of them, but not everyone does. Therefore, CONQUITO understands that training is key, which is why they have also invested in a very active and ambitious training program for EPS entrepreneurs. (Albuja, 2020)

Regarding the importance of political support, Albuja said that the law reform was a crucial element for the Inclusive Fairs, which is why the initial push was strongly focused at the highest level. He also pointed out that the political and technical processes need to be balanced in order to provide positive results. If you only consider the political variable, it is easy to make a mistake. If you focus only on the technical aspect, it can also lead to imbalances. An example was the negotiation mentioned above between the elected officials and CONQUITO where they agreed to progressively reach 10% of the Annual Recruitment Plan for EPS, increasing by at least one percentage point per year until achieving the 10% goal.

Table 9- Ferias Metropolitanas Inclusivas: Evaluation with respect to the proposed dimensions of success.

Effectiveness associated with relevant goals and values	Openness to participation in key processes	Changes in behavior	Citizenship interest and social acceptance	Replication of the initiative	Identifiable Success Factors
 Undermined by the introduction of a new inclusive procurement system				 The model is national in scope, the experience has been developed throughout the country, based on specific local regulations.	

Source: Own elaboration.

Symbology:  Accomplished  Not accomplished  Missing information or analysis  To be determined

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