

## **MÉXICO**

### **The Budget Transparency Portal**

#### **What did the commitment seek to achieve, and why is this important?**

Mexico set itself a challenge in its 2011 OGP action plan, to make sure its citizens could find out, as easily as possible, what happens to their tax money. This would involve the open, continuously-updated publication of information about the budget, including investments, public finance, transfers to states of federal assets, indicators and audits, as well as other financial information. In order to publish this information, and to make it as accessible as possible, the Mexican government worked to improve its Budgetary Transparency Portal.

The objective behind the Portal was to gather budget information in one place so that citizens could have access to expenditure information without visiting multiple sites: a "one stop shop" for budget information, so that both citizens and decision makers would have the necessary tools to monitor the use of public resources, improve their allocation and ultimately increase their social value.

The Portal is the first federal level institutional site that publishes the basic information about a federal program, allowing citizens to evaluate its progress - including quarterly updates about the money spent, external evaluations and a matrix showing progress towards planned and achieved goals.

#### **How did you go about implementing the commitment? Who were the key advocates both within and outside of government during the implementation phase?**

One of the main challenges of this initiative was to define the information that should be published and how it would be done. This is where the government called on citizens themselves to find out what information they wanted to see. Working with civil society organizations allowed the government to determine a list of minimum content to be included on the site.

Another important challenge was to make sure that the Budget Transparency Portal had a friendly and intuitive design, which allowed any citizen to adequately access and understand a large amount of technical information. In that sense, one of the most critical elements of the project was the design and publication of the new citizen's budget, introduced in 2013, which helps citizens understand the structure of Mexican budget.

**What were the key factors in allowing this effort to succeed? What are the emerging opportunities as a result?**

The successful implementation of the budget transparency commitment was possible only through close coordination with several areas of the Ministry of Finance for the collection and processing of the data. Since the data comes from so many different sources, the site's information is not found in a single system and is not fed by one administrative unit of the Ministry; instead it required integrating several internal systems.

In that sense, the greatest difficulty the project faced was making sure those in government who were responsible for all the different sets of relevant information understood the importance of publishing data in open, accessible formats that everyone could manipulate, reuse and disseminate.

**How have citizens benefitted from this reform? If possible, please include evidence of results or uptake, e.g. links to news coverage, quotes, and/or quantitative measures, such as web analytics.**

The transparency portal has received more than 200,000 unique visits since it was introduced. In 2012, it received the "Innovation Award for Transparency of Institutional Management Improvement", awarded by the World Bank and the Federal Institute of Information Access and Data Protection (IFAI).

The portal also played a significant role in other aspects of Mexico's OGP Extended Action Plan, which was based on requests and proposals from civil society. One of the outcomes of this was the publication of the matrix used by the government to measure the progress of all government initiatives, which is one of the most used sections of the Portal. It also included the publication of important macroeconomic information, which enabled citizens to have a more informed discussion with the government on the proposal and execution of the budget.

The budget information disclosed through the Portal helped increase Mexico's Open Budget Index score by nine points, which placed Mexico 23<sup>rd</sup> in the world for budget transparency.

The benefits of the budget transparency project have been far reaching in their impact. Firstly, it has contributed to improved decision-making in budgetary processes, the design and implementation of public policies and accountability for budgetary decisions.

Secondly, it has generated commitments from the Federal Public Administration to make progress on public projects and initiatives which have fallen behind. Once progress on government projects is made public, the pressure is on to achieve,

since citizens can scrutinize resources and complain when they see poorly-managed resources.

Finally, the publication of budget information in a clear, simple, timely and accurate way can reduce uncertainty. It gives people more and better understanding of government decisions, generating confidence and legitimacy in national leaders and public servants.

**What did NOT go as planned, and what did you learn from this? What is the unfinished business, e.g. how might you take this work forward in your next OGP action plan?**

One of the most difficult issues has been widening the group of citizens who access and use the newly available budget information. The government is looking at redesigning the online tools used to access budget information so that they are more engaging and interesting to ordinary citizens. With this in mind, the Ministry of Finance is currently working on a better design and is developing applications that will allow citizens to monitor public investment in infrastructure, so they can generate their own reports and provide feedback directly to the government.