

ARTICLES AND CASE STUDIES OF OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN PARAGUAY

1) *THE DAILY HEROES THAT BUILD AN OPEN GOVERNMENT*

<http://www.gobiernoabierto.gov.py/articulo/los-heroes-cotidianos-que-construyen-un-gobierno-abierto>

Citizen participation is one of the most important democratic exercises in the Open Government Partnership. Activism and people's interest in accessing information, which is now public, and contributing to improve public services, are the support of a different philosophy on the role of citizens in public management and in its results.

Citizen participation is one of the engines of the Open Government Partnership, an innovative link between government and society, which is facilitated by the access to technology. Beyond regulatory frameworks, laws and government commitments to facilitate access to public information, the fact is that citizen participation can contribute to improving the efficiency of public services, improving social spending.

The challenges for citizen participation are many but also the access to information. By accessing the link on the page of the Ministry of Finance, it is possible to know that the government has a budget of just over 66 trillion Guaraníes for 2017. The national budget is organized by each Branch of the Government, by the decentralized agencies, National universities, autarchic entities, etc. In addition, other data can be accessed as the classifier of public expenditures, where the current expenses are observed such as personnel, purchases, etc.

This information is a valuable input to address citizen participation with a broad vision and to even promote social transformations. The definition of social spending in Paraguay is related to the functional classification of public expenditure and refers to the institutions' budgets for the provision of goods and services for the benefit of society, mainly in education, health, housing and social security, services to improve the quality of life of the entire population.

Citizen participation is important in this analysis because it can demand and demonstrate the need for greater efficiency in the process and delivery of public services through the exchange of data between sectors. This can provide an overview of unnecessary expenditures, or expenses that are being oversized.

In fact, in the countryside, neighborhood commissions, school cooperators, and parents' commissions are the ones who have been complaining, denouncing and influencing local governments to push them to account for its citizen's.

In this sense, the great potential of using the open data from the FONACIDE portal and app shows how the citizen agenda and the Open Government Partnership have the possibility to generate even more changes. Also, through the following website www.datos.gov.py and the portal of the Ministry of Education (MEC) one can have access to the list of schools that are prioritized and eligible for the FONACIDE funds.

Citizen participation can make possible a more effective control of resources, work schedules, companies involved and, above all monitor with their actions the adequate use of public funds. It is clear that social welfare can be improved to the extent that society benefits from the knowledge generated from the analysis of the government transparent and accessible information.

An Open Government is possible thanks to the involvement of citizen heroes in government processes, thanks to complaints, the issuance of opinions and the use of tools created to exercise better control over leaders or rulers.

Through the Open Government Partnership a joint work is promoted between the Government and the Civil Society, translating into concrete actions the fulfillment of the objectives related to transparency, accountability, citizen participation, technology and innovation.

The implementation of the Open Government Partnership in Paraguay is carried out with the support of the Democracy and Governance Program, from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), implemented by the Center of Environmental and Social Studies (CEAMSO).

2) THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IS THE GUARANTEE THAT DEMOCRACY IS IMPROVING

<http://www.gobiernoabierto.gov.py/articulo/la-participacion-de-mujeres-es-la-garanti-de-que-la-democracia-esta-mejorando>

Paraguay has a population of approximately 6,926,000 inhabitants, of which 50.6% are women and 49.4% are men. [1] Thinking of the process of transparency, citizen participation, accountability and access to information without equal participation of women strikes with any modern definition of democracy.

All persons, without any discrimination based on their ideas and beliefs, sex, race or economic class, have the fundamental right to access information. Historically societies assigned women and men different activities and responsibilities, often giving them differentiated hierarchy and social, economic, political and cultural responsibilities.

Today's progress in Paraguay on gender equity and equality is due to the active promotion of women's rights, both from the Public Institutions and from the Civil Society. In this sense, the challenges of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and of all the institutions implementing transparency actions for the promotion of equality include strategic actions that can contribute to improving the quality of life of women:

- Encourage equal participation of men and women in all public actions and activities of the Open Government Partnership Agenda, including training in the fulfillment of the right to be informed, public sources of information, the use access tools to information, Open Data, Open Public expenditure, etc.
- Encourage and invite women's organizations to participate in the Open Government Partnership initiative and encourage them to autonomously decide the actions and information they need to influence public policies that affect them.

- Take into account the gender digital gap and differentiated access to technology that puts women at disadvantage, especially in rural contexts. In this sense it is possible to see that, with simple and practical applications, it is possible to advance. Such is the case of AKUERAPP, a catalog of public health services that includes a list of medicines that is available to families, and essentially to women.

What can women do from the Open Government Partnership perspective?

As we have seen, the Open Government Partnership is an opportunity to promote women's active participation. The emphasis on the rights supports and guides the use of the principles of equality and equity, transparency and information, participation and empowerment of women [2].

The Third OGP Action Plan 2016-2018 contemplates ten commitments; the third one is perhaps in practical terms one of the most important for the Civil Society and especially to those promoting equality, to review, monitor and impact on public policies.

COMMITMENT 3: Citizen participation and the implementation of new channels for citizen monitoring public works and services.

In fact, having information on public investment and the results of that investment is the first and fundamental step for the revision of social policies. All public policies can and should have a gender perspective, that is, ensure that the benefits of these policies benefit both men and women alike, taking into account their differences and aspirations.

Also, another axis of review and access to information refers to the reports on the results and investment of the State in policies of equity and equality, which includes the fight against violence, actions to reduce poverty and generate equal opportunities for girls, adolescents and women in situations of vulnerability.

The Portal for Access to Public Information has adhered to 92 institutions that report on its management in very sensitive and important sectors such as agriculture, education, poverty, health, disability, childhood and adolescence, etc. Although these issues are known to be of interest to men and women, often women are the most affected when these social policies are not efficient or their funds end up trapped in cases of corruption.

Some countries such as Colombia, through the Open Government Partnership are already encouraging more women to participate in the formulation and evaluation of public policies on gender equity. In Paraguay, one of the major challenges for women is to place at the center of the debate and actions how transparency, accountability and citizen participation contribute enormously to demanding the exercise of their rights and better.

In Paraguay, the implementation of the Open Government Partnership is carried out with the support of the Democracy and Governance Program, from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the Center for Environmental and Social Studies (CEAMSO).



<http://www.ceamso.org.py/>

[1] EPH 2015 Bulletin, available at www.dgeec.gov.py Consultation February 20, 2017.

[2] Empowerment involves questioning the subordinate status of women, becoming aware of being subjects of rights and taking action, along with other individuals and groups to promote changes in public policies that affect their lives.