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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR A MORE EFFICIENT AND TRANSPARENT STATE

The technical note is based on a cross-sectional study that analyzes the civic participation and oversight mechanisms implemented by some USAID-supported projects. These mechanisms, along with other strategies, have sought to reduce corruption, contribute to greater State transparency, and promote greater civic engagement in issues of national interest.

Civic Engagement

Civic participation, oversight, and activism are specific forms of civic engagement. Civic engagement is a form of connection between a citizen and public affairs. Citizen engagement is the voice and the participation of citizens which, in a democracy, is essential for institutions.

The value of a civic engagement mechanism* lies in the fact that it is a “proxy” for channels of representation or relationship between the person and the nation-state, the affirmation of identity, personal citizenship capacity, and the sense of belonging.

USAID considers civic engagement as a supporting factor to strengthen State institutions and facilitate or promote good governance, increase public integrity, reduce corruption, and promote the full exercise of human rights.

*“Civic engagement mechanism” is understood to mean the structures or concrete forms of civic participation that the implementing partners promote.

2 Public management performance as subject of citizen oversight

Execution of budget from mining royalties

Local governments executed

69.1% of budget in
2018 and

64.7% in 2019.

Regional governments executed

67.3% of budget in
2018 and

62.6% in 2019.

(COMEXPERU, 2020).

Execution of budget for reconstruction with change

Up to 2018 the Authority for Reconstruction with Change had only executed

10% of budget.

In 2020, execution had reached

40% of budget

with progress at

33% of physical goals

(ARC, 2021).

National Plan against Human Trafficking (PNAT)

In 2019, the budget allocated and executed for implementation of the PNAT decreased with respect to 2018, by an amount representing

0.0046%

of the General Budget of the Republic.

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regional governments failed to report a budget allocation for the fight against human trafficking.

(CHS, 2020)

In 2020, only one public institution had a

trust rate higher than

50%

The highest distrust was towards Congress and the political parties.

Citizens' high level of distrust towards public management increases due to the lack of knowledge regarding the actions carried out by public institutions, the lack of access to information, and the lack of transparency in management.

(INEI, 2020)

3 Civic engagement activities

Between 2014 and 2021, five USAID activities were aimed at promoting civic participation, oversight, and activism. These activities were implemented by IDEA Internacional, Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, Asociación Civil Transparencia, and Capital Humano y Social Alternativo. The following are some of the achievements of the civic engagement mechanisms:



1. Increased awareness and mobilization of people regarding their civic rights.



2. Integration of agendas and proposals of excluded groups (e.g., LGTBQ+, people with disabilities, youth) and emerging groups in the democratic system, such as the Ordinance of the Municipality of Metropolitan Lima on non-discrimination. The mayor of Monzón (Huánuco) integrated the agenda of youth and producers for the improvement of government services and support to agriculture. In the district of José Leonardo Ortiz (Lambayeque), the Citizen Oversight Committee established a governance agreement with candidates.



3. Concrete change in communities: the Oversight Committees of Moquegua, Cusco, Colán, and Catacaos (Piura) achieved the commencement of or changes in municipal works, and in Lalaquiz (Piura) they achieved the corrective action of companies that had failed to pay salaries.



4. Motivation of authorities to adopt transparency measures: the Oversight Committee in Cusco organized a community assembly and invited the mayor to explain the delay of the works and the expenses incurred. In Catacaos (Piura), youth prompted the Neighborhood Board and the Citizen.

Oversight Committee to request the municipality information on the budget and progress of works.



5. Generation of social awareness and civic interest in communities, getting neighboring communities to initiate citizen oversight.






6. Submission of oversight reports to local, regional, or national authorities, including the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic.

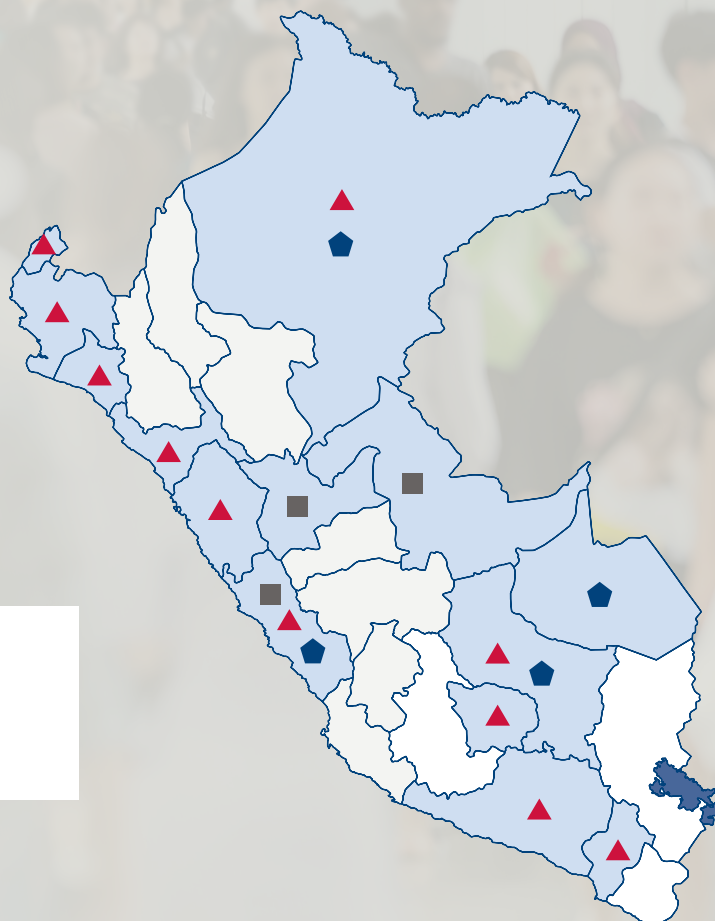
4 Three forms of civic engagement mechanisms






The classification presented here was prepared taking into account the main or dominant function performed by the civic engagement mechanisms studied.

CLASSIFICATION	FUNCTIONS	MODALITIES	ACTIVITIES
Citizen advocacy/awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes civic engagement in elections. Encourages awareness of civic-democratic issues. Political advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activists Volunteers Young artists Journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalist training. Information dissemination. Debates among candidates. Mobilization and awareness-raising to influence public policy.
Oversight/surveillance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation and control of State performance and functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committees to oversee quality of public expenditures derived from extractive industries. Oversight committees for reconstruction with change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual oversight through web portals. Preparation of oversight reports. Visits to public works. Coordination with other oversight bodies. Campaigns, marches, events with authorities.
Citizen advocacy/awareness and oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness-raising on human trafficking. Auditing of cases or risks, state performance in prevention and protection of victims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight committees against human trafficking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training for members of oversight body and other public institutions. Awareness-raising and communication campaigns. Detection, follow-up, and monitoring of high-profile cases. Preparation of regional reports.

5 Location of civic engagement mechanisms



-  Citizen advocacy/awareness
-  Oversight/surveillance
-  Citizen advocacy/awareness and oversight

6 Lessons learned



PLANNING



Solid planning from the outset, including definitions, identification of goals and functions, as well as strategy identification. This is a crucial element that favors the performance of civic engagement mechanisms and allows the expected impact to be outlined.



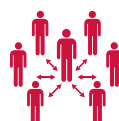
Participatory and inclusive design helps the work of the participants in the mechanisms to be more committed if they are clearly aware of and involved in the preparation of goals, functions, strategies, priorities, and articulation methods from the beginning of the intervention.



DECENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Management and support of implementing partners adapted to civic engagement mechanisms' realities and their needs and opportunities can enhance their results. From the design of the mechanism to the convening to the delivery of its products, through obtaining feedback, it is important that implementers respond to the specific context of the people or institutions participating in the mechanisms.



Coordinated and collegial management between the national and regional levels helps the functioning, learning, and effectiveness of civic engagement mechanisms. Civic advocacy/awareness mechanisms were the most centralized in Lima, mainly in their strategic management. In the case of the oversight mechanisms, data collection was local, but the analysis, coordination, and advocacy processes were centralized in the capital. In advocacy and oversight mechanisms, there was greater decentralization of functions and decision-making.



COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP STRATEGIES



Mutual learning between implementing partners (from the national level where NGOs operate and in the local intervention areas) is a potential element to strengthen the mechanisms and can be better leveraged.



Ongoing follow-up and training strengthen the continuity of civic engagement. These elements were crucial during the pandemic as they facilitated the enhancement of members' ability to access virtual information, thus enabling them to continue their work and reflecting the adaptability of implementing partners.



For visibility, social validation, and achievement of results, it is essential to disseminate and liaise with respected leaders and public entities, with the dissemination of gradual achievements adding significantly to achieving goals. Therefore, the relationship with the media is a helpful tool. In oversight, connections with governmental control entities (allies or recipients of its findings) can make a difference; in advocacy, connections with specialized State agencies, as the case may be, and with the Legislative Branch.



The recognition and visibility of the role of volunteers in citizen oversight processes contribute positively to their functions, facilitating their tasks or in order to present themselves to the State. The recognition can be symbolic or factual, from thanking them to personal equipment that identifies them (e.g., vests, ID cards).



CHALLENGES



The precarious civic culture and the consequent limited management of democratic principles in the country represent a significant hurdle for the functioning of the mechanisms.



State bureaucracy and the lack of a citizen-oriented culture limit transparency and hinder the work of the oversight and surveillance processes.

7 Best Practices

- a. Strategically include traditionally excluded groups (women, youth, LGTBIQ population) not only as participants, but also as beneficiaries.

In practice	
Citizen advocacy/ awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the municipal elections in Lima, LGTBIQ groups, through the Presente association, led advocacy actions with proposals from people with disabilities, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, and women. In alternative crop production areas, advocacy actions were carried out with leaders of local organizations and producers, schoolchildren and youth. As a result, the mayor of Monzón adopted part of the agenda of proposals from youth and producers in his administration.

- b. Design mechanisms for civic participation and oversight with specific strategies to integrate a gender perspective.

In practice	
Oversight/ Surveillance	<p>Citizen oversight bodies for reconstruction with change implemented the following strategies with a gender focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping and analysis of conditions in which women took part in the spaces and roles provided as part of the oversight processes. Monitoring of women's attendance at training events. Evaluating suitable schedules and places for women's participation Assessment of appropriate times and places for women's participation. Developing differentiation criteria for women's participation in accordance with urban and rural contexts, age group, and occupations.

- c. Seek allies (organizations or individuals) to improve the management of civic engagement mechanisms through complementary expertise.

In practice	
Citizen advocacy/ awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen advocacy/awareness mechanisms were implemented with allied institutions and with volunteers with certain expertise who were integrated as mobilizing agents (e.g., journalists, analysts, artists, or members of groups involved in advocacy work, etc.). During subnational and early congressional elections, citizen awareness/advocacy mechanisms established alliances with groups working on democracy, transparency, and anti-corruption issues, which enabled them to engage them and carry out joint dissemination or advocacy.

- d. Engage local organizations in leading or being partners in the mechanisms to promote greater acceptance and sustainability at a territorial level.

In practice	
Oversight/ surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Lima, citizen awareness/advocacy mechanisms included allied institutions to lead consensus-building and proposal work on the rights of marginalized populations and for dissemination and public mobilization on issues related to integrity in politics and institutional reforms.
Citizen advocacy/ awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Moquegua, volunteers and representatives of local organizations were engaged, whose experience supported the operation of the committee to oversee the quality of public spending derived from extractive industries.
Citizen advocacy/ awareness and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mirada Ciudadana oversight bodies included local organizations that are differentiated at the regional level. This institutional membership strengthened the prospects of continuity for the work of these mechanisms.

- e. Disseminate the activities developed by the mechanisms through national or local media, including social networks, to encourage their continuity and citizen interest.

In practice	
Oversight/ surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen advocacy/awareness mechanisms for election processes disseminated messages and events on their own social networks (and those of allied institutions or individuals).
Citizen advocacy/ awareness and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mirada Ciudadana oversight bodies had a website where they disseminated the events of each regional oversight body and their network, as well as cases of victims or risk situations that occurred in their regions.

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