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CONFERENCE**

**MOBILISING PEOPLE:  
CONNECTING AGENTS OF CHANGE**

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### **Short Session Report: Global Solutions**

**Session Title:** Opening Governments for the People: targeted transparency policies for better public service delivery and accountability in the LAC Region

**Date & Time:** Fri 9 Nov 15:00 – 17:00

**Report prepared by:** Alvaro V. Ramirez Alujas, Instituto Universitario de Investigación Ortega y Gasset,

#### **Experts:**

**Sonia Tschorne Berestesky, Neourbanismo consultora**

**Marcela Restrepo Hung, Corporación Transparencia por Colombia**

**Orazio Bellettini Cedeno, Grupo FARO**

**Nicolás Dassen, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**

#### **Moderated by:**

**Session coordinated by:** Harald Tollan, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

#### **Main Issues Covered (500 words or more, narrative form)**

During the session, the coordinator Nicolás Dassen provided a precise explanation of the concept of targeted transparency (TT) and concrete examples regarding the implementation of TT policies, followed by an analysis of the concept of open government and its potential to both engage citizens and modernize governments within the context of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) country action plans.

Further, the session answered specific working questions, such as how can TT policies improve the quality of public services in different social and economic sectors? How can they enhance social monitoring of public policies and prevent corruption? How can they enable consumers and users of public services to make better informed decisions? Which are the challenges for CSOs and governments in implementing TT policies and assessing their impact? In answering these questions, three

experts from Latin America talked about their experiences in different sectors.

On infrastructure, Sonia Tschorne's presentation explained the design and implementation of a Public Works Control Systems, aimed at providing more transparency and control in the public infrastructure industry in Chile.

On housing, Marcela Restrepo Hung addressed the topic of TT polices in the management of access household financial loans in Colombia.

On extractive industries, Orazio Bellettini shared the results of a Project that revealed the quantity, accessibility and quality of available information related to the oil sector in Ecuador.

In short, transparency is a key public policy tool for promoting greater efficiency in the use and distribution of public resources and improving public services.

In the spectrum of possible intervention models, targeted transparency policies have the fundamental characteristic of using information disclosure as a way of achieving a concrete public policy goal, such as improving public service delivery in healthcare, education, and transportation, among other sectors.

### **Main Outcomes/Outputs**

In Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, targeted transparency policies do not always originate in the legislative branch or public sector agencies. Organized civil society, particularly the media, plays a central role in bringing targeted transparency policies onto the public agenda and, in turn, raising awareness among citizens and private sector representatives that the use of public information can be valuable for decision making.

The concept of open government can—and must—be employed to spur public sector modernization in the LAC region. Open government must be understood as a process that goes beyond merely “digitalizing bureaucracy,” reducing the number of transactions and decentralizing public services; it is a platform for rethinking the role of the state from a pro-citizen perspective that can open up opportunities for participation

and collaboration between the public sector, civil society, and the private sector.

Given the importance of subsidies in LAC economies, transparency is vital to ensure that the criteria of efficiency and fairness are considered during allocation (this is the case, for example, in Argentina). When the public entities responsible for disclosing information do not do so in a way that facilitates citizen participation, then civil society must step up to generate and disseminate that information.

Poor accessibility, technical complexity, and the wide dispersion of information in the oil industry hamper good governance and decision making in this sector which in turn, impacts efficiency and imposes a high economic cost on countries. Civil society occupies a central role in the design and implementation of minimum, integrated, and participatory standards of transparency. The application of these standards can help public and private sectors find innovative solutions for enhancing transparency at every step of the value chain (as in the case of Ecuador, for example).

Housing construction and the allocation of loans with low, nonexistent, or state subsidized interest rates create opportunities for discretionality. As in the case of Colombia, targeted transparency policies can play a vital part in guaranteeing that information is disclosed about beneficiaries' identities and criteria for decision making in the sector. This has the potential to prevent the unlawful influence of private interests and unjustifiable costs in contracts, thereby enhancing the quality of the housing delivered, among other benefits.

The creation of highly specialized and institutionally robust monitoring units can lead to improvements in the infrastructure sector, as can be seen in the case of Chile. Defining specific compliance goals for government instruments that evaluate the monitoring and performance of public management can help guarantee the sustainability of pro-transparency policies. This, in turn, must be accompanied by the political will to make the necessary investments in human and financial resources that would facilitate the design and implementation of tools to encourage transparency in the public works procurement and monitoring system.

### **Recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)**

The main recommendation and follow-up actions are:

1. The success of targeted transparency policies begins with an accurate definition of the goal that the policy is aiming to achieve.
2. Communication during the implementation process about the targeted transparency policy is a fundamental element in its success and sustainability.
3. Coordination between the actors involved in the process of disclosing and using information is one of the main challenges facing targeted transparency policies.
4. In order to effect behavioral changes by information disclosers, it is important to have a solid institutional commitment.
5. In the action cycle of targeted transparency policies, active participation by civil society organizations is a key factor.

For more information, please check out the book:

<http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=37245826>

## Highlights (200 words please include interesting quotes)

Main highlights:

Open government policies and their link with targeted transparency tools are essential because:

- a) They are essential to the provision of public services more efficient, quality and integrity, and
- b) The citizen-centered approach opens opportunities for participation and collaboration between the public sector, civil society and the private sector

Currently, there is a more conscious citizens of their rights... that requires transparency, better public services and access to public information.

Undesirable attributes of public information providing:

1. Scarce for citizens and other public services
2. Dispersed, depends on who provides
3. Presented with an exaggerated level of technical complexity

Public information as a central element to reduce inconsistencies in the management of public resources, and as a deterrent to corrupt practices.

“Citizenize information” (and improve the level of understanding of public information).

The relevance of access to public information and the challenge to build state capacities to generate and manage public sector information.

Promote mechanisms for closer links between the rules related to access to public information with targeted transparency tools, regulation and enforcement.

*“The efforts of open government are aimed at strengthening the democratic system, increasing citizens’ trust in their political institutions, maximizing civic engagement and commitment, and improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of governments and their public administrations, based on the principles of fairness, integrity, and*

*transparency”*

Nicolás Dassen

*“...The experience of Ecuador’s Extracting Transparency Initiative, which was designed to improve transparency in the oil sector, based on a set of standards agreed to by the government, the private sector, and civil society organizations.”*

Orazio J. Bellettini Cedeño

*“Both the integrity of the TACS program and the direct participation of a variety of actors in the development of public housing policy make information a key requirement to reduce uncertainty, raise confidence, and promote transparency”.*

Marcela Restrepo

*“The availability of good-quality and timely information enables more efficient and effective decision making in the processes of planning, design, construction, operation, and monitoring of public works; reduces financial and operational risks in service delivery; and facilitates accountability to the authorities and the general public regarding the management of the works and service delivery”.*

Sonia Tschorne

### **Key Insights Recommended to be included in the IACC Declaration**

Transparency is a key public policy tool for promoting greater efficiency in the use and distribution of public resources and improving public services.

Public information as a central element to reduce inconsistencies in the management of public resources, and as a deterrent to corrupt practices.... Access to public information (as a right, a tool and beyond) is a key to fight corruption, promote transparency and openness in government, and help improve public services. In this regard, the targeted transparency is a way to promote the construction of

information systems quality, socially useful and which serves to promote citizen participation and accountability permanently (in the context of open government initiatives).

The need of “Citizenize information” (and improve the level of understanding of public information).

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**Rapporteur’s name and date submitted**

**Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas**  
**Nov 10, 2012**

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