

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

*Conference organised by the Office of the President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, the Ministry of Social Development, SEDESOL, the State of Morelos and the OECD LEED Programme
Cuernavaca, 26 June 2003*

Rationale

To better respond to a new set of concerns of the population, governments today actively seek a broad partnership with civil society and the private sector. It is widely agreed that innovative solutions to the key challenges facing our societies can be found through an open public debate.

It is at local and regional levels, closer to the problems and the individuals, that partnerships are most often formed to address issues of collective implications. Partnerships are being established throughout OECD countries to tackle issues of economic development, employment, social cohesion and the quality of life, sharing a common desire to improve governance – how society collectively solves its problems and meets its needs. Through partnerships, civil society, its NGOs, enterprises and various levels of government work together to design area-based strategies, adapt policies to local conditions and take initiatives consistent with shared priorities.

Mexico provides good illustrations of the use of partnerships to improve governance. Soon after the last elections, the Fox administration launched a vast consultation process at all levels of society to set long-term objectives for the social and economic development of the country (“Mexico 2025”). A new programme to foster self-reliance among the disadvantaged has been implemented in partnership with the local communities. New meso regions have been created to co-ordinate better the development of physical infrastructures. These reforms have been accompanied by similar ones at local and regional levels: civil society and business have been involved in the design of social and economic development strategies; instruments of participatory planning (COPLADES, COPLADEM) have been renovated and adapted to the local context and needs, as shown by examples Guanajuato and Sinaloa (e.g. CODESIN); and civil partnerships have been set up to ensure the continuity of development projects throughout political changes at municipal and state levels.

However, improving governance through partnerships is not an easy task. One of the main weaknesses of partnership as a form of governance is the uneven capacity of the partners. For a partnership to generate fruitful and effective co-operation, its main partners must share a similar degree of legitimacy. Yet the means of the three main sectors of society that are normally represented in partnerships - public sector, civil society and business circles - differ significantly: the largely unstructured civil society is often represented on a volunteer basis and on the leisure time of its members. The non-government organisations (NGOs) that often volunteer to represent civil society indeed represent the interest of their respective members and not that of the wider local community, generating conflicts of interest and undermining the accountability of partnerships as a whole. In various circumstances, business, and in particular the small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), also finds it difficult to be represented appropriately. As a result, partnership may set objectives for local development and labour market policies that do not portray representative priorities, as they would be expressed and addressed in a wider and more balanced partnership. For the various sectors to be in a position to play a significant and comparable role in partnerships, mechanisms enabling broad representation, the definition of mandates and reporting structures need to be designed and implemented. The stronger partners (i.e. the government) may have a role to play to help build the capacity of the weakest parties.

The weak capacity of local communities raises a more fundamental challenge for partnerships: that of harmonising public accountability and participatory democracy. While civil society has little accountability, elected officials and public officers are accountable to their constituencies and to the government respectively. Similarly, trade unions and employer representatives are accountable to their own members in the first place. For partnerships to be effective in fostering co-operation and co-ordination, ways must be found to reconcile standard accountability frameworks with the use of collective strategic planning exercises involving various types of actors. This issue is particularly relevant and sensitive in Mexico, where society has been exercising again its democratic rights over only a few years.

This conference will provide a unique opportunity to debate the progress and achievement in improving governance in Mexico in light of the OECD Study on Local Partnerships and other research. International experts and representatives from all sectors of society from Mexico and other countries are invited to take part in the discussions and exchange views.

General information

Aims of the conference

- To debate the results of recent innovations in local governance in Mexico;
- To present and discuss the results obtained within the framework of the OECD Study on Local Partnerships in Mexico;
- To identify ways to improve the effectiveness of partnerships through community capacity building.

Participants

150 participants from Mexico and various other countries. Representatives of the following groups will be participating in the conference:

- government departments in various policy fields, regional governments and municipalities;
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations and other organisations of civil society;
- private enterprises and trade unions;
- academics.

Languages

English, French and Spanish.

REVISED AGENDA

	Chairman	<i>Sergio Arzeni, Head of the LEED Programme, OECD</i>
	Rapporteur	<i>Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway</i>
9:30 - 10:00	<i>Welcome and opening remarks</i>	<i>Antonio Sánchez, Undersecretary of Social and Human Development. SEDESOL</i> <i>Sergio Estrada Cajigal, Governor of the State of Morelos</i>
10:00 - 13:00	Session 1: Local governance and development in Mexico	
	<i>A new local governance framework has been designed for Mexico to involve civil society and business circles in the design and implementation of shared social and economic development strategies. What are the main achievements? What are the problems yet to be solved?</i>	
10:00 - 10:45	The OECD Study on partnerships in Mexico	<i>Sylvain Giguère, Deputy Head of the LEED Programme</i> <i>Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway</i>
10:45 - 11:00	The experience of a State	<i>Juan S. Millán, Governor of the State of Sinaloa</i>
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee break	
11:30 - 12:15	Round-table discussion: local governance in Mexico in the light of the OECD Study	<i>Heriberto Félix Guerra, Minister of Economic Development of the State of Sinaloa</i> <i>Gabriel Haddad Giorgi, Minister of Economic Development of the State of Morelos</i> <i>José Antonio Abascal Ceballos, Deputy Head for Institutional Co-ordination. SEDESOL</i>
	General discussion	

12:15 - 12:45 Partnership, participatory planning: a new local governance framework in Mexico *Carlos Flores Alcocer, Chief of the Presidential Office for Strategic Planning and Regional Development, of the Mexican President*

12:45 - 13:00 Closing remarks morning session *Antonio Sánchez, Undersecretary of Social and Human Development. SEDESOL*

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch offered by the Presidency of Mexico

14:30 - 18:30 Session 2: Building the capacity of local communities

One of the weaknesses of partnerships and other instruments of participatory planning is the low capacity of civil society to organise itself and be represented effectively in decision-making instances. What are the obstacles to overcome? How can the capacity of local communities be best strengthened?

14:30 - 16:00 Panel discussion: experiences from other OECD countries *Linda Powell, Secretary of State, Ministry of Community Services of Australia and Vice Chairperson to the LEED Directing Committee*

Paul Cullen, Employment and Social Policy Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union

Ging Wong, Special Advisor, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

Jeff Finkle, Chief Executive of the International Economic Development Council, United States

General discussion

16:00 - 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 - 18:00	Round-table discussion: building the capacity of local communities in Mexico	<p><i>Rafael Tamayo, Professor of Politics and Regional Economic Development at CIDE</i></p> <p><i>José Manuel Acosta Cazares, Director of the Regional Development Office of ITESM Campus Cuernavaca</i></p> <p><i>Vicente López Portillo, Rector of the Universidad de Occidente</i></p>
	General discussion	
18:00 - 18:10	<i>Conclusions by the rapporteur</i>	
18:10 - 18:30	<i>Closing remarks</i>	<p><i>John P. Martin, Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD</i></p> <p><i>Gustavo Merino Juárez, General Director for International Relations, SEDESOL</i></p>
<i>18:30</i>	<i>Cocktail</i>	