

Municipal Transparency Evaluation System

“SETRAMUN”

1. INTRODUCTION

To talk about transparency, we need to start from a definition, even if brief, of what we want to combat: corruption. For the purposes of this presentation we will take Nye's¹ characterization: Corruption is a behavior that deviates from lawful public function due to private considerations to obtain economic or bureaucratic benefits; or the violation of rules of conduct because of private interests.

However, we have to remember that though corruption is considered a negative practice, it may reflect actual behavioral patterns. That is, its explanation and, therefore, its solution go beyond the understanding of individual interests.

Given the problem's seriousness, it is necessary to make it explicit to the citizenry that corruption is contrary to shared values and, above all, that it is necessary to produce new norms consistent with those values. Governments must take actions to build a truly transparent system with real citizen participation and free access to public information without authority manipulation.

The opening up of governments that are susceptible of corrupt acts is vital for building a better social environment that translates into the well being of people. It is the only way to gain trust and support for government actions.

In its desire to actively participate in building and developing the environment required to reach a better quality of life, civil society in Mexico has, in recent years, pressed for the opening up of municipal, state and federal governments.

1.1 Objectives

The System of Evaluation for Municipal² Transparency (SETRAMUN for its Spanish initials) of the Secretaría de Contraloría y Desarrollo Administrativo (SECODAM, Secretariat of and Administrative Development) will try to identify those municipal programs that are susceptible to corruption, and generate spaces of citizen participation to oversee and evaluate those programs. The objective is to rate administrative processes and make honest practices known.

The aim is to measure the transparency level, rather than the corruption level of local authorities. The idea is to stimulate Municipios with good transparency ratings to continue

¹ Nye, J. "Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis", *American Political Science Review*, 1967, vol. 61, núm. 3, pp. 417- 427.

² In México a "Municipio" is the smallest administrative unit of the Federation. There are several municipios in each state

their efforts and to stimulate others to emulate them incorporating practices that favor citizens' trust.

The measurement of the level of transparency will center primarily on the various fields of action of the authorities: a) information and accountability, b) participation areas, c) citizen's evaluation of government actions d) attention to citizen's demands. All this will result in good municipal practices to be known through the media, academic institutions, civil organizations, and the citizenry in general. This knowledge will reinforce those practices.

1.2 How to identify and measure transparency in the municipios?

The Municipal Transparency Evaluation System, SETRAMUN, is being developed in Mexico to this end.

2. Transparency in Government

A government makes itself accountable to its citizens when 1) it informs clearly and pertinently of its actions 2) It involves society in its work through open communication with it, and 3) It jointly defines with society the means to satisfy citizen's needs. Transparency is thus invaluable in the pursuit of a just and modern society.

2.1 General objective of SETRAMUN

SETRAMUN aims to register the quantity and quality of information offered to society about government actions to tend to citizen's needs, and about the means to involve citizens in government decisions. The objective is to foster disclosure by the authorities of what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they involve citizens in determining it.

2.2 What does SETRAMUN measure?

It will try to measure activities and problems faced by governments. The transparency indexes must be specific to the activities, programs, projects and plans in question. They will be classified according to the involvement of different Government levels using seven categories: 1)Federal; 2)State; 3)Municipal; 4)Federal-State-Municipal; 5)Federal-State; 6)Federal-Municipal; 7)State-Municipal.

3. METHODOLOGY OF MEASUREMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE FIELDS OF TRANSPARENCY

The criteria to be used are the following:

- a) Government must inform about actions and decisions
- b) Government must establish spaces for interaction and communication with the community, like Councils, Committees, Neighborhood meetings, etc.

- c) Government must listen to society, that is, to receive and consider complaints, proposals, advice, petitions, etc.

From these criteria, three fields where transparency plays an important role in municipal development were identified:

- 1) **Information to the citizens:** relevance and content quality of the information supplied by the government to its citizens.
- 2) **Communication spaces:** representative constitution, quality of the rules governing them and the proper functioning of communication spaces between Government and society.
- 3) **Attention to citizen demands:** quality of services rendered, quality of the attention paid to the demands of society and means to attend these demands.

4. OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND INDEXES OF MUNICIPAL ACTION TRANSPARENCY

Table 1

1. CITIZEN INFORMATION	2. SPACES OF GOVERNMENT-SOCIETY COMMUNICATION
<p>Particular Objective: To evaluate the level of specificity of the information and the process that generates that information, in order to reach a wide citizen base and with the goal of achieving a true and clear accountability.</p>	<p>Particular Objective: To evaluate the spaces for citizen discussion, communication and decision-making between government and citizens, specifically, their composition, their rules and their functioning so as to reinforce them and promote them as key mechanisms for transparency.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To evaluate the accessibility of information about Municipal providers. ● To evaluate the accessibility of information about municipal finances and whether this information is made public. ● To evaluate the accessibility of information about infrastructure works in the past and in the future within the Municipio and whether this information is made public. ● To evaluate the accessibility of information rules and laws that apply to the Municipio and whether this 	<p style="text-align: center;">Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To review the representativity and make up of the Municipal Development Council, citizen committees and councils of Municipal services, among others. ● To evaluate the functioning of the councils and its rules of operation. ● To evaluate the opening to the public of local authority sessions and the formation of Commissions to follow up measures decided in these sessions. ● To evaluate actions designed to foster citizens' participation in activities to improve their residential area.

<p>information is made public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate how well publicized the existence of a manual of co-responsibility between government and citizens is. • To evaluate the accessibility of information about the processes of acquisitions, adjudication of contracts, leases and services to citizens. And whether this information is made public. 	
<p>3. ATENTION TO CITIZENS</p>	
<p>Particular objective: To evaluate the systems and procedures to process complaints, proposals, advice, petitions, and to evaluate the service manuals and how well publicized their existence is, in order for citizens to know of the means at their disposal to satisfy their needs.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make public the existence of user manuals of services provided by the Municipio. • To make public the means (internet, window services, telephone systems) through which citizens are heard. 	