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Best Practices Database

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Citizen Attention System, Mendoza

Argentina

Good Practice

New for 2002

Categories: Environmental Management:
- monitoring and control
Urban Governance:
- partnership development
- public administration and management
Civic Engagement and Cultural Vitality:
- community participation

Level of Activity: Provincial/State

Ecosystem: Arid/Semi-Arid

Summary

Program objectives is to strength community capabilities about environmental and juridical issues, to raise a further participation on decision-making process at local and state government level. Actually, the most significant successful are formation of more 180 "extensionistas juridico-vecinales y ambientales" (community animators on environmental and juridical subjects), which are working in 25 communities on Mendoza Province through so called "Consultorios vecinales" (neighbourhood information bureau), whereby they get advice, guide and derive cases to others institution to community people's. Citizen Attention System (CAS) attended until December 2001 more 18.000 people. CAS was declared "of Governmental Interest

Narrative

SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN

People with small or without access to basic services and goods, few citizen involvement, people without access to available resources, include governmental ones (such as "disadvantage people defenders agency"), social exclusion, social conflicts and citizen unsafety.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES

Priority one is improvement justice and social services access to disadvantages and underserved citizens, communication improvement between CSO and Government agencies, and communicate them that "an informed citizenship is key for to enhance democracy". Priorities were established for FAVIM Board, carry on for Extensionismo Project Task Force (EPTF) and periodically revised. At priority definitions moment, was carry on it participation process between opinion leaders, public

government officials and Community-based Organisations leaders

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The program goal is to strength community capabilities on environmental and juridical issues. Main strategy is citizen empowerment since formation on "citizen subjects", which let them a social working for democracy and justice. Peoples which are trained can group them in others or new community organisations. Goals and objectives was building since beneficiary consulting, system users, whom be asked them in all project steps. A meeting series with stakeholders let us to identify most important objectives and problems.

MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

Financial resources was mainly addressed to identify social leaders, his formation and training on citizen concerns, neighbourhood information bureau installation and promotion, and co-ordinated operation about all system.

Technical and human resources was mainly designated to strength communication between "extensionistas", and with his institution FAVIM foundation, where are admission, mediation and litigation teams with his co-ordinating. Lawyers, social workers, and psychologists, were distributed in interdisciplinary admission, mediation and litigation teams.

Financial resources came mainly from AVINA foundation, technical and human resources were supported by FAVIM Foundation.

PROCESS

Process begin with people identification into communities, with capabilities to face an eight-months length preparatory course. A professional team is trained to raise the program goals. Preparatory courses are theoretical and practical contents, about community subjects concerns, conflict resolution processes, and social workers into his neighbourhoods offices.

Then they pass your examinations, go to the "practical phase" into neighbourhood offices, help them for old extensionistas. Then divide them and begin his activities in new neighbourhood offices, which install it according social-economical criteria in new communities. This "communities agencies" are a wide promotion. When users visits these neighbourhood offices, a percentage of them are attended there, while the other part are derives forward FAVIM foundation where there exist admission teams that give them customers attention. Cases can go on with mediation or low-cost litigation. This actions let citizen have further justice services access, with quality and lower or without costs. There exists cases which it isn't possible to obtain money, therefore those cases where system obtained some money, it will cover those cases of indigent or poor people.

At beginning, we confront high absenteeism rates, which analyse us thorough an personal questionnaire. Questionnaire outcomes was that more probable causes were economical and social personal and familiar situation, change in work time, unemployment, etc.; with this dates, we established a scholarships system, psychological support, micro enterprises, shorter courses, small employment generation, etc.

Final absenteeism rates were diminished at 60 %.

Other problem we confront were maintenance of financial support to neighbourhood offices with direct item from project, because strong devaluation and high inflation rates. Then, We established a voluntary money collect system en each neighbourhood offices, and trained an extensionista team for micro-fundraising, proposal writing and others fundraising strategies. Still problem there exists, but tendency is to approximately nine months neighbourhood offices raise his self-sustainable financial balance.

In conflict resolution, collaboration from our partnerships, involvement communities and specially, system users, were highly valuable, due to collaboration with work, money or species. They were an indispensable helping.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

Beginning with extensionista intervention, institutions are more articulated, because his labour is "decode" access to available resources for who don't have any information, generally underserved or misrepresented groups. Extensionista offer a social network at community level. At institutional level, extensionista can co-ordinate tasks with others institution and organisations, according to sense and subject that is present.

Â· Mejora de la capacidad institucional a nivel nacional, sub-nacional o local. Citizen Attention System enhance environmental and social management capabilities of local governments, due to it capture a percentage of service demand that usually go on to crowded government agencies.

Â· Cambios en los procesos de toma de decisiones, incluyendo la institucionalizaci3n de la participaci3n (partenariado). Provincial and local government -through agreements- included involvement of neighbourhood offices to available social resources. Moreover, extensionistas participate of social and politic life at local level, and give information and tools for stakeholders participation in making-decision process.

Â· ¿Se han producido cambios en las conductas y actitudes de la poblaci3n? Extensionistas and System social work give users necessary information about his citizen rights. There is a attitude change from users since they come into Citizen Attention System.

SUSTAINABILITY

Â· Financiero: Uso y nivelaci3n de recursos, incluyendo la recuperaci3n de costes, e indicando como los pr3stamos, si los hubiera, est3n siendo devueltos as3 como sus t3rminos y condiciones. Extensionista labour into neighbourhood offices means a "save" over U\$S 1,7 million in 3 years for communities. This outcome was obtained since opportunity costs calculation for other user's activities. Low cost litigation let to access to the justice for further number of people, and support others system activities. Mediation help a lot of people, at the same time it produce an positive economical impact in familiar budgets. At the end of initiative (May 2003) We think to raise financial sustainability for all system, therefore, AVINA financial support will not be necessary.

Â· Social y Econ3mico: Igualdad de g3nero, igualdad e inclusi3n social, movilidad econ3mica y social

Extensionistas -direct target of project- are social leaders supported for his communities, and a 70 % are women. At the same time, into neighbourhood offices work are oriented to women know and exercise her rights, specially in familiar violence and sexual crime cases. Too we assist her with psychological and legal support.

Â· Cultural: Respeto y consideraci3n por distintas actitudes, patrones de comportamiento y herencia cultural

A lot of our extensionistas are from others ethnic, nationalities and cultures. They come to this program with many kind of reasons. We promote respect for cultural diversity, and an extensionista team soon will development your voluntary work into neighbourhood offices migration-oriented situated in Bolivian, Peruvian and Chilean communities and consulates.

Â· Ambiental: Reducir dependencia de los recursos no renovables (aire, agua, suelo, energ3a, etc.), y cambios en los patrones de producci3n, consumo y tecnolog3a. The "extensionista ambiental" confront environmental conflicts and problems there where live or work. Changes are observed in communication patterns between governments and citizens, due to since extensionista intervention, communities begin to understand relation between human rights and environment, stakeholders involvement tools on environmental issues, and citizen empowerment strategies, which let them enhanced and further public and private services (for example, public tree maintenance, pollution reduction on air, soil and water, agricultural best practices and responsible consumption, etc.

LECCIONES APRENDIDAS (300 palabras)

Main learned lesson is referred to importance to have a solid project team, together to a clear mission and vision about extensionismo program and Citizen Attention System. Fortunately, project team challenged no variation in all program history and we did can to resolute the constraints during past four years.

Other learned lesson was about how to reduce high absenteeism rates from who entrance to the formation and training program. We did understand that the most important variables involvement are engagement level from students beside economical and social situation. In this context of learning, who come into the program have a strong support from FAVIM through scholarships, affective support from teachers and the rest of project team, beside we enhance his social engagement.

TRANSFERIBILIDAD (300 palabras)

Extensionistas make a double task: on the one hand they resolve daily and specific conflicts into communities, through information, paralegal and social support, and derivation. On the other hand, they teach citizen to know and exercise your rights. Admission, mediation and litigation teams promote an attitude change in others professionals, which understand the voluntary and solidary labour with other approach. Beside, Citizen Attention System is in Jujuy province (FORINS NGO) in preliminary phase. Too there exists others national NGOs interested such as Fundaci3n Participacion Ciudadana (Tierra del Fuego province), Fundaci3n Woodville (Bariloche city, Rio Negro province) and Fundaci3n Poder Ciudadano (Buenos Aires city and province)

Key Dates

1998 - Agreement FORJA Foundation (Chile) and FAVIM Foundation (Argentina) for know how program methodology transfer "Citizen Actions for Justice and Democracy program", and beginning first pilot project about extensionismo.

1999 - Beginning "Extensionismo Ambiental Comunitario" Project (first prom in country).

2000 - Beginning "Extensionismo: un puente hacia una mayor participaci3n de la comunidad" Project (first "big scale" Project)

2001 - First know how and transference project agreement to Jujuy Province

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Type of Organization: Foundation

Partners

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Type of Organization: Foundation

Type of Partner Support: Financial Support

Financial Profile

| Year: | Complete budget: U\$S | Partner A contribution (FAVIM Foundation): | Partner B contribution (AVINA Foundation): |
|--------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| 1998 | 12,800 | 100 % | 0 % |
| 1999 | 25,800 | 42 % | 58 % |
| 2000 | 91,342 | 17 % | 83 % |
| 2001 | 223,045 | 17 % | 83 % |

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