

***Topic: Incidence in Public Social Policies of the National Associations
of NGOs in Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay: Progress and Challenges***

Prepared by

Consuelo Castro

consuelocastro@cemefi.org

Centro Mexicano de Filantropía (CEMEFI)

MEXICO

Raúl Monte Domecq

pojoaju@pojoaju.org.py

Asociación Nacional de ONG, POJOAJU

PARAGUAY

Analía Bettoni

anong@anong.org.uy

Asociación Nacional de ONG (ANONG)

URUGUAY

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the region of Latin America the strengthening of democracy and citizenship has implied in addition to the establishment of new economic models, the emergence of new spaces of articulation and political action, as well as the participation of new actors. This leads to new forms of interacting, consensus-building or public dialogue, that have been promoted both by the State, and by international organizations, cooperation and development agencies and civil society organizations.

In modern governance, not only State authorities participate in the formulation and realization of public policies, but also private organizations are active participants. The State and the society cooperate with each other and this cooperation can occur at the local or at the national level. In addition to the direct collaboration between the State and the non-state actors (i.e. private corporations, civil society organizations –CSO-, and citizens in general), governance includes forms of social self-regulation, in which the private actors fulfil regulatory functions that are ultimately of public interest.

Equilibrium, negotiation and consensus-building are necessary, so that the articulation among the sectors is not threatened by the stagnation or the establishment of weak commitments that do not make it possible to solve the problems. The search for strategies and successful participation mechanisms is one of the big challenges.

In this scenario, Civil Society Organizations have a broad scope of new spaces of action and political incidence, both in the local, national and international areas, and CSO have been gradually recognized as legitimate and skilled actors. This capacity of influence has increased due to the stronger power and credibility of CSO.

Political incidence can be defined as the accumulation of activities aimed at increase access to and specially to generate influence on the actors who have decision-making power in matters of importance for a group or for the society at large.¹ On the one hand, political incidence can be regarded as a tool for real citizenship participation in government decision-making or in other spheres of power. Furthermore, political incidence can be conceived as governance, and if citizenship can manage to influence decision-making at State agencies, then civil society is exerting its own power. The political incidence is in addition a cumulative process; it is more than a single action. It requires the implementation of diverse strategies,

¹ WOLA (2002) Manual básico para la incidencia política, El Salvador.

creativity, and persistence and the success in the field of political incidence, often are, preceded by numerous failures.

The national associations of NGOs emerge as privileged actors to exert pressure or to influence policies, since their collective work and representation of common interests position these associations as core actors. In Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay the National Associations of NGOs have become reference actors in the processes of dialogue, of consensus-building, and of articulation. These processes have also been characterized by challenges, difficulties and problems. The analysis of these processes and the learnings from their own experiences are key aspects so that the associations can advance and become stronger in this function. This study aims to analyze some of the cases of political incidence in public policies on the part of national associations of NGOs in the three countries, in order to identify the weaknesses or common difficulties that the associations confront in this field and to draw lessons, that beyond borders can contribute to define strategic lines that can strengthen their capacities of political incidence.

1.1. Goals and aims

The **general goal** of this study is to conduct a brief research about the mechanisms, the scope, and the impact of the national associations of NGOs in Mexico, Uruguay, and Paraguay, in its political incidence in social policies.

A series of **specific goals** are proposed in order to achieve the general goal. These goals transcend the national contexts and try to identify common aspects and propose general lines of action for all the national associations of NGOs:

- **To analyze the different forms of relationship** of NGOs with governments, in the case of cooperation actions, and in cases of criticism or appeal to protection of rights, or in cases of social and citizen control.
- **To analyze some of the most usual participation mechanisms** and their impact on public policies.
- **To identify which are the main themes** that have required public positioning from the national associations of NGOs.
- **To analyze the relationship of the national associations** of NGOs with other actors of civil society, while working together to incidence in public policies

- **To make an assessment of the results** achieved by the associations in their incidence actions in public policies
- **To identify the strengths and the weaknesses** of the associations of NGOs in the processes of incidence in public policies, both as far as its relationship with the State is concerned, as with international cooperation agencies, with the corporate sector, as well as internally inside the organization.
- **To define guidelines or strategic orientations** to strengthen participation and incidence institutional capacities of the national associations, that can be applied to other national contexts.

1.2. Methodological considerations

The coordinating organizations in Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay carried out a brief research, whose results are presented in this final document. The methodology of the national studies included literature and document review, in-depth interviews with qualified informants, data analysis and case studies. The selection of the methodology and of the cases in each country was the responsibility of each coordinating organization. Each case study includes the problems aimed to be solved, the objectives, the partnerships, the actors, the strategies, and the results obtained.

2. CASE STUDIES: MÉXICO, PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY

From the analysis of systematizations made in Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay, is possible to identify points of contact, beyond the particularities that each country displays. The three reports offer the possibility of extracting lessons and of thinking strategies that they collaborate with a greater and better incidence of the associations of NGOs in the public policies.

2.1. CEMEFI Report, Mexico

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) represent a fundamental force to impel, manage, promote and serve the demands posed by the various social groups and regions in the country. In countries like Mexico, aspiring to reach a participative democracy, organized citizenship acquires a relevant role both through CSO as well as through the mechanisms for relationship established with the government.

It is worth noting that the 2007-2012 “Plan Nacional de Desarrollo” (*National Development Plan*) which contains a clear and feasible strategy to move forward on solid ground toward the transformation of Mexico, refers to the need to promote effective and systematic actions that help foster citizen participation in design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and public policies initiated by the government.

In order to maintain a government-civil society relationship, one of the mechanisms that have been instrumented in the course of the past few years has been the establishment of government Advisory Councils, in which CSO representatives participate. It is for the above reason that this topic was chosen to develop a paper, because we believe that an analysis and enumeration of the major existing federal government Advisory Councils will provide a general overview on the venues that have been instituted.

Included herein are also recent regulations that support the above formalization of councils. This transcends uncertainty and clarifies the volunteer condition because in the past public officers were inviting CSO’s participation as a concession to them.²

It is worth noting that Advisory Councils, given the composition of its membership, not only provide a space for dialog for national coverage organizations, as is the case of Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía – CEMEFI (*Mexican Center for Philanthropy*), but also provide a good venue for topic related networking.

2.1.1 Mayor Federal Government Citizen Advisory Councils

A summary of the existing major advisory councils to the Mexican federal government, is here presented:

A) *Citizen Advisory Council of the National System for Integral Family Development.*

This is probably one of the Councils that has been more recently established, since it was installed during 2007. Its purpose is to issue opinions and recommendations on policies and programs related to social welfare and the support needed to carry out those activities. The

² The state and municipal fields have also seen the need to have Councils in which OSC participate. As an example we have the Council for The Aged, State Councils created by the Secretaría de Salud (Secretariat of Health).

Council has 4 CSO members. Positions are honorary and these members are elected for a 3-year period.³

B) CCDS - *Advisory Councils for Sustainable Development.*

During 1995, *National Advisory Council* and four *CCDS Regional Advisory Councils for Sustainable Development* were invited by the *Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources*, to serve as advisory council members for the environmental sector. A possibility to participate in those Advisory Councils is open to higher education and research institutions, as well as to different types of organizations such as businesses, NGOs, social, women's and/or gender perspective organizations, indigenous population organizations and the youth, to participate ⁴

C) CONASIDA - *National Council for Prevention and Control of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.*

Known by its acronym as CONASIDA, its specific purpose includes all topics related to AIDS. CONASIDA is chaired by the Secretary of Health and is composed by representatives from the *Secretariat of Public Health; Mexican Institute of Social Security, Safety and Social Services Institute for State Workers, National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition Salvador Zubirán and National Institute of Public Health.* One representative from a national or international organization and one from the academic sector, through a specific invitation, may become new members and take office for a 2-year period; also, eight representatives from civil society may be invited to participate.

D) *Mexican Council for Sustainable Rural Development.*

It was established to serve as an advisory instance for SAGARPA - Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Production, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food where the interests of producers and agents of rural society were represented. Among its objectives, we find the following: To issue opinions and coordinate outgoing information and promotional activities directed to the sectors represented, on programs, actions and standards related to the concurrent special program and the systems that are considered in the *Law for Sustainable Rural Development.* Also, to participate in the establishment of special, sector programs and special concurrent programs, and to promote social participation in the sector's programming through national organizations that form part of the *Mexican Council for Sustainable Rural Development.*

The purpose is to have the interests, both of producers and agents of rural society, represented in it. Membership is composed by 50 representatives of national organizations of the social, private rural, agribusiness and marketing sectors, the fields of agribusiness production, the production systems committees, education and research institutions and non-

³ Please see the following web page: www.consejotecnicoconsultivoleydefomento.org.mx

⁴ Please see web page: <http://consejos.semarnat.gob.mx/>

government organizations. Web page for SAGARPA contains very complete and updated information indicating the full complexity of this CSO. As an example, we can observe the minutes for Advisory Council meetings showing the ample range of topics discussed, going from *Regulations for the Biosecurity Law*, through policies for the sugar cane producing sector; and from cash guaranties for the 2008 funding, and *Weather Contingency Assistance Program* to *Calendario de Apertura de Ventanillas SAGARPA 2008 (Schedule for SAGARPA's Service to Clients)*⁵.

F) Advisory Council on Development.

The *Advisory Council on Development* is the advisory organization for *Secretariat for Social Development*. Prior to July 20, 2004, it was called *Citizen Advisory Council for Social Development*). Its main purpose is to propose programs and actions on national social development policies. This Council is chaired by the Secretary of Social Development who invites the participation of an Executive Secretary, plus fifteen prestigious members from the private, social, academic, professional scientific and cultural sectors, all of them with liaisons to social development. Members hold their positions for a one-year period, with a possibility to be re-appointed for an additional year.⁶

G) CONAPASE - National Council for Social Participation in Education.

CONAPASE was instituted as part of the 1992 *National Decision for Basic Education Modernization*. On August 13, 1999 *Secretarial Decision No. 260* was published. This decision provides for the general legal CONAPASE aspects, which has the main purpose of serving as a liaison with federal and local educational authorities, as well as for cooperating with state councils, and for integrating the information and recording system of the social participation councils. CONAPASE has a membership of 50, one of which is appointed Chairman. It has an Executive Coordination and 7 task groups, 5 of which are of a permanent nature and 2 of a temporary nature. Their composition is based on the specific needs of CONAPASE itself.⁷

H.- Advisory Council for Professional Career Service

This Council is a support organization for the *Secretariat of Public Activities*. It is composed by the Secretary of Public Activities, by representatives from the *Secretariat of the Interior* (SEGOB), *Secretariat of the Treasury and Public Credit* (SHCP) and the *Secretariat of Labor and Social Security* plus a representative each from the social, private and academic sectors, upon an invitation by all other members.

⁵ Please see web page: www.sagarpa.gob.mx/cmdrs/inicio.htm

⁶ Please see web page: www.indesol.gob.mx/docs/7_transp/DeC_20_VII_2004_consejo_consultivo_de_desarrollo_social.pdf

⁷ Please see web page: www.conapase.sep.gob.mx:8090

I.- CTC - Technical Advisory Council for the Law of Promotion

The *Technical Advisory Council for the Law of Promotion*– CTC was established as a result of *Federal Law for Promotion of Activities Performed by Civil Society Organizations*, that became effective after being published in *Federal Official Journal*, on February 9, 2004 (hereinafter to be referred to as “Law on Promotion”). This Law was advocated since 1994 by Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía – CEMEFI (*Mexican Center for Philanthropy*), Convergencia de Organismos Civiles, Foro de Apoyo Mutuo and Fundación Miguel Alemán. The purpose was to have a framework of regulations to sustain a stimulating policy for actions undertaken by CSO, one of them being the participation of CSO in planning, execution and follow-up of public policies.⁸

Text in the Law on Promotion also provides for the establishment of two other instances. One of them, the *Commission for Promotion of Activities Performed by Civil Society Organizations*⁹ and the other, CTC - *Technical Advisory Council*¹⁰.

The former, *Commission for Promotion of Activities Performed by Civil Society Organizations*, is a result of the need to define promotional actions by organizations and to permit coordination between the various government agencies, as well as to assess such promotional actions. This Commission has a membership composed by representatives from *Secretariat of the Treasury and Public Credit, Secretariat of the Interior, Secretariat of Social Development* through its *National Institute of Social Development* and *Secretariat of Foreign Affairs*.

The latter, *Technical Advisory Council*– CTC, according to its regulations, has as main purpose to issue proposals and recommendations on the Registration of CSO, and also to attend on an annual basis the Commission, to perform a joint assessment of promotional policies and actions.¹¹

The Commission became effective on May 18, 2004 whereas CTC became effective on January 17, 2005. To compose CTC’s membership the election of nine CSO representatives is provided for, plus four more members that are to be invited one each from the academic, professional, scientific and cultural sectors. Two more members are also part of its Board. Both are Congress representatives, one is a House member and the other is a Senator. Holding members and substitutes are appointed for a 3-year duration period.¹²

⁸ See Law on Promotion §13 (II)

⁹ See Law on Promotion § 10

¹⁰ See Law on Promotion § 26

¹¹ Subject matter for Consejo Técnico Consultivo- CTC (*Technical Advisory Council for the Law of Promotion*) can be found in web page: www.corresponsabilidad.gob.mx as well as in its own web page. It can also be found at the newly created web page: www.consejotecnicoconsultivoleydefomento.org.mx

¹² A Bill of Law is presently at the House of Representatives to grant additional powers to al CTC and grant additional resources to CTC so as to fund its work.

2.1.2. Comments on Advisory Councils

After researching the advisory Councils under study, the following comments in this section seem pertinent.

- *Their formal establishment is relatively recent as legal provisions ruling on these councils are fairly recent too (see table No. 1). Therefore CTC was established is only 3 years old while the Citizen Advisory Council of Social Development) was established ten years ago, and the Citizen Advisory Council of the National System for Integral Family Development was instituted only one year before this paper was drafted.*
- *Advisory councils have members working on a pro-bono basis. This permits the CSO representatives to have the condition they hold.*
- *Council membership is variable in number in duration and nature. For instance there are four CSO members, nine at CTC, whereas at National Council for Social Participation in Education there are 50 members. Their operation is expected to be variable depending on regulations guiding their activities, the scope of agreements and decisions they need to follow, and the funding obtained.*

Nevertheless, membership for citizen councils has represented a window of opportunity for organizations having membership with national coverage, such as CEMEFI. Following its major strategic lines, CEMEFI “is to provide a voice for supportive sector positions.”¹³. On the date this paper was published, Jacqueline Butcher, CEMEFI’s Chairperson, is a member of the *Citizen Advisory Council of the National System for Integral Family Development*. Also, Jorge Villalobos, CEMEFI’s Executive President has held a position at the *Advisory Council on Social Development* for the *Secretariat for Social Development* and is presently a member of the *Advisory Council for Professional Career Service*; and Consuelo Castro, Legal Coordinator, and the author of this paper, is a member of the CTC.

By means of these advisory instances of the federal government, dialog is established between government and these organizations that aspire to participate in the design, follow up and assessment of public policies. Nevertheless, Laura Sarvide, in her research paper entitled "Relación Gobierno-Sociedad Civil" (*Government-Civil Society Relationship*) warns that, given the nature of Councils, important incidence limitations are found on public policies, because council decisions or agreements do not possess a binding or mandatory nature.¹⁴ Challenges

¹³ CEMEFI - Documento de planeación estratégica del CEMEFI 2008 (*CEMEFI's 2008 Strategic Planning Document*).

¹⁴ Sarvide, Laura, et. al. *Relación Gobierno-Sociedad Civil*. Espiral, S.C. Primera edición, México, D.F., abril de 2003, p. 27

faced by councils are of a miscellaneous nature. Design and assessment of public policies addressed to the non-profit sector itself, is still one of the main challenges. Nevertheless, some progress has been made, such as the report prepared by Cuauhtémoc López and María Columba, 2006 *Report on Assessment of Federal Public Actions Fostering Activities Performed by Civil Society Organizations*.¹⁵

Another one of the achievements CTC has reached is that thanks to its active advocacy action and that of other organizations such as CEMEFI, fiscal incentives have been incorporated into human rights organizations in accordance with the federal fiscal legislation.

Table No. 1

Major Councils that have participation by CSOs

Name of Council	Government Agency	Legal Framework	Date Published * (DOF)
<i>Citizen Advisory Council on Development</i>	<i>Secretariat for Social Development (SEDESOL)</i>	Decision by which Consejo Consultivo Ciudadano de Desarrollo Social is established as an advisory body to Secretaría de Desarrollo Social.	7-XII-1998 Annulled 20-VI-2004
<i>Advisory Council on Development</i>	<i>Secretariat for Social Development</i>	Decree by which Consejo Consultivo de Desarrollo Social was established	20-VI-2004
<i>Technical Advisory Council for the Law of Promotion - (CTC)</i>	<i>Commission for Promotion of Activities Performed by Civil Society Organizations</i>	Ley Federal de Fomento a las Actividades Realizadas por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil	9 -II-2004
		Regulations for Comisión de Fomento de las Actividades Realizadas por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil	23-XI-2004
		Regulations for Ley Federal de Fomento a las Actividades Realizadas por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil	7-VI-2005
<i>Citizen Advisory Council of the SNDIF</i>	<i>National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF)</i>	Ley de Asistencia Social	2-IX-2004
		Regulations for Consejo Ciudadano Consultivo del Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia	29-XI-2006

¹⁵ López Casillas Cuauhtémoc Arturo et al., Avances y Desafíos de la Relación Sociedad Civil y Gobierno. Secretaría de Gobernación Avances y Desafíos, pags. 141-218

		Decision for the public call to elect members of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) as members to Consejo Ciudadano Consultivo del Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia for the 2006-2009 term	1-III- 2007
<i>Advisory Councils for Sustainable Development (CCS)</i>	<i>Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)</i>	Ley General del Equilibrio Ecológico y la Protección al Ambiente	28-I-1988. Reformed 23-02-2005
		Decision by which Consejo Consultivo Nacional, and six Regional Consejos Consultivos are established	21-IV-1995 Reformed 21-XI-2002
		Decision by which Consejo Consultivo Nacional, and six Regional Consejos Consultivos, and thirty two Core Consejos Consultivos for Sustainable Development are established	14-III-2008
<i>National Council for Prevention and Control of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (CONASIDA)</i>	<i>Secretariat of Public Health (SS)</i>	Decree to reform Consejo Nacional para la Prevención y el Control del Síndrome de la Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida, and by which Decree to establish Consejo Nacional para la Prevención y Control del Síndrome de la Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida, Published on August 24, 1988 is annulled	3-VI- 2001
		Internal Regulations for Consejo Nacional para la Prevención y el Control del Síndrome de la Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida	5-XI-2002
<i>Mexican Council for Sustainable Rural Development</i>	<i>Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Production, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA)</i>	Ley de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable	7-XII-2001 Reforma 02-II-2007
<i>National Council for Social Participation in Education (CONAPASE)</i>	<i>Secretariat of Public Education (SEP)</i>	Secretarial Agreement No. 260	13-VIII- 1999
		Internal By-Laws for CONAPASE	2-XII-1999
<i>Advisory Council for Professional Career</i>	<i>Secretariat of Public Activities</i>	Ley del Servicio Profesional de Carrera en la Administración Pública Federal	10-IV-2003

Service		Regulations for Ley del Servicio Profesional de Carrera en la Administración Pública Federal	6-IX-2007
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- DOF - Diario Oficial de la Federación (*Federal Official Journal*), is the communicating journal for the Federal Government.

It is worth noting that this effort by authorities and CTC members has been very significant to set the bases and assess as a whole, the development policies towards CSO. Given the short life after their establishment that some of these councils have had, it is impossible to judge with precision their success or their failure, particularly when it comes to its rate of efficiency for incidence into public policies.

However, it may be concluded that, in the course of the past few years, a binding space has been institutionalized by means of the creation of advisory councils to the federal government, which permits consolidation of the government-civil society relationship. In spite of limitations, and given the advisory-only nature of the councils, they represent an opportunity for CSO to be able not only to follow up on public policies but also to influence them, particularly for those with an inclusive and representative character of the interests of their sector.

2.2. POJOAJU Report, Paraguay

2.2.1. Presentation

Paraguay is facing a new situation: the alternation in the government of a political party that stayed in power for more than sixty years, thirty-five years of which corresponded to a dictatorship period –with all the consequences the population had to bear. The Nation must face this alternation with responsibility and integrity so that its benefits reach all its inhabitants. This new situation, which is marked by hope for social, political and economic changes, brings about new, urgent and strong challenges to the organizations of the civil society because they will have to fulfil a leading role.

Some NGOs and social movements may suffer weaknesses because their main referents may be incorporated to the new government. However, the new government will need to hear the civil society’s critical voice in order to monitor public policies and disseminate the social demands from excluded and discriminated sectors.

This situation demands developing mechanisms for participative democracy, training social leaders and strengthening the NGOs and the national networks for the generation of initiatives with increased consistency and commitment for change, maintaining the autonomy that distinguishes the NGOs as social organizations.

This report briefly seeks to gather the elements that will allow reflecting upon the results of actions recently performed, to identify the more sensitive issues and outline some suggestions for the participation in the public policies that affect the interest of the organizations of the civil society.

To the purposes of this report, we identify seven social participation levels, with different degrees of range and depth, according to the pursued objectives.

A. Access to information: There is no participation without information. For instance, we have the Public Hearings for Report Submission, informative meetings such as the open municipal Councils, citizens' information office, among others.

B. Consultation: This level through which the government makes its decision considering the received opinions is still primary in matters of civil society participation because the final decision always comes from the authorities that can accept or reject (totally or partially) the community's concerns. Some examples are the public hearings, neighbour consultation, neighbour government, etc.

C. Decision: A specific example of the right of citizens to petition, propose initiatives at local level occurs for instance, the responsibility to select the works and public utilities projects that will be financed, for instance, the Agreement Boards of Participative Strategic Plans or the tripartite commissions (Executive, Legislative and social organizations) which must deal with participative budget projects.

D. Citizen control: For the control of the execution of projects and government action, specifically, this includes the authorities' management of public resources. One example is the Citizen Comptrollers' Office, which investigates corruption cases in the public administration, in ministries, decentralized entities or state-owned companies.

E. Co-management authorities – citizens: The participation of social organizations in the formulation of public policies, including the execution and supervision of the use of public property and public utilities has many examples in the municipal scope, there are many examples such as the construction of infrastructure works in neighbourhoods and rural areas.

F. Investigation and public denunciations: The summon occurs when there is total or partial concealment of information, in corruption cases, arbitrary measures, or a potential damage to public interest.

G. Protest and social mobilization: It is a collective action of social actors who make a public stand and demand answers from the authorities over specific requests on matters that affect their interests, which can be from a sector or referred to the common good of the population. This is one of the most common participative mechanisms used that shows dissatisfaction in the relations between the civil society and the authorities.

The NGOs and their networks, National Association of NGOs, resort in a high degree to consultation, investigation and denunciation mechanisms. There are cases of co-management such as the participation in environmental policies (CONAM, its initials for National Council for the Environment) with good results or in the combat against corruption with meagre results. The neighbour organizations and Citizen Comptrollers' Office show higher degrees of practice in participative budgets or in the social control in specific public management cases but with still limited results. The challenge is to achieve higher spaces for political, social and economic participation through the incidence role that can be exerted by an *active citizenship* –higher participative democracy– in order to show progresses in exclusion scenes.

2.2.2. Incidence mechanisms of national networks of NGOs and POJOAJU

Next, we present the report of the main mechanisms developed by Paraguay Association of NGOs POJOAJU, and the national networks of NGOs.

CONAM. POJOAJU, has been performing incidence tasks in the debate of issues concerning regulations of the Law of Wild Life N° 96/93; of the Law of Protected Wild Areas N° 352/1994; the creation of the National Fund for the Environment; the Law of Waters; the Law of territorial classification of the Republic of Paraguay; the raising of the reservoir level and the social and environmental debts of the bi national hydroelectric dam Yacretá; the initiative on the agriculture of soybeans; the national strategy for biodiversity; among other issues.

Dialogue Board for the consolidation of the Central Zone of the Natural and Cultural Patrimony Ayoreo Totobiegosode, Alto Paraguay – Chaco. POJOAJU took part of this Board as a Joint Observer along with members of the Government, Paraguayan Indigenous Institute, Secretariat for Environment's Affairs, UNDP, Private Entities Network in the

Service of the Indigenous Peoples representatives in Paraguay, Paraguay Non-Government Environmental Organizations and Paraguay Human Rights Coordinating Board. In addition to the defence of the patrimony, the Board proposes to keep a watch over the welfare of the Ayoreo Tobiegosode indigenous relatives in state of voluntary isolation before eventual encounters/contacts with the other Tobiegosode indigenous people in process of recent sedentary process or any other member of the national society, to stop the deforestation of their traditional forests by cattle ranchers and mechanized agriculture.

Interaction mechanism Inter-American Development Bank - Civil Society. POJOAJU led the participation of the civil society in the design and elaboration of the regulation for the Civil Society Advisory Board (*Consejo Asesor de la Sociedad Civil - CASC*) of the IDB, which seeks to constitute in a participation mechanism in the project cycle, in a first stage; and later in the Country Strategy (4 years) and the annual operative cycle. The IDB holds an important weight in financing different development projects of the country and seeks to encourage the social control to combat possible corruption practices and to utilize social equity criteria and environmental sustainability in the orientation and application of the loans, among other factors.

National Council for Integrity (*Consejo Nacional de Integridad - CISNI*). POJOAJU led, together with other social organizations (unions, peasants, etc.), a critical and proactive position to combat corruption, for the transparency and integrity in this mixed consultant public-private council. It contributed with anticorruption initiatives and it summoned the CISNI Chairman himself (who was at the same time Economic Adviser Minister of the President of the Republic), because he was denounced by Comptroller General's Office of the Republic and by the media for alleged acts of corruption. In view of the impunity endorsed by the government's representatives and as an act of protest, the NGOs, peasant and union organizations withdrew from CISNI, which took public credibility from the program and later the Chairman submitted his resignation to the position. The civil society summoned the government for its lack of coherence.

Alliance of Organizations of the civil society for Monitoring the Process of Selection of the State Attorney General. POJOAJU, International Transparency and the Networks of Citizen Comptrollers' Office are part of it. It is composed of 30 organizations of the civil society that combat corruption and promote citizen participation. A public hearing was held to introduce citizens' proposals to the State Attorney General when he assumed office.

Alliance for Monitoring the Coastal Strip (*Alianza para el Monitoreo de la Franja Costera – AMFC*). POJOAJU made an assessment of its participation in this space and after a wide and participative debate and at the request of several NGOs partners and poor residents social movements of the *Bañados* (floodable areas by the Paraguay River in Asuncion), decided to withdraw from the debate for not agreeing with the work of the AMFC and some NGO partners, due to the lack of a high transparency and access to information on the project. Nevertheless, this raised situation allowed POJOAJU to strengthen its cooperation links with the organization COBAÑADOS¹⁶

Permanent Citizen Observatory to combat corruption. A social articulation was started and summoned by Transparency Paraguay and other organizations, including POJOAJU. Its goal was to monitor the execution of the Inter–American Agreement to Combat Corruption signed by the Paraguayan Government, in addition to promoting a process for awareness of citizens on the effects of corruption.

Social articulation against the installation of Cargill grain port. The Cargill soybean multinational company is building a grain port near the water source in the Paraguay River that provides water for Asuncion’s metropolitan area. The enterprise puts the area in serious risk of contamination because of the operation and eventual accidents in that port. There are studies that reveal the serious socio-environmental impact of the port activities on the inhabitants of the region. POJOAJU participates together with environmental organizations, NGOs, social movements, in a campaign to move this port. Among the mechanisms used are the Public Hearings at the Municipal Legislative, the protest mobilizations and awareness of society.

2.2.3 Identification of the main issues

- Rural development, agrarian reform and rural poverty in view of the advance of mechanized agriculture and, specially, agriculture of soybeans and the expulsion of peasants. Food sovereignty.
- Support and solidarity for the indigenous peoples who try to preserve their forests and regularize their ancestral lands in Alto Paraguay as well as they request the watch over their relatives in voluntary isolation. Respect for the identity and culture of the indigenous peoples.

¹⁶ Coordinadora de Organizaciones Sociales y Comunitarias de los Bañados de Asunción Asunción - COBAÑADOS (Coordinating Board of social and community organization of floodable areas).

- The expropriation of a part of the large state of the Moon Sect, on behalf of the people of Casado, Paraguayan Chaco. This case was won in the Parliament and voided by the judiciary branch.
- Public criticism to the proposals to combat poverty presented by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank without the participation of local actors. These proposals were labelled as canned goods because they pretended to be established from Washington.
- Rejection to the changes in the Penal Code known as Antiterrorist Law for violating elementary human rights which represented a regressive step. For example, the penalty for stealing cattle was double than the penalty for raping children, among other cases.
- The combat against the pesticide law promoted by soybean companies with the cooperation of networks and NGOs and social movements such as ROAM¹⁷, ONAC¹⁸, CENOCIP¹⁹, MCNOC²⁰, CONAMURI²¹, CEIDRA²², Permanent Popular Plenary. POJOAJU supports CODEHUPY's²³ reports on the "irresponsible and indiscriminate use of toxic products which affect indigenous and peasant communities".
- Workshops for human rights "It is time for democracy with rights", with the participation of Paraguay Human Rights Coordinating Board and social organizations. It seeks to reflect upon the human rights situation in the country, report on abuses and demand the fulfilment of human rights by the State.
- Demands for justice, reparation and security for the victims of Ycua Bolaños supermarket fire and no more impunity and protection to material and economic goods above the Right to Life (Asuncion, December 5, 2007) were presented in a meeting with the President of the Supreme Court Alicia Pucheta de Correa.
- Formulation of social policies to combat poverty with gender focus. Defence and promotion of the rights of women, combat domestic violence, discrimination and social exclusion.
- Demands to the government for public policies to deal with the situation of children who beg on the streets and in extreme poverty.

¹⁷ Red de Organizaciones Ambientalistas del Paraguay - ROAM (Network of Environmental Organizations).

¹⁸ Organización Nacional Campesina - ONAC (National Peasant Organization).

¹⁹ Central Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Populares - CENOCIP (National Central of Peasant, Indigenous and Popular Organizations).

²⁰ Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas - MCNOC (National Coordinating Board of Peasant Organizations).

²¹ Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones de Mujeres Trabajadoras Rurales e Indígenas de Paraguay – CONAMURI (Paraguay National Coordinating Board of Rural and Indigenous Women Workers).

²² Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones de Derecho Rural y Reforma de la Universidad Católica – CEIDRA (Catholic Church Centre for Rural Law and Reform Studies and Research).

²³ Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay – CODEHUPY (Paraguay Human Rights Coordinating Board).

- POJOAJU petitioned the renegotiation of the Itaipu Treaty to the governments of Brazil and Paraguay in the MERCOSUR Social Summits in Brasilia (December 2006), in Asuncion June 2007) and in Montevideo (December 2007).
- The reform of the judicial system towards an independent judiciary. The courts should not be subject to partisan intervention, specially, in the appointment of judges.
- Demands for universal policies to enforce the basic rights to food, education, health, housing, access to land, water, electricity, access to new communication technologies, gender equality, rights of the indigenous people, security benefits and social security, life in a healthy and safe environment and the right to work in one's own country for the entire population.

2.2.4. Relationships with other organizations of the civil society.

Support for rural organizations in diagnoses and proposals. Approached by rural networks of private development organization, together with Paraguay Human Rights Coordinating Board (CODEHUPY) and POJOAJU, meetings are held in order to analyze the countryside problem and seek solutions in topics linked to the production of family agriculture; access to land and public utilities; the market prices and state subsidies; the effects of the extensive cultivation of single crops (soybeans and ethanol); the internal and external migration; new alternatives for sustainable production for the small producer; combating poverty, agriculture fuels, agrarian reforms, and others.

Support for Victims of the Ycuá Bolaños Supermarket Fire, where 400 people died. POJOAJU has assisted the different activities of the victims of the supermarket fire, among them, the campaign "THERE IS NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE" Ycuá Bolaños NEVER AGAIN!, promoted by the Coordinating Board of the Organization of Victims, Families and Friends of the Ycuá Bolaños supermarket fire, with the objective to maintain mobilizations until the verdict of the trial against the supermarket shareholders.

POJOAJU support the expropriation of lands of the Moon Sect on behalf of the Puerto Casado community (52 thousand hectares that represents 8% alone of the large state of 650 thousand hectares). It carried out its work before the Chamber of Senators of the Nation. As well, there was support for the mobilizations with the national networks of NGOs and POJOAJU. The battle was won in the Chamber of Senators but, later, the Supreme Court declared the unconstitutionality of the expropriation Law approved by the Parliament, which led to the loss of this claim.

Support for feminist organizations. POJOAJU participated as the NGO that convoked Paraguay Third Feminist Meeting “History of struggles, power transformation” in November 2007. More than 400 women (from different social, indigenous, rural, civil organizations and the media from different parts of the country) participated. Progress was made in the debate on the social building from the gender equity perspective and there has been a contribution to a better awareness of society on these proposals.

Southern Peoples Summit for “Building Sovereignty”. Organized by: Paraguay Association of NGOs POJOAJU, Paraguay Central Unions Coordinating Board, Paraguayan Initiative for the Integration of the Peoples (Paraguayan Chapter of the Continental Social Alliance), the Social and Joint MERCOSUR, Program “Without Excuses against Poverty” - Paraguay, and peasant and indigenous organizations. It was held in June 2007, in Asuncion, as a parallel event to the Summit of MERCOSUR Presidents. The objective was to continue with the debate raised in the former popular summits with a broader alliance among different social sectors, and deepen the discussions on the broad sense of sovereignty in the region.

More than 1,500 people from social, popular, union and peasant organizations from seven countries in the region discussed diagnoses and proposals by focusing on the topic of sovereignty from seven thematic points common to the agenda of the social movements such agriculture business: Food sovereignty and agriculture fuels; militarization, criminalization of the social struggles and Antiterrorist Law; energy, infrastructure, development policies and funding; alliance between social movements and political organizations in the change processes in Latin America and Paraguay; employment creation; migration and Labour Rights; social inclusion – Identity – Diversity – Culture; asymmetries in the integration of the Peoples.

National Coordinating Board for Sovereignty and to combat impunity and State Terrorism. It was started on August 14, 2007, initially promoted in the Southern Peoples Summit (June 2007). It is an important articulation of some 30 organizations of the civil society and social and political movements in Paraguay that agree on the defence of democracy and the rights of those most excluded people from society, of the victims of injustice both in the dictatorship period and in the transition to democracy; for a more equal and sustainable development model that enables the reduction of inequalities and an access to a better quality of life. October 19, 2007 marked the huge mobilization in repudiation and rejection to impunity, authoritarianism and state terrorism, increasing the awareness of society. It made the Senate reject an unpopular legislative bill that, under the pretext of antiterrorism, violated several human rights that male/female citizens conquered 18 years ago with the fall of the dictatorship.

Electoral Control. The network of NGOs DECIDAMOS²⁴, CIPAE²⁵, CDE²⁶, POJOAJU and social organizations among others promoted the project SAKA²⁷ for transparency and electoral control in the general elections held in the Republic of Paraguay on April 20, 2008.

2.2.5 Result evaluation

In the last few years there has been an increase in the quality and quantity of social organizations that seek to have incidence in the public policies in Paraguay. Although this phenomenon is still far from being considered as high incidence, due to the limited results that are generally observed, we must value the important effort and increase of the NGOs, national networks and POJOAJU actions.

The lack of resources, the weaknesses in the organizational structure and the conditionings imposed by some agencies in the cooperation programs can be considered as restraining or weakening factors. To this, we must add the government attacks that seek to do harm to the reputation of the NGOs the before the public opinion. Several officials, including the President of the Republic Nicanor Duarte, held the NGOs responsible for problems such as the children in the streets, the situation of the indigenous peoples, etc, by pointing out that they get many donations, but do nothing to solve these social problems.

Among the results that could be considered as very encouraging, we can point out the contributions in the defence of the environment, the awareness over the use of toxic products in agriculture, the defence of human rights and its follow-up by CODEHUPY for more than 10 years, the parallel reports of the civil society in areas of gender, women's rights, economic, social and cultural rights, the fulfilment of the convention to combat corruption, impunity and others.

A very positive aspect observed is how social movements and the NGOs are striving towards a closer relationship. The former has the capacity for mobilization and social protest. The latter has the strength to formulate diagnosis and proposals for public policies as well as support in lobby processes before the Parliament. This acquired a renewed force in the Southern Peoples Summit for "Building Sovereignty" (June 2007), and that later ended in the creation of a coordinating board for sovereignty and against impunity. It unites thirty

²⁴ DECIDAMOS, *Campaña por la Expresión Ciudadana* (Campaign for Citizen Expression).

²⁵ *Comité de Iglesias para Ayudas de Emergencias - CIPAE* (Committee of Churches for Emergency Aid).

²⁶ *Centro de Documentación y Estudios - CDE* (Documentation and Studies Centre).

²⁷ *SAKÁ Iniciativa para la Transparencia Electoral* (SAKÁ Initiative for Electoral Transparency - SAKÁ means "transparency" in Guarani).

movements, social and political organizations, NGOs, etc, which achieve unity in the action on shared claims before the State. This occurs in front of the other contrary phenomenon: the breaking of political parties and movements during the recent electoral process.

In Paraguay's case, the access to information is, generally, poor. There is progress at the level of public entities and local governments. Social movements, such as the peasant associations, workers unions, homeless and landless, resort to public denunciations, protest and social mobilization in a high degree given the government's little ability to respond to their claims.

2.3. ANONG Report, Uruguay

2.3.1. Introduction

Diversity is one of the characteristics of civil society in Uruguay, not only because of the way in which they organizations group themselves and the manner in which they work, but also because of the topics they focus on. Within this ample spectrum of society, we find grassroots and community cultural, social and sports activities organizations; and we also find labor unions, service organizations, defense of rights groups, foundations, educational institutions and cooperative organizations.

Within this context, ANONG, an umbrella non-profit civil association, established on September 1992 serves as the core for 90 NGOs all over the country. The activity of the organizations is linked to the development of a wide diversity of topics: social sciences, communication, consumers, culture, human rights, local development, farming, health, economics, education, childhood, regional integration, environment, women, small and medium size businesses, labor unions, third age, violence, housing, and volunteering.

From its inception, ANONG has contributed to the permanent relations established between civil society and State organizations, especially with those that serve social policies, whether national or municipal. ANONG also holds a tight relationship with international organizations, multi-lateral agencies, and similar associations in the region. ANONG is presently participating in around 20 inter-institutional areas of miscellaneous types, and is permanently called to participate. Some of the most important areas in the national level are: *the Space for Social Dialogue; ART Local Development Program; National Honorary Consulting Council for the Rights of Children; Committee for Eradication of Children's Labor; Commission for the Establishment*

of the National Institute of Human Rights; Economic and Social Consultant Forum for MERCOSUR; Mirror Committee for ISO Standards on Social Responsibility; Committee to Prevent Sexual Violence against Children; COTAOT (Consulting Commission for Territorial Zoning); COTAMA (Technical Consulting Commission for Environmental Protection) and the Consultative Council of the Ombudsman.

2.3.2. Civil Society and State: between policy execution and incidence

The State has a major role in the making, executing and funding of public policies, although presently there are new actors that share with the State the implementation of its policies, as well as the participation in some instances of policy design and development. During the last decades CSOs have started to offer social benefits that were previously only offered by the State. In Uruguay, agreements to execute social policies signed between these organizations and the State, have developed a growing importance and have been incorporated, although slowly, into a considerable number of State organizations. As an example, it is worth noting the extensive participation of civil society in the field of INAU (National Institute for Children and Teenagers), which is the official organization in charge of serving minors. Official data from SIPI (Public Information Service) for August 2007 reveal that for permanent type benefits, CSO cover 86% of the children and teenagers at the Institute²⁸.

On the other hand, PANES (Emergency Plan) by the Ministry of Social Development - MIDES, through its programs *Work for Uruguay* and *Building Exit Roads* among others, is able to almost completely implement them with CSOs. Experience of Plan CAIF (Care Centers for Children and Families) is outstanding, because right from its inception it incorporated the participation of civil society to establish the Care Centers that to this date surpass 300 all over the country.

Incidence of CSOs in terms of processes has grown in the past few years, with an incorporation of society representatives in a diversity of work commissions and consulting organizations, at various levels, depending on the topics, situations, and institutional strengths implied. However, CSOs continue to participate mostly during the policy implementation stage, through service co-management and, at a lesser level, in policy decision making and development.

In this sense, the capability civil society has to determine agenda is very limited. According to a report by the Department of Social Policies at the Planning and Budgeting Office a topic to keep in mind is that the heterogeneity of civil society makes it have multiple

²⁸ Source: INAU official web page www.inau.gub.uy

agendas. Some civil society organizations have a higher impact than others on the development of policies. For example, labor unions or chambers of commerce have a track record and a proven mobilization capability to generate influence than do NGOs or grassroots organizations. In the above mentioned document a qualified informant expressed: “There are levels of incidence, but I consider that there is no capability to establish an agenda before other agendas that are basically determined by government initiatives, by political parties initiatives or, in a very dynamic conjunction, by initiatives of international agendas influencing the government or influencing civil society can be determined”.²⁹

According to data revealed and studies performed on the CIVICUS Index for Civil Society in Uruguay between 2004 and 2006³⁰, there is a determined inability to produce dialogue channels between the State and CSOs, although there is no clear definition of the forms of interaction for them, and it is seen that dialog can only be found for a small subgroup of CSOs. As an example, in a survey performed on CSOs and their direct counterparts (government, corporations, academics, international organizations, donors), 61% of the individuals interviewed state that dialog between the State and civil society is non-existent, or is limited.

2.3.3. Two case studies

As mentioned above, at a national level ANONG has become a benchmark for civil society and is permanently invited to participate in miscellaneous multi-sector areas to represent “civil society” beyond its 90 members. This is a considerable challenge for ANONG, not only because it represents a very diverse sector when it comes to topics, interests and capabilities, but also because of its own institutional capabilities that have not permitted it to have so far a pro-active attitude but rather a reactive one, to respond to situations it has been faced with. In spite great advances have been made in the different spaces of incidence, from two distinct situations hereinafter referred to, we can draw some conclusions, recommendations or lines to follow that will permit to strengthen ANONG and turn it into a more pro-active actor with a higher incidence capability.

First Case: Space for Social Dialogue

²⁹ Report on Social Responsibility and Public Policies. “El papel de las empresas, las organizaciones y los ciudadanos.” OPP, Montevideo, December 2006

³⁰ “Brillos e impurezas de un diamante” (*Glitter and Impurities of a Diamond*). Results on the implementation of CIVICUS Index on Uruguay’s Civil Society, ICD, 2006

In the year 2005, for the first time in its history, Uruguay had a leftist government. This was considered by civil society allied to that sector as a big triumph in the struggle for social justice. However, with the establishment of the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), right from the moment the new government took office, difficulties arose between the new organization and CSOs. Within the bill of law for the new ministry, some clauses considered authoritarian and highly interfering in the CSOs autonomy were included, which jointly with the lack of consultation with CSOs in the definition of programs for the new ministry, and the establishment of a new bill of law for volunteers, created concerns. A significant turn was made for CSOs to implement programs.

As a reaction on October 27, 2005 the “*Space for Social Dialogue*” (referred to as Space) was installed with the purpose “to analyze, discuss, and prepare recommendations on social policies, offering the visions and proposals from civil society to be considered within the planning that is being performed by the State”³¹. It defines that this space will have the participation of MIDES representatives and umbrella civil society organizations such as: ANONG, Federación Uruguaya de Cooperativas de Vivienda de Ayuda Mutua (FUCVAM), Confederación de Entidades Cooperativas (CUDECOOP), Asociación Uruguaya de Educación Católica (AUDEC), Espacio de Economía Solidaria, Federación de Institutos Populares de Educación Infantil (FIPEI), la Comisión Nacional de Seguimiento Mujeres por Democracia, Equidad y Ciudadanía (CNS), Cáritas Uruguay and Federación de Cooperativas de Producción del Uruguay - FCPU. By mid-2007, Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos became a part of the Space.

On December 2006, a new instance of articulation was formed between the Space for Social Dialogue and the Consejo Nacional de Políticas Sociales (*National Council of Social Politics*), an inter-ministry instance composed by the *Ministry of Work and Social Security, Ministry of Economy and Finances, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Environment and Housing* and with representatives from the *Congress of Mayors and Decentralized Organizations*. The purpose of this new instance was to configure a multi-parts organization for policy discussions, as well as to monitor and assess current social policies. However after the first meeting was held, there were no additional meetings. The perception is that is a way for government to endorse decisions on public policies, without actually having a true participation by civil society. In the course of the year 2007 activities by the Space had a notorious decrease, with considerable stagnation in relation

³¹ Web page for Ministerio de Desarrollo Social <<http://www.mides.org.uy>>

to participation and proposals, without an agenda and without a committed participation, and this was considered as a crisis.

Such situation moved all members to assess the value of the Space, and to re-think its participation. ANONG prepared a diagnosis with the point of view of its leading participants which conclusions would help for proposals. From diagnosis on the Space³² one can identify some difficulties could be identified and also made participants re-think and imagine new means of participation and incidence for umbrella platforms and organizations. Some of the main obstacles identified are the following:

- *Being a collective actor without losing individuality.*
- *The difficulty of bringing together CSOs themselves* in order to produce a common agenda.
- *A lack of commitment and dedication* to produce impacts that are effective
- *A lack of sufficient information* provided by government.
- *A lack of trust* between government and CSOs.

Second case: Annulment of tax exemptions to CSOs

On July 1st, 2007 a new fiscal regime that considers cancellation of some fiscal exemptions for civil society organizations in Uruguay became effective. According to article 90 of the new Law number 18.083, dated December 27, 2006, this new regime would not be applicable to institutions covered by articles 5 and 69 of the Uruguayan Constitution, articles that provide that religious organizations and “private education and cultural institutions of the same nature have fiscal exemption for national and municipal taxes, as a subsidy for their services”.

In spite of the fact that both the Law and the Constitution are indeed clear in this respect, an important number of organizations that were enjoying the fiscal exemptions for employer payments covered under article 69 of the Constitution, were receiving communications from BPS (*Bank for Contingency/Pension Funds*), which is the organization collecting labor and retirement funds, notifying them that as of that date such exemption was being cancelled.

The possibility for NGOs to have to pay taxes, retirement an sick-leave fees, among other fiscal payments provided for in the new fiscal system, produced alarm. ANONG publicly stated that organizations do not have the financial capability to be able to pay for such

³² Diagnóstico del Espacio de Diálogo Social. La percepción de sus propios protagonistas. ANONG, diciembre 2007. Disponible en www.anong.org.uy

expenses, and as unconstitutional. Some organizations that have established agreements with the State posed the possibility of cancelling those agreements, situation that generated public alarm given that a considerable part of the most vulnerable sectors in the population would be left with no coverage for the social services rendered by those CSOs. ANONG claimed the annulment of such mandate by BPS and the establishment of a special commission, jointly with the Executive power, to discuss the tax exemptions levied.

In the month of July of 2007 there was an intense political uprising, as a result, the President of the Republic, Dr. Tabaré Vázquez, communicated the temporary suspension for 120 days of such measure and the criteria for a “case by case” revision were defined on July 16 and formalized by a decree published on July 25.

The case of educational institutions seemed to be out of such discussion, but interpretation posed a larger problem because it referred to the definition of which were the organizations that were included into the “cultural organization” bracket. The mentioned decree provided for the establishment of a inter ministry task group was formed. ANONG’s position was to advocate with Representatives and Senators of the Republic against the unconstitutional provisions and to provide the definition criteria for educative and cultural institutions which would allow them to be considered tax exempt.

After nine months of negotiations, on March 14, 2008, the Executive Power signed a decree to regulate exemptions on employer taxes for civil society organizations and religious institutions. This decree was considered to be unclear in how it defined educational and religious institutions. Thus, ANONG, jointly with AUDEC (*Uruguayan Association for Catholic Education*), *Episcopal Conference* and *Federation of Evangelical Churches*, worked to draft and advocate a complementary decree that was, eventually, signed on March 27, 2008.

ANONG has to work very hard in the Follow-up Commission on Decree dated March 14. The mentioned Commission is to be composed by representatives from Ministries plus three civil society members from the cultural, social and sports sectors. There will be a possibility to cooperate in the establishment of mechanisms to provide for monitoring, comptrollers and accountability activities. With this, CSOs will have the assurance that a transparent process in the allocation of tax exemptions will be obtained in the future, something that up to this date has been considered to be handled discretionally by the government.

2.3.4. Conclusions and recommendations

Considering the cases under study, we are able to identify obstacles that endanger an adequate development of political participation actions, which can anticipate the situations that may be encountered in the future, and we also discovered that there are some ideas for a more pro-active process. Some of the weaknesses found in the cases under analysis are:

- A great individuality in CSOs that hinders the possibility of topic analyzing or negotiations with the State, on more global terms. Umbrella organizations such as ANONG, must consider as a matter of ethics to have their members transcend the work they do beyond their own organizations in order to build common agendas.
- There is a weak capability for analysis and setting of mid-term goals. In the case of the Space for Social Dialogue, participants are mostly looking at the needs of their own organizations and cannot have a more ample view of the needs of the whole situation.
- There is no social monitoring on a systematic and consistent manner. Some follow-up initiatives for public activities are considered in certain areas, although there is a considerable deficit due to lack of transparency and accountability by agencies, plus the difficulties to access public information. This can be seen in the analysis and awarding of tax exemptions.
- CSOs are unable, in general, to systemize learning and turn learning into institutional capabilities. This problem is seen both inside the organizations and in collective action spaces.

In order to develop a purpose oriented participation in politics, and to develop institutional capabilities for incidence, here are some recommendations:

- Provide an egalitarian access to information. The coordination of social policies would allow government authorities to present their government plans to social organizations. As a consequence, organized civil society would be able to present its own concrete and specific proposals in relation to government proposals.
- Train and educate the decision making process actors. Participants need to be prepared to intervene and contribute to debate in an efficient manner by transferring resources such as training and establish commitments from a core organization to a peripheral one.
- Transcend immediacy. There are different points of view, and there is a need to acknowledge the diversity of social realities and priorities in the social policies of a country. For this purpose, it is necessary to generate debates, in a rational and egalitarian manner.

- Generate systems of trust. The sense of belonging produced when there is trust among participants permits participants to transcend immediacy: To think beyond one's own organization to produce a global view and be able to design of social policies relevant for all society. To generate such trust, it is necessary to have good communication and transparent interaction mechanisms.
- Horizontal communications logic. When information concentrates in a single organization, all other actors are under unequal conditions when the time comes to make suggestions. As a consequence, member participation in decision making areas decreases, and lack of trust and frustration develop.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the experience of the National Associations of NGOs in Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay, this joint document, extracts some of the lessons learned that may be helpful to other national associations of NGOs in their design of strategies in order to strengthen their capacities of political incidence, the document analyzed some mechanisms of relationships with the State, fundamental for the improvement of current relationships or for the redefinition of new strategies necessary to influence public policies.

While analysing such mechanisms, it is necessary, not only to take into account external factors, but to have an introspective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the associations themselves. This evaluation will help the organizations have a better understanding of the institutional skills that need to be worked, think through and reorient the strategies and actions to evaluate the work and to its continuity or necessary changes.

In an effort to go beyond the particularities of each country, the authors of this joint document reached the following conclusions which may be considered as strategic guidelines or orientations in the implementation of their action plans:

The NGOs and their national networks must:

- **Build up strong alliances with good coordination mechanisms** to strengthen the incidence in public policies. It is important to have a general debate that includes a ample point of views from the sector.
- **Deepen the relationship between NGOs and social movements** in the defence and broadening of the rights for a better incidence in decision of public policies. Strengthen the project for social change in order to improve the quality of democracy, refocus the

development model and integrate vast sectors excluded from society to combat exclusion and discrimination.

- **Strengthen the organizational capacities** through training and professionaliation of decision makers.
- **Foster an egalitarian access to the information** in order to make concrete proposals to government plans government and be able to follow-up or monitor processes.
- The flow **of information must occur in horizontal form** to avoid concentration of information which generates distrust and frustration.
- **Building up trust** in order to sustain transparency and advocacy of parties involved in order to have a broader vision to contribute to the design of public policies.
- It is recommended to **strengthen the international spaces** for exchange and incidence before multilateral organizations, they would be able to reach beyond national borders and build a global speech of the civil society to face the regional and global problems of the planet.