

Measuring and Assessing Democratic Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean
Panama, June 10-11, 2010
Group Exercise 1

Preliminary remarks:

- The case study presented hereunder is purely fictional. It is meant to represent some of the conditions present in certain countries of the LAC region, but not to refer to any real country in any way.
- The information about the imaginary country of “Independencia” provided hereunder serves as a mere background for the group exercise. You do not necessarily have to use or mention all the information provided. If needed, you can also use elements of information not explicitly included in the description of Independencia, if these are elements that are obviously present in most countries [for example, the existence of a certain “standard” type of institution in the country (ex: the presence of a Parliament, of certain Ministries, etc.), of different age and gender groups, etc.)]

Description of the fictional Republic of Independencia:

Geographic and demographic information:

Independencia is a country situated in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a medium-sized country of 40 million inhabitants, including 20% indigenous people from 16 different Amerindian groups, scattered among all the territory. 40% of its population is urban, 60% is rural.

Political and administrative information:

Independencia, after centuries of European colonial rule followed by a succession of dictatorial governments, finally held its first free and fair elections about 20 years ago, and has since then been a recognized democratic republic. The Constitution provides for the division of the executive, legislative and judiciary power, and undisputed free and fair elections are held on a regular basis at the executive and the legislative level. Two main political parties compete and alternate, but there are also several smaller parties. Traditionally, the government of Independencia has been mostly centralized, but in the last 5 years it has started a decentralization process. Administratively, it is divided into 12 provinces, each of them being divided into 5 districts.

Socio-economic information:

Independencia has been showing relatively good general economic growth, however alarming and growing socio-economic inequalities have been identified. The level of poverty is particularly high in the countryside, notably among certain indigenous groups but also other groups of population, and in the new precarious urban areas that develop randomly at the outskirts of the main cities of the country due to a fast rural exodus. Striking inequalities also exist between different provinces of the country. In general, the unemployment rate has grown in the last years, and it is particularly high among certain groups of population. In addition, the country currently faces frequent strikes and demonstrations due to this unsatisfactory socio-economic situation.

Development/governance aid information:

Independencia receives important amounts of external aid from diverse sources. Some of its donors and aid partners in the governance field include the World Bank, USAid, and UNDP. Several governance evaluations have already been conducted in the country. In the World Bank governance assessments, it was ranked towards the bottom of LAC countries, and it received poor scores in the Transparency International corruption perception Index. The government of Independencia is both offended and embarrassed by these negative rankings, and would like to construct an answer to these external evaluations by providing more accurate and detailed information on the status of different aspects of governance in the country.

In partnership with the government, the UNDP-Independencia Country Office is currently debating on the theme of the National Human Development Report 2010, and is considering doing it on the theme: “Taking stock of democratic progress”.

Other information:

Independencia has a vibrant civil society. It includes civil society organizations that work on very different themes, such as environment, youth, gender-based violence, anti-corruption, or indigenous peoples' rights. However, there are some minority indigenous groups in the country that are not represented by any organization of any type.

The country's research and higher education sector in the political and economic science field is small but advanced, with several independent research institutes of high academic level, the biggest and most famous one being the Independencia Social Sciences Institute (ISSI).

The Independencia National Statistical Office is the official government institution that provides data to the country's policy-makers and informs the official yearly national reports. But the quality of the information it offers seems quite low, and it hardly includes any governance-related data.

Exercise instructions:

You are a team composed of UNDP-Independencia governance staff, members of the Independencia Social Sciences Institute and representatives of the government [*roles within the team are indifferent*]. You are assigned the task of designing a country-led governance assessment process in your country.

1 → What would you identify as relevant entry points for UNDP to support a governance assessment in Independencia?

2 → Who/which type of entity would you recommend leads the assessment process, and why?

3 → How/through which type of process would you identify the indicators to be used in this governance assessment?

4 → How would you ensure that the assessment process is inclusive and participatory?

5 → How would you ensure that the assessment has a durable impact on the level and quality of democratic governance in the country?

Procedure:

Once groups are formed:

Step 1: Identification of the Chair (who will also be the timekeeper) and the Rapporteur for your group;

Step 2: Brainstorming on the 5 questions above, in any order you like;

Step 3: The main points or recommendations resulting from the brainstorming are written down;

Step 4: The groups go back to plenary session and each group reports on a maximum of 5 main bullet points.