

## 5 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### 5.1 Case Studies

#### 5.1.1 Argentina, Municipality of Avellaneda, Public Hearing<sup>60</sup>

##### Background

Beginning in 1999, a project to construct the La Serna Bridge generated conflict between two neighborhoods in the municipality of Avellaneda, a suburb of Buenos Aires. The residents of Villa Modelo, a low-income neighborhood, lobbied for the construction of a bridge that the municipality had promised, with or without financing from the World Bank. For these residents, the benefits of the construction of the La Serna Bridge were considerable, in particular, greater accessibility from their neighborhood to the city of Buenos Aires. A small, but well-organized and well-advised, group representing residents of La Serna Park, a high-income neighborhood, strongly opposed the project. According to these residents, the new bridge would have only negative impacts on their neighborhood.

##### Objectives

The municipal government's two previous efforts to consult residents had failed to reduce tensions between the two neighborhood groups. Faced with escalating conflict between these groups, the Bank proposed to the municipality that it convene a consultation in the form of a public hearing.

##### Process

The municipal government used an external partner, Citizen's Power, to organize a public consultation on this contentious issue. Citizen's Power operated as the Argentinean chapter of Transparency International. This CSO had organized previous public hearings and had credibility among local citizens. Its past experience was an important factor because time was limited by construction deadlines, and a decision on bridge construction had to be reached within 20 days.

Citizen's Power designed a two-stage strategy for the public hearing. During the first stage, a training workshop was held for municipal officials in charge of registering participants for the public hearing and conducting the hearing itself. Following the training workshop, the public was invited to the hearing. Citizen's Power used the two principal national newspapers and local media (radio, graphic media, television and other public media) to announce and convene the hearing. In addition, to ensure greater participation, Citizen's Power made personal contact and extended invitations by telephone to representatives of the neighborhood groups involved in the conflict. Citizen's Power opened an office to respond to the public and register participants. Background information and studies on the construction of the bridge were made available in this office. A poster in the office directed people with questions, complaints and suggestions to Citizen's Power.

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<sup>60</sup> Adapted by Sera (2004) from Cesilini (1999).

Citizen's Power organized two additional workshops, one with each group of residents involved in the conflict, to explain the rules and procedures that would govern the public hearing. These activities ensured the participation of both groups and facilitated an orderly hearing process.

The second stage of the strategy consisted of the public hearing itself, attended by more than 450 local residents, the mayor, and senior officials from the Secretariat of Transportation and the World Bank. For the participants, the presence and participation of the mayor as the president of the public hearing confirmed the commitment of local authorities to address the neighborhood conflict despite the initial reluctance to support the consultation process.

### **Participants**

During the 20 days that preceded the hearing, a list of speakers was compiled to maintain an orderly, informative, and balanced process. More than 60 speakers participated in a public hearing that lasted more than four hours. While most of the neighbors who attended the meeting supported the construction of the bridge, speakers represented both supporters and opponents of the project.

The hearing also served as a forum for the Secretary of Transportation's technical team, allowing the team to explain the improvements that had been made to the original project such as the use of noise reduction panels, the incorporation of a bicycle lane, the restriction of heavy vehicle transit and the protection of green spaces. In addition, the team shared the results of feasibility and environmental impact studies. A World Bank representative spoke about environmental standards and citizen participation in these types of projects.

During the public hearing, Citizen's Power measured the opinions of the participants through the use of a self-administered poll: 77 percent of those polled claimed to be highly pleased with the public hearing process, 57 percent indicated that the organization of the public hearing was very good, and 76 percent stated that the public hearing had allowed them to look at the issue from a new perspective.

### **Outcomes**

The public hearing produced two outcomes. First, the hearing improved the original project. Several modifications were introduced to address the concerns of the residents who opposed the construction of the bridge. The modifications included redesigning the bridge to improve vehicle movement, reducing the number of trees to be removed, establishing protection for green spaces, and prohibiting truck traffic. For most of the actors involved in the process, these modifications improved the original project and addressed objections by the bridge opponents. Second, this public hearing reduced the tensions within the local community. The hearing did not completely resolve the conflict, however. Many of the residents of La Serna Park continue to oppose the project, but they recognized that the hearing did address some of their concerns.