

Chapter 7

Participatory Budgeting Within the Framework of Open Government: Dominican Republic as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Participatory budgeting is a public policy and management instrument as well as a mechanism to help develop citizen participation and transparency. This chapter examines participatory budgeting from its origins, evolution, and the way in which it has contributed to make management transparent at the local government level, appropriately guiding the use of financial resources while contributing to the fight against corruption. This work demonstrates how the Dominican Republic is implementing participatory budgeting policies and their impact on the administration of local municipalities, quality of life improvements, and citizen participation as a core democratic principle of direct open government. This chapter presents a strong case, based on the example of municipal-level governments in the Dominican Republic, that participatory budgeting at the local level is one of the most important direct democratic instruments of Open Governments after the right to vote to create a solid foundation for good governance at the local level.

1. INTRODUCTION

The New Governance and Good Governance model seeks to legitimize its decisions through the key players interrelation, better known as stakeholders of the society. Hence the importance of implementing strategies and instruments that address this purpose achievement. In this context, the Open Government notion plays a key role, since it establishes within its principles the collaboration/participation of citizens

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in the creation and improvement of services, as well as in strengthening transparency and accountability in public management. Participatory budgeting enters the scene as a direct means of citizen participation.

The Participatory Budget (PB) is defined as “a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. It gives people real power over real money” (The Participatory Budgeting Project). In other words, PB is a policy and management instrument, which besides being a strategy that helps develop civic engagement also promotes working groups with key players, thus allowing direct participation in public policymaking, elaboration, execution, control and evaluation. In addition, the PB process helps allocate economic resources, which impacts communities and has an measurable impact on decision-making.

In this sense, this paper outlines the participatory budget, from its origins, evolution, and the way in which it has contributed to make management transparent at the local government level, appropriately guiding the use of financial resources while contributing to the fight against corruption. This work shows how this instrument has been implemented in the Dominican Republic and, above all, the impact generated within the municipalities in which this important resource management, control and inspection tool has been implemented.

Furthermore, the impact of this instrument on the processes of consolidation of citizen participation as a principle of Open Government, which seeks to remove management from opacity and place the citizen at the center of politics, not only as a receiving entity, but also as an active entity in the whole process is studied; thus considering that a public policy generated from citizen participation is essential for legitimacy thereof as well as to add value thereto.

Therefore, the participatory budget designed from citizen participation is a mechanism directly representing democracy.

Addressing this issue from the Dominican Republic experience is an opportunity to present the impact of this mechanism implementation for more than twenty years in the different city councils and municipal districts of the country, and in the improvement of the quality of life of the municipalities.

To this work, the methodology used has been the review of existing legal instruments in the Dominican Republic on participatory budget. Likewise, this article was written from gathering information on the experience of different municipal governments that have implemented the participatory budget as part of their management and good governance in the Dominican Republic. In that order and considering the lack of texts or literature about the subject in question for the country studied, a structure based on the Dominican Constitution, the Law that governs Local Governments, as well as reports and magazines published by government agencies was required. Civil Society dealing with this topic. It should be noted that this work aims to tell the progress of Dominican Local Governments on their journey to develop a management centered on its citizens. Thus, this article is based on the analysis of the most recent reports that had been published to date about participatory budget.

2. PARTICIPATORY BUDGET: CONCEPT, ORIGIN, AND EVOLUTION

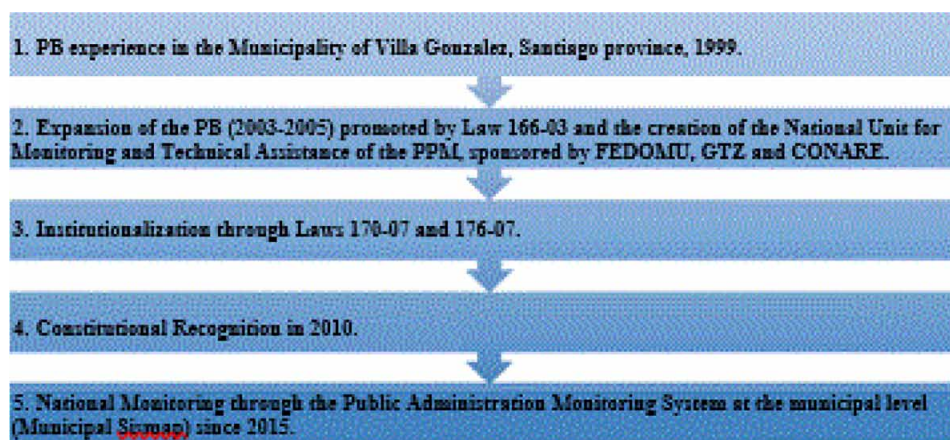
The participatory budget in the Dominican Republic was preceded by a growing interest in reproducing experiences of this management instrument that other countries in the region had already been developing, particularly Brazil, which had carried out this type of activity since 1989, in the cities of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte (Souza, 2001). Years later, in the 1990s, in the Dominican Republic, institutions such as the extinct National Council for State Reform (CONARE), an entity embarked on

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the implementation of processes aimed at democratizing and effective municipal management, had an active participation. Moreover, the launch of the Program to Support the Reform and Modernization of the State (PARME), financed by the European Union, had an impact. It is appropriate to note that this program included a strong element of institutional decentralization, which allowed the creation of foundations to promote the management capacity improvement. Also, in changes produced at the legislative level, that local governments have been able to show during all this time, today there is talk of greater skills and increased resources, largely thanks to these initiatives.

Figure 1. Milestones in the institutionalization of PB in the Dominican Republic

Source: Participación Ciudadana, Report on Participatory Budgeting Implementation within the Framework of Law No. 176-07 (2019)



As detailed in Participación Ciudadana's *Report on Participatory Budget Implementation within the Framework of Law No. 176-07 (2019)*, by the years 1997 and 1998 the country had already made this mechanism a management model in its local governments, developing the first experience in this modality, which was carried out in the Villa Gonzalez municipality, Province of Santiago. As of 2003, this good practice began to be replicated, although at that date its implementation was scarce, with about 5 municipalities only i.e., Constanza, Villa Gonzalez, La Vega, Jima Abajo, and Sabana Grande de Boya, such a situation turned out to be positive going from 59 municipalities in 2005 and 120 in 2006.

In 2007, this instrument was institutionalized with the enactment of the Municipal Law No. 176-07, which in Article 236, establishes the Municipal Participatory Budget System. This system aims to establish mechanisms for citizen participation in the discussion, prepare and monitor of the municipality's budget, especially with regard to the 40% of the transfer that municipalities receive from the National Budget by Law, which must be allocated to capital and investment expenses, as well as own income applicable to this concept.

Within the objectives of the Municipal Participatory Budgeting System established by the aforementioned Law in Article 2, due to the direct impact on the issue addressed, I wanted to point out the following:

1. Strengthen local self-management processes and ensure the communities main participation in the identification and prioritization of project ideas;

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2. Guarantee all players participation: communities, sectors, sectoral bodies, and other local development entities and that they clearly express their commitment to municipal development plans;
3. Identify demands from the community level, articulating at the municipal level the ideas of priority projects, which facilitates population direct participation;
4. Allow monitoring and control of budget execution;
5. Carry out preventive maintenance of public works.

Later, in 2010, to give greater character to this tool institutionalization, the participatory budget acquired constitutional relevance. In this sense, the Dominican Constitution (2010), in Article 206 sets out: “The investment of municipal resources will be made through the progressive development of participatory budgets that promote the integration and citizen co-responsibility in the definition, execution and control of local development policies”.

With the constitutional reform approved in January 2010, as well as with the enactment of the National Development Strategy Law (END) in 2012, “a new cycle of decentralization was opened”, not only aimed at promoting reform within the municipal public administration, but also with the aim of encouraging these bodies to “equip themselves with the instruments and processes necessary to promote territorial development, in which local governments are called to play a fundamental role.” (Manual Municipal Management, 2020, p. 15).

2.1 The Participatory Budget in the Framework of Open Government

As I have stated in foregoing paragraphs, the Participatory Budget is a citizen participation mechanism. In this regard, Open Government has this strategy as one of its pillars, and it seeks to put the citizen at the center of decision-making, making it a participant and collaborator in the different stages making up this process particularly. In fact, according to *CitizenLab*, an online community engagement platform for local governments, “participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool for cities (local governments) to educate, engage, and empower communities”.

2.2. Origins of Open Government and Guiding Principles Comprising It

When it comes to strengthening the democratic system, open government is one of the main elements. Authors such as Ramirez-Alujas (2012), cited in *Enfoques Magazine: Political Science and Public Administration* (p.71, 2015), point out that we would have to go back to the middle of the 20th century to observe Open Government appearance in the first official agendas and debates, since it is at that moment that a series of pressures begin to occur through citizen movements to improve access to information.

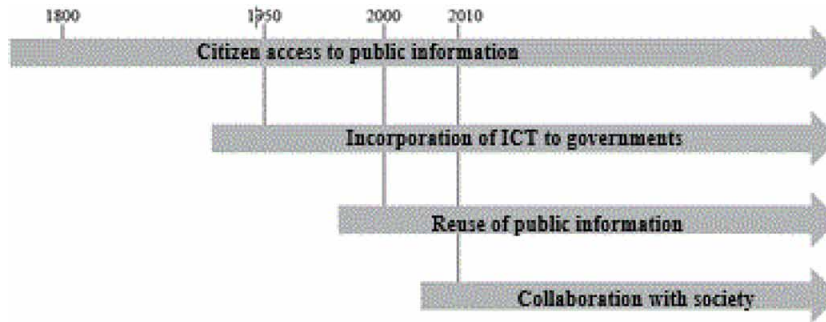
The concept of Open Government emerged in England in the late 1970s, so this democratic doctrine has existed for decades. However, its greatest momentum occurs as of 2009 with the execution of the executive memorandum signed by the then President of the United States, Barack Obama, on “Transparency and Open Government.”.

In the aforementioned memorandum, President Obama promised to create “an unprecedented level of openness in government.” President Obama also pledged to work together to ensure public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration that would strengthen democracy, ensure public trust, and promote government effectiveness and efficiency” (Memorandum, 2009).

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Figure 2. Graphic on Background to Open Government

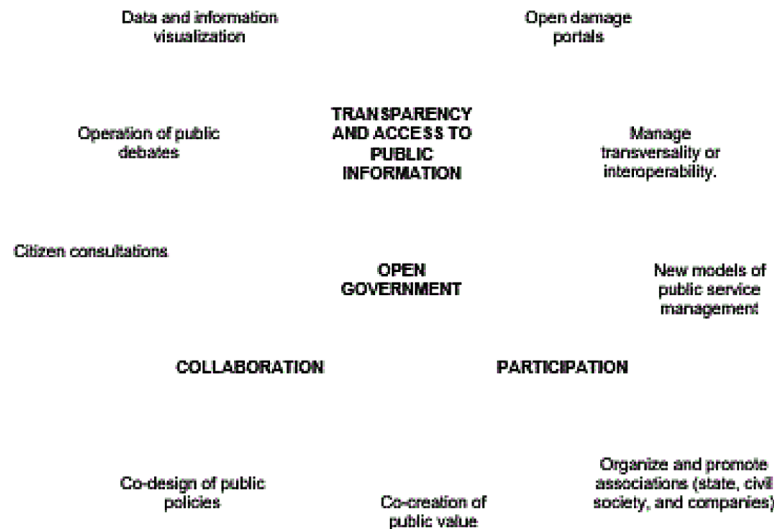
Source: Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism (2013), cited by *Enfoques Magazine: Political Science and Public Administration* (P. 71)



A diagram showing the development of open government and the principles comprising it is detailed below.

Figure 3. Ecosystem of open government development

Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: <https://biblioguias.cepal.org/EstadoAbierto/concepto>



A few years later, in Latin America, the Latin American Center for Development Administration (CLAD), published the Ibero-American Charter of Open Government (2016), which established a definition for this subject:

It will be understood as the set of mechanisms and strategies that contribute to public governance and good governance, based on the pillars of transparency, citizen participation, accountability, collaboration, and innovation, focusing and including citizens in the decision-making process, as well as in the

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formulation and implementation of public policies, to strengthen democracy, the legitimacy of public action and collective well-being (CLAD, 2016).

The Charter bases the development of Open Government on four pillars or principles which must occur systemically, each one contributing to the achievement of the others in an organic and independent way. In a schematic way these pillars are:

Figure 4. Principles of the Open Government Alliance

Source: Open Government, 2015



2.2.1 Transparency and Access to Public Information

By referring to this pillar or principle, the Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation in Public Management indicates that transparency should guide the relationship of governments and public administrations with citizens in the management of public affairs. Furthermore, it involves two fundamental areas: the right of access to information, held by public institutions and that citizens may request, and also the obligation of governments to make available to citizens, proactively, the information that give an account of their activities, the use of public resources and their results (CLAD, 2009).

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC (2018). From Open Government to Open State:

Government Transparency: It consists of the information on the activities of public bodies being created and made available to the public, with limited exceptions, in a timely manner and in open data formats without limits for reuse. This includes the disclosure of information in response to citizen requests and proactively, at the initiative of public entities.

In the Dominican Republic, this pillar or principle is strengthened by the existence of a Law that grants free access to public information, known as Law No. 200-04 on Free Access to Public Information (2004), which states: “That the right of access to government information is one of the sources of development and strengthening of representative democracy insofar as it allows citizens to fully analyze, judge and evaluate the acts of their representatives, and encourages transparency in the acts of the Government and the Administration”.

Moreover, Article 1, Section b, sets out a series of autonomous and/or decentralized State Bodies and entities, including the National District and municipal bodies, under its application or scope.

Kaufman (2013, p.5) explains very well the different phases of participation in the process of empowering citizens:

“Access to information, consultation, involvement, and collaboration are considered as successive, recurring, and interdependent phases in the processes of civic involvement and empowerment. For its part, the willingness of citizens to participate in these democratic processes will depend on the relevance and credibility of the government actors, as well as on a set of more complex and even independent factors”.

2.2.2 Public Accountability

Accountability is a concept or modality created in France about 231 years ago, around the year 1789 with the adoption of the Statement of the Rights of Man and Citizens, in Articles 14 and 15 the Citizen’s right to hold their representatives accountable for what is administered.

In the decade of the 60s, it can be implied that this modality had been evolving, and the concept of accountability¹ arises in England. This meaning was used in the same way in countries such as Canada and the United States to indicate the duty of all public officials to be accountable not only for the way in which public funds or resources were used, but also for the fulfillment of the functions that have been conferred upon said officials.

In that sense, the Dominican Constitution (2010) enshrines the Accountability importance, in Articles 91 and 92 and orders the presidents of the legislative chambers to carry out the accountability in the first week of the month of August of each year. On the aforementioned date a report must be submitted on the legislative, administrative, and financial activities carried out during the preceding period. It is established in the same way for legislators before their voters.

Accordingly, Article 114 establishes the accountability of the President of the Republic.

It shall be the responsibility of the President of the Republic to render accounts annually, before the National Congress, of the budgetary, financial and management administration that occurred in the previous year, as set forth in Article 128, Section 2, Paragraph f). It also establishes that the accountability must be accompanied by an explanatory message of the macroeconomic and fiscal projections, the expected economic, financial, and social results, and the main priorities that the government intends to execute within the approved General State Budget Law for the current year.

While the Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation in Public Management considers:

In a broad sense, this pillar is based on the standards, procedures, and institutional mechanisms -as a legal and ethical duty- that oblige government authorities to base their actions and assume responsibility for their decisions, respond in a timely manner and report on the management and the yields of funds, goods or public resources assigned, and the results obtained in the fulfillment of the conferred mandate (CLAD, 2009).

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As mentioned accountability in the Dominican Republic is an issue enshrined in the Constitution. Law No. 176-07 of the National District and the Municipalities, in Article 60 defines the performance and powers of the trustee, as described in Section 19, “develop municipal economic management in accordance with the approved municipal budget, its management cycle and render accounts to the municipal council for the operations carried out.”

In the same context, Law No. 1-12 which establishes the National Development Strategy 2030 (NDS), states as the first pillar, “Structuring an efficient public administration that acts with honesty, transparency and accountability and seeks obtaining results for the benefit of society and national and local development”.

To achieve such a purpose, the National Development Strategy 2030 has set out in its first general objective, “efficient, transparent and results-oriented public administration”; in this regard, accountability plays a significant role in improving the quality of the democratic system, commits public officials to the fulfillment of their duties, allowing at the same time an informed citizenry and builds trust in the entities and bodies of the State that is so much needed in these times in the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, the NDS (2012) in its specific objective 1.1.2. sets forth the following: “To promote local, provincial and regional development, by strengthening the planning and management capacities of municipalities, the participation of social players and coordination with other State instances, in order to enhance local resources and take advantage of the opportunities of global markets”.

It is precisely in this context that they have defined the line of action in which permanent participation mechanisms and communication channels are established between municipal authorities and the inhabitants, so that a permanent promotion of active and responsible social participation in the spaces for consultation and agreement of the local government is made, including the process and stages of the participatory budget. Through this line of action, it is also sought to develop a culture of rights and duties of the municipalities, and therefore, the strengthening of community and representative organizations of the different sectors interacting in the municipality.

It should be noted that, since 1997 the country has a regulation on the Affidavit of Assets and Illicit Enrichment, Law No. 322-97, which in its Article 14 includes the accountability mandate.

2.2.3 Citizen Participation

The concept of participating is defined in the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language as “to take part, be or become actively involved in something” “sharing, having the same opinions, ideas... as another individual”. It implies the action of being part of something, being involved or share a process.

Citizen participation according to ECLAC (2018), “is what supports and sustains the Open Government. It is the basis of many of the other issues related to open government policies, active citizenship is usually a vital link between transparency and accountability”.

Correspondingly, the Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation in Public Management states that, “Citizen participation will be understood as the process of social construction of public policies that, in accordance with the general interest, channels, responds to or expands fundamental rights, reinforcing the active position of citizenship in the management of public affairs” (CLAD, 2009).

It is appropriate to note that, for some time, citizen participation was limited to the right to exercise suffrage or vote to elect government authorities; however, nowadays such concept can no longer be approached from that limited perspective, since it implies a more direct involvement of citizens in public

affairs in such a way that it allows their participation not only in the activities of the Public Administration, but also in decision-making processes.

Oslak indicates that, “It is clear that citizen participation does not occur just because the population is invited by a government to do so. There must be, for it, an opportunity which does not depend solely on the existence of channels provided by the State” (2013, p. 19).

In the Dominican Republic, the right to citizen participation is constitutionally granted in Article 203 of the Constitution, establishing the referendum and the plebiscite as initiatives for the strengthening and “development of democracy and local management”. Following the constitutional mandate, in Article 15 (numeral 4) of Law No. 176-07 of the National District and the Municipalities, it is defined as the right and duty of the municipality to, “participate in municipal management in accordance with the provisions of the laws and regulations”.

According to Ray Guevara (2018, p. 94), “the constitutional agreements of the right of citizen Participation [constitutes one] of the pillars of the government and the Local Administration, since it becomes an essential budget to democratize the management of the municipalities”.

2.2.4 Public and Citizen Collaboration and Innovation

The Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation in Public Management (2009) establishes a definition for these concepts: “The pillar of collaboration is understood as the generation of new spaces for meeting, dialogue and work that promote the co-creation of initiatives and co-production of new public services”.

It indicates that the adoption of these elements implies the promotion of new approaches, methodologies, and practices to promote and strengthen innovation within public institutions and favor collaboration with other players in society, the private sector, third sector organizations, among others. Likewise, recognizing the capacities available in society itself and the benefits that these can bring in the design and implementation of public policies, which in turn also means leaving behind the approach of a passive citizenship recipient of institutional actions, to become protagonist and producer of its own solutions.

In line with new transparency mechanisms of the Dominican Municipal Administration, the Public Administration Monitoring System (Sistema de Monitoreo de la Administración Pública), SISMAP Municipal, was created in 2015 as a tool designed and applied to Local Governments consisting of a technological application that collects information on management to allow identification of progress, areas for improvement and results. It is a public management system, in real time and designed to keep the public informed about the administration and regulatory compliance.

Until 2017, this monitoring tool showed information on human resources management, planning, budget, purchases, transparency, quality of spending, citizen participation through participatory budgeting and affidavits of assets of municipal public officials. To date, its functionality has expanded with the inclusion of other modules that allow not only to measure the aforementioned aspects, but also in compliance with a series of regulations that were previously alien thereto, which are under the coordination of 10 governing entities:

1. Ministry of Public Administration (MAP).
2. National Institute of Public Administration (INAP).
3. General Directorate for Territorial Planning and Development (DGODT).
4. General Directorate for Budget (DIGEPRES).

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5. General Directorate for Public Procurement (DGCP).
6. General Directorate for Government Ethics and Integrity (DIGEIG).
7. Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic.
8. Chamber of Accounts of the Dominican Republic.
9. Dominican Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU).
10. Dominican Municipal League (LMD).

Currently, the Municipal SISMAP monitors the management of 158 city councils and 47 municipal district boards for a total of 205, with an increasing projection to 300 in the coming years, with a positive increase of 46%, helping to extend transparency in municipal management.

This system, as I have indicated, is not only for monitoring. It is aimed at improving the management of Local Governments, while optimizing the strategy of accompaniment and technical assistance from the coordinating and control entities of the Dominican State.

Another of its characteristics, as I mentioned above, is a real-time system, which has information, evidence, and scores, also designed with the aim of keeping citizens informed, bringing the public administration closer to people, and meeting their needs for information access to municipal management data.

2.3. Municipal Participatory Budgets (MPB) as a Mechanism for Control and Prevention of Corruption

The recent history of management at the level of local governments in the Dominican Republic had been characterized by the non-transparent, uncontrolled, and unaudited management of financial resources; also, investments were not directed to works that benefited communities and there was no accountability on what budget was ultimately spent.

The participatory budget has become an excellent instrument for citizen management and participation not only in the decision-making processes of municipal entities, but also in the surveillance, control, and inspection of their resources, ensuring their correct use and helping to prevent corruption.

The Municipal Participatory Budget (MPB), according to the Dominican Republic's Municipal Management Manual, "is one of the instruments promoting a greater connection between the City Council and the citizenry. The MPB deals with investment in works and services, directly linked to the needs identified by the municipalities that seek to substantially improve the quality of life of the people living in different communities" (2020, p. 22).

The MPB could be considered as the space where citizen participation takes its highest level and representation, where another part of democracy is reflected, in addition to the exercise of suffrage. "The Participatory Budget responds to a new ideological political conception that emphasizes the social management of finances and establishes the preparation of the municipal budget essentially considering the proposals made by citizens from their territory or specialized sector." (Matias, 2004, p. 21)

3. THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND ITS EXPERIENCE IN THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

As I have pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, since 1997 in the Dominican Republic the practice of participatory budgeting began in some municipalities, a practice that was rapidly replicating, becoming part of the management culture of Dominican city halls.

That, in 2020, 205 city halls use modern management tools, implement control and transparency mechanisms, give participation to the municipalities and are talking about accountability, it is extremely significant.

3.1 The Local Governments of the DR, Preparation, Execution, Control, and Evaluation of Participatory Budgets

Law No. 170-07, Article 14 (Regulation): It is the responsibility of the City Council of each municipality to develop implementation guidelines to apply the aforementioned law. A period of ninety days should be granted for presenting these guidelines. This regulation is intended to respond to specific characteristics of the municipality as well as the procedure for holding the Community Assemblies, the Sectional, Neighborhood or Block Assemblies, the Open Town Hall or Municipal Assembly, and the Monitoring and Control Committees. Several city councils have begun this approval process, such is the case of the Higüey City Council, which presented its “Implementation Regulations for the Participatory Budget 2016-2020” process with the corresponding guidelines.

*Figure 5. Stages of MPB Implementation
Own elaboration.*



Stage One: Preparation, Diagnosis and Elaboration of Strategic Development Vision

At this stage, the following steps take place opening the whole process:

1. Authorities and organizations agree on how they will carry out the Municipal Participatory Budget
2. They will determine the amount of investment money on which they will plan the projects and works to be carried out by the City Council the following year.
3. The amount of money is pre-assigned between the communities or neighborhoods of the municipality according to the number of inhabitants.

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4. In the event that a community or neighborhood receives a very low pre-allocation, the Board of Councilmen can transfer more money to it for solidarity reasons.

Stage Two: Consultation With the Population

1. Population identifies its highest priority needs.
2. Decides on the projects and works to be carried out by the city council next year by holding a sequence of meetings.
 - a. Community meetings in each place or community with more than 30 families
 - b. Sectional, neighborhood, or block meetings
 - c. Townhall or Municipal Meeting

Stage Three: Transparency and Monitoring of the Municipal Investment Plan

1. Execution of Works
2. The projects and works of the Municipal Investment Plan of the Municipal Participatory Budget are executed throughout the year, following a schedule for projects and works commencement.
3. The communities elect a work or social audit committee to follow up on each of the works and, when construction is completed, it becomes a maintenance committee.

3.2 Citizen Participation in the Elaboration of the Participatory Budget as a Principle of Open Government

The Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation (2009) defines citizen participation as the process of social construction of public policies that, in accordance with the general interest of democratic society, channels, responds to, or expands economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights of people, and the rights of the organizations or groups in which they belong, as well as those of the indigenous communities and peoples.

The Charter, when referring to participatory budgets, as instruments of citizen participation in municipal management, establishes that they are not an end in themselves; rather, they play a fundamental role within the public investment planning processes and, therefore, in the policies and strategic development objectives of a given country.

Moreover, it indicates that, to analyze this relationship between public investment planning processes, it is necessary to rely on specific objectives:

- Help to a better consistency between the lines, strategies and community, municipal, provincial, and national development actions, poverty reduction and social inclusion and;
- Guarantee all stakeholders participation: communities, sectors, sectoral bodies, and other local development entities and that they clearly express their commitment to municipal development plans.

For the specific case of open government, it establishes that citizen participation as a pillar should allow not only the social construction of public policies, but also the increase of citizen capacities in monitoring and controlling them.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, (OECD) report “Open Government Global Context and the Way Forward”, “Greater citizen participation in the public policy cycle (PCCPP) is fundamental in an open government and should be an integral element of the countries’ path towards openness through all the powers of the State” (2016, p. 12). In this sense, it also states that effective participation creates a renewed attention to the mechanisms whereby governments go beyond the role of simple providers of public services towards greater collaboration with all the players involved, including the private sector, the academy, and independent bodies of the State.

4. RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETS IMPLEMENTATION

From 1997 to date, there has been consistency in the MPB implementation in the Dominican Republic. Among the most successful cases due to its application systematicity are: Banica, Bani, Azua, Jarabacoa, Santiago de los Caballeros, San Juan de la Maguana, Barahona, Salcedo, Villa Tapia, to name a few City Halls. As I have mentioned before, to date of the total number of municipal entities monitored by SISMAP, 205 implement the participation tool, which is why there is a good representation.

It should be said that, of the total monitored municipalities, which are 158 city halls and 47 District Boards, they are classified into three categories: small, medium, and large, and the budget is assigned based on that classification, but this situation limits their ability to better implement this instrument. Furthermore, they prevent compliance with the provisions of the norm on the percentage of funds that should be allocated to the PPM.

Despite the limitations, city halls, regardless of size, make efforts to involve municipalities in decision-making processes impacting the community.

It must be recognized that the city halls have made significant progress in various areas, through citizen participation in these processes, the foundations have been laid to continue institutional strengthening at the municipal level, greater control mechanisms have been implemented for management supervision, which in turn strengthen transparency and reduce corruption.

A citizenry that little by little has become empowered and made aware of their role in the face of these processes or participation mechanisms established by the Dominican Constitution is part of the results of implementing the Participatory Budget in the country.

It has been possible to strengthen the spaces for agreement and collaboration between the different players, Civil Society, and local governments, improving participation and joint responsibility in municipal management. Also, it has been possible to impact on the formulation and monitoring of public policies at the local level in strategic aspects such as environmental sanitation and the construction of priority works.

5. CONCLUSION

Countries go through processes of transformation and changes that allow them to incorporate new management paradigms, while contributing to institutional strengthening. In such process, local governments play a key role, since local governments are the entity that is closest to the citizen. This allows to generate spaces that make possible to meet citizen needs and consider them in the development of action plans

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aimed at solving them. These spaces are used so that the players and stakeholders present the collective needs, in order to seek collective solutions; this is what happens with the participatory budget.

Since the arrival of this management and transparency tool, in 1997, Dominican local governments have made progress and have been consolidating citizen participation. They have put their ears into the hearts of people and listen to what their needs are. The most effective, is that a solution is being sought.

The Municipal Participatory Budget (MPB) is one of the most relevant instruments after the exercise of suffrage, so that through its application it is possible to create solid foundations aimed at good governance at the local level. These new management paradigms, such as the open government, which makes citizen integration into decision-making processes available to public administrations, constitute significant advances in seeking not only transparency, but also supervision, control, and accountability.

It is evident that governments, in a general sense, today are under great pressure for having opened up to public scrutiny and giving openness and accessibility to the citizen; however, these processes must take place so that we have a quality democracy, strengthened and at the height of the current circumstances.

The strengthening of the democratic system cannot be considered if the limited scope of action of participatory organizations is not recognized and efforts are made to summon a social and political force capable of facing the legitimization of the existing political apathy, which encourages abstinence and ends up consolidating democracy, but from the point of view of voting every four years to elect authorities, and not from the use of citizen participation mechanisms. I understand that municipal management in the Dominican Republic is heading towards that north, according to the steps of progress that it has been taking in that regard.

The close relationship existing between participatory budgeting and open government, as instruments and strategies that foster the strengthening of democratic systems, contributing from the agreement and participation spaces, is the opportunity for citizens to participate not only in budgets preparation, but also in the monitoring of the proper use of the financial resources allocated, since it allows the implementation of accountability and making municipal management transparent.

Given that this study was carried out supported by a series of reports, published by ad-hoc entities, most of the research data was collected from direct observation and through contact with municipal bodies, in addition to reviewing the Monitoring System designed for the local scope, SISMAP. These ad-hoc entities include the National Council for State Reform, CONARE, by the State Reform and Modernization Support Program, PARME, which was funded by the European Union to support the implementation and development of these issues in public management at all levels. This report also draws upon more recent publications from the civic engagement organization in Dominican Republic, Participación Ciudadana. The development of future research on participatory budget in Dominican Republic should be encouraged.

Finally, this process of paradigm change at the municipal level has not been an easy task. It has been a long journey, but there are challenges that Dominican local governments still face to achieve an efficient management oriented to the satisfaction of citizen needs.

Challenges such as the economic allocation intended for participatory budget is not intended to payroll, contravening regulation provisions; also, increasing budget from the Central Government, especially to city halls classified as small, since they do not have the structure and financial and human resources to carry out these processes.

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ENDNOTE

- ¹ In English, the definition of the Anglo-Saxon term *Accountability* refers to the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens, as defined by Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/accountability>